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We're in this Together: Framing Contest over the Precariat in the Third Sector in Poland

Abstract: The article is a study of collective action frames created during the union organizing campaign of the precariat in Polish non-governmental organizations. NGOs are paradigm precarious working environments with a great share of atypical employment relations, voluntary work and blurred work-life boundaries. Trade union used the frame of the precariat to reach workers of such organizations but during framing contest NGO managers intercepted the frame. Despite their power advantage within organizations, managers' working conditions were precarious, too. Dynamics of the case shows dangers of using extended frames, such as the precariat, in organizing precarious sectors. The very concept of the precariat obscures conflict and power inequalities within organizations.

Keywords: collective action frames, union organizing, precariat, third sector in Poland

In 2015 radical Polish trade union Worker's Initiative attempted to organize workers of the third sector. Union's campaign "We, the Precariat" provided a framing for this unionizing effort. However, the term "precariat" was intercepted by managers of non-governmental organizations, as it was broad enough to obscure employee-employer divide in a precarious third sector. The trade union had to change its framing to one that emphasized power inequality within organizations. It was the sole instance of the mobilization of the precariat in Poland. The case shows how extended frames, such as the precariat, can contribute to the failure of organizing efforts when used in a sector which is precarious as a whole. This case study answers questions related to the dynamics of framing in the course of organizing the third sector in Poland in 2015: How the trade union constructed the collective action frame for mobilization of the third sector? How was it countered by the third sector employers?

The aim of the study is to analyze the conflict within the third sector as a framing contest between workers, trade union and managers. Students of industrial relations call for inclusion of theoretical and methodological accomplishments of sociology of social movements within their field (Gahan, Pekarek 2013; Kelly 1998: 199). This article is a response to this call. It adopts the methodology of collective action frames to study union organizing campaigns and employers' counter-actions. Collective action frames are narratives used by social movements to gain support, mobilize adherents and indicate means of action. There is a body of literature on the precariat and precarity, but studies on union organizing of

precarious workers are only beginning (C. Bodnar 2006; della Porta et al. 2015b; Mattoni, Vogiatzoglou 2014b).

The first section of the article introduces the notion of precariat. Literature review shows that despite widespread insecurity of employment the notion is used by cultural and creative workers. The second section describes conditions in the Polish third sector in time of the described framing contest, with an emphasis on precarity of work and difficulties for trade unions' activity. The next section on the methodology elaborates on the concept of collective action frames and describes the research method. Fourth section describes frames employed during the case and the conflict between workers, trade union and managers. In the discussion, similar cases are considered. A conclusion follows.

Organizing Precarious Workers

Publication of *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class* by Guy Standing (2011) stirred debates on the significance of the concept. Standing described a coherent socioeconomic phenomenon called the "precariat." Soon, three groups of more nuanced approaches superseded it (Pałęcka, Płucienniczak 2017). The first is macrosociological, concerned with the labour market, economy and quality of jobs: *precarious* employment (Mrozowicki, Maciejewska 2016; Olsthoorn 2014). The second is meso-sociological, and focuses on the collective identity of the *precariat*, social movements and contentious politics (della Porta et al. 2015a). Finally, a third group studies individual experiences of *precariousness*, feelings of insecurity, subjugation, fear and anxiety (Castel 2003; Lorey 2015). In this article we focus on all three meanings: conditions of work, mobilization of a social movement and individual experience. The second one remains the most important for the analysis.

While the precarity of work is a global problem, mobilizations of the precariat are not correlated with the global spread of precarious employment (Doogan 2009). Organizations in Western and Southern Europe have adopted the term "precariat" as a shared identity and call to action. In other regions, such as Northern Europe (with an exception of Finland), neither unions nor movements employ the term (Arnold, Bongiovi 2013; della Porta et al. 2015b). While both Italian and Greek employees experience precarity, the Italian labour movement refers to this term, while Greeks remain loyal to worker identity (Mattoni, Vogiatzoglou 2014a). Notions such as "irregularity" and "informality" of work gain more traction among labour activists and academics in the global South (Agarwala 2014; Tilly et al. 2013). Moreover, precarious workers throughout Europe organize in independent unions and social movements (e.g. *Precários Inflexíveis* in Portugal, *San Precario/Santa Precaria* in Italy, *Génération Précaire* in France, *IWGB* and *UVW* in United Kingdom) rather than in traditional trade unions.

Mobilization of precarians began in creative and non-governmental sectors, among culture workers, specialists and freelancers in Western and Southern Europe. In France intermittent cultural workers developed the concept of the precariat along with the idea of immaterial labour. In Portugal the lower strata of middle-class qualified workers was the most affected by precarization and mobilized under the banner of the precariat. It was a result of loss of trust towards trade unions in both cases (C. Bodnar 2006; Estanque 2015).

Individual activism of the early years culminated in massive EuroMayDay demonstrations in multiple countries (De Sario 2007).

The frame of the precariat assumes an anti-sectionalist community of workers. It goes beyond working conditions and encompasses the negative impact of precarity on individual and social existence. It is used so that events, situations and biographies could be seen by workers not as their own individual struggles, but as parts of a bigger problem (Snow et al. 1986). The precariat is a conceptual toolbox that unions and movements use to describe an insecure labour market and to act upon it (Casas-Cortés 2014). Researchers consider such extended identities to be an adequate response to fragmentation of the labour market and limitations of business unionism (Frege, Kelly 2003; Lucio, Marino, Connolly 2017).

Organizing Precarious Third Sector in Poland

The third sector consists of formal, non-profit and value-driven organizations distinct from public administration and market companies (Corry 2010). This article studies its crucial part: foundations and associations that constitute two-thirds of all non-governmental organizations in Poland. In 2015, there were around 103,000 of them, but only 70,000 were active (Adamiak, Charycka, Gumkowska 2016: 9).

The third sector in Poland faces three barriers to its growth and stability: distrust of political elites (Załęski 2012), lack of civic engagement and inadequate financial support (Nałęcz, Leś, Pieliński 2015; Adamiak, Charycka, Gumkowska 2016). It experienced explosive growth only because of European funds that helped to fill the gap in local support. In the period 2005–2012 the revenue of the sector doubled, from 12.4 billion zlotys to 24.0 billion zlotys (GUS 2014: 219). Still, legal hurdles make it difficult to sustain organizations: many grants require significant financial contributions or do not cover costs that do not directly contribute to the task (such as contracts for employees who administer organizations) (Broniszewski 2016: 44).

All those woes contribute to the sorry state of employment in the sector. In 2015, when described events took place, only 55 percent of foundations and associations had any paid staff and only 20 percent of organizations had at least one full-time employee, while 35 percent relied on civil law contracts (Adamiak, Charycka, Gumkowska 2016: 49). According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS), which applies a broader definition of non-governmental organizations,¹ in 2014 only 39 percent of them had any paid staff, 15 percent employed at least one full-time worker and 24 percent relied on civil law contracts or voluntary work (GUS 2016: 56). Economic insecurity is a primary problem for workers and managers. Both groups complain about dependence on short-term projects, low pay, lack of administrative skills, stress and disrupted work-life balance. Managers consider costs of labour to be the heaviest financial burden for NGOs (Broniszewski 2016: 47). For workers, low pay,

¹ The Central Statistical Office applies the formal definition which includes all kinds of non-governmental entities, including: associations, foundations, churches and other religious entities, hunting associations, volunteer fire brigades, etc. Meanwhile, Klon/Jawor Association takes into consideration only associations and foundations. Authors of the report argue that this definition is more practical, as it allows comparing entities who constitute the core of the third sector and who operate in accordance to similar rules and precepts.

lack of career opportunities and overworking are crucial problems (Charycka, Gumkowska 2020: 14).

The excessive usage of precarious employment, especially civil law contracts (mandate contracts and specific-task contracts), is not restricted to the third sector, but a defining characteristic of the Polish economy (Maciejewska, Mrozowicki, Piasna 2016; Nölke, Vliegenthart 2009). The transformation of 1989 brought recurring waves of precarization (Karolak 2020; Trappmann 2011). There is no precise data on the usage of civil law contracts; various sources estimate that 5–7 percent workers (0.8–1.2 million workers) are employed on such contracts, and the number is growing (Muszyński 2016: 334). Such contracts are easy to terminate within a few days and are not regulated by labour law. In 2015, when described events took place, they were not covered by minimum wage regulations (this changed for one type of them in 2017). What is more, Polish law reserved benefits of unionization for employees on regular contracts. This was a crucial barrier for organizing efforts in precarious sectors. The Polish Constitutional Tribunal ruled this legislation unconstitutional in 2015, yet the new law came into effect only in January 2019.

Trade unions in Poland are weak, as only 11 percent of the workforce (1.6 million) is unionized, with the lowest numbers in professional services (5 percent), construction (4 percent) and retail (2 percent) (GUS 2015: 5–6). 66 percent of all unions are active in the public sector and state-owned enterprises or large industrial facilities, where regular labour contracts are the norm (Gardawski, Mrozowicki, Czarzasty 2012). The situation in the third sector is exactly opposite.

Only small unions innovate and employ strategies targeting precarious workers. There are three such unions in Poland: Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy “Konfederacja Pracy” (All-Poland Workers’ Trade Union “Confederation of Labour”), Związek Syndykalistów Polski (The Polish Union of Syndicalists) and the aforementioned Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy “Inicjatywa Pracownicza” (All-Poland Trade Union “Workers’ Initiative,” OZZIP) (Mrozowicki, Maciejewska 2017). The actions of the last one are a subject of this article.

OZZIP arose out of an anarcho-syndicalist background, maintains a high level of public presence and regularly interacts with other actors, such as anarchists, tenants’ movements and other trade unions. Its organizing strategy relies on regional and milieu committees. This approach allows OZZIP to recruit workers in non-unionized companies and those employed on civil law contracts.

Theory and Methodology

Sociology of social movements conceptualizes variables such as identity, meaning and motivation using collective action frames. A frame is “an interpretative schema that signifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action in one’s present or past environment” (Snow et al. 1992: 137). The successful construction of a frame allows a movement to mobilize its adherents, gain support and choose a repertoire of action. To study frames is to study practices through which actors refer to experiences, narratives and knowledge of their targeted public. In order for frames to succeed, they have to be aligned to the understanding

of a situation shared by the audience, related to their daily lives and specific for the invoked targets (Lindekilde 2014). This process consists of three core tasks: diagnosis, prognosis and motivation. Diagnosis provides a description of a situation or grievance. Prognosis shows the means to change it, a meaningful set of actions that would alleviate the problem. Finally, motivation provides reasons for taking action: an identity or common good (Snow, Benford 1988). A frame has to perform each of those tasks in order to be successful, that means, to mobilize collective action. In the situation of a framing contest, the aim of contenders is to mobilize support, while their opponents want to prevent this by creating counter-frames that demobilize or redirect contention (Benford, Snow 2000).

In order to describe and understand dynamics of the usage of precariat in third sector organizing, we studied documents produced during the OZZIP organizing campaign in 2015 and its counters by NGO managers. The main body of texts consists of thirty-four utterances produced in the discussed campaign and later during conflicts in two NGOs: eleven texts produced by the OZZIP NGO committee and “We, the Precariat” campaign, nine articles coming from the NGO.PL “What kind of job? What kind of pay? (in non-governmental organizations)” debate, eleven statements produced in the process of the two denouncements made by NGO workers and three commentaries published in the online magazine Political Critique. Moreover, two groups of auxiliary texts were considered. The first comprises seventeen commentaries produced in 2010 in a first public debate on the condition of the third sector in Poland. The second is a short series of texts initiated by the NGO.PL in 2018 to discuss work in the sector again.

Above-mentioned fifty-three written public utterances were all short-form: online articles, posts in social media meant as statements by actors involved, leaflets, commentaries, manifestos, postulates, open letters or interviews. All used first-person perspective (singular and plural), which indicates speaking in one’s own name or in the name of the author’s milieu or organization.

The first step of analysis was inductive coding in order to identify objects and themes that were relevant for framing. The second step included deductive coding to recognize functions of themes: diagnostic, prognostic or motivational. Sentences which described the situation, identified issues and ascribed blame were coded as diagnosis; those which proposed solutions, strategies, tactics and means of action as prognosis; finally sentences which justified and indicated values as reasons for action were coded as motivation.

We distinguished three frames: of the precariat, counter-frame of managers and the final frame of the trade union. Frames differed in terms of coherence and comprehensiveness. Documents produced in the ‘We, the Precariat’ campaign established the collective action frame of precariat. The main brochure of the campaign contained eight short articles, with framing elements dispersed among them. Two denouncing pieces written by NGO workers contained only diagnostic elements of frames. They were elaborate, full-length articles depicting working conditions in NGOs. As such they combine notions of precarious employment and of individual precariousness. Their status is equivocal: while authors clearly referred to the precariat frame, their utterances became the trigger for further events and frame-building. Managers published spontaneous responses to them, unsystematic in form but coherent in content. In response, the trade union produced another text, this time presenting its own, complete frame consisting of all three framing elements.

Managers as a group appeared most coherent in their statements, even though they were not organized, and presumably did not discuss their remarks beforehand. The unanimity is the result of a relatively long history of managerial discourse in the Polish third sector, as most of its elements could be found in the 2010 debate and were visible in the 2015 *NGO.pl* debate as well (Bodnar, Kucharczyk 2010; Graff 2010; Wygnański 2010). For this reason employers' utterances are analysed here as a separate frame, and not merely as an answer to workers' claims. The trade union took up the task of challenging the employers' discourse and introduced the traditional workers-employers distinction.

Dynamics of the Case: the Precariat in Polish Third Sector

In April 2015 the All-Polish Trade Union Worker's Initiative launched "We, the Precariat" campaign. Its aim was to publicize the problem of precarity and organize workers. Meetings in major cities were held to discuss living conditions of the precariat in Poland and to create banners for the demonstration on May 23rd, "The Precarian Day." Meanwhile, OZZIP registered a milieu committee for NGO workers. The campaign provided an occasion for activists to reach out to workers, show at the demonstration and give speeches.

Soon after inauguration of the campaign, in May 2015, the leading Polish Internet portal for the third sector *NGO.PL* initiated the debate "What kind of work? What kind of pay? (in non-governmental organizations)". Nine articles were published: an opening one by the editor, four commentaries by employers, two by researchers (one of whom was an NGO worker as well) and two by workers, including an appearance by the freshly formed OZZIP committee. Only workers used the terms "precariat" and "precarization" during the debate (Komuda, Cibor 2015; Komisja Pracujących w Organizacjach Pozarządowych 2015c). The first conflict between NGO workers and their employers occurred in early September 2015. When a worker denounced labour law violations in his organization in a short post on social media, the employer promptly fired him and published own statement via the same medium (Matusz 2015a; Świątkowska 2015). OZZIP responded with support for the worker (Komisja... 2015d). A long article that described recruitment and working conditions in the organization in question was published (Matusz 2015b).

The second conflict erupted two months later when another worker described working conditions in his NGO workplace. His open letter was published on the website of the OZZIP milieu committee for art workers along with the committee's declaration of support and ad hoc commentaries by the employers (artists themselves) (Klaman 2015; Komisja Środowiskowa Pracowników Sztuki 2015; Orzeł 2015; Szyłak 2015). Later, in November, the employer spoke in an official statement published in a local Internet portal. Only in the beginning of February 2016 did the NGO workers' committee publish a polemic piece in support of the whistle-blower and encouraged others to reveal irregularities in their organizations (Komisja... 2016). Both conflicts occurred in NGOs in the field of art and culture in two big cities. Since then, similar events have not occurred and mobilization efforts in the third sector seems to have stalled.

Three frames that were created during the campaign and the dispute are examined in detail below.

First Frame: the Precariat

Manifestos of the “We, the Precariat” campaign constructed a coherent and complete frame of the precariat. It diagnosed a problem and gathered those affected under the banner of the precariat. The union blamed both the state and employers for the precarity. Solution was straightforward: a complete ban on civil contracts. This was to be achieved through pressure on the government and employers: mobilization in the streets and organizing in workplaces. The frame indicated a motive for collective action: an identity of the precariat, a “diverse, yet unified pressure group” that is a part of an international movement for better working conditions (Stokfiszewski 2015).

Diagnosis

The frame of the precariat identified a broad group of people of different occupations, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity and social class. They shared precarious condition, understood as a lack of regular employment, general instability, insecurity and distress.

The diagnosis indicated the sources of these adverse conditions, namely job market deregulation and precarious employment. The government was guilty of deregulating the job market by hindering the growth of minimum wage and restricting union rights. Entrepreneurs and managers, both private and public, used civil contracts to “make work as cheap as possible and maximize their profits at the expense of workers” (Komisja... 2015a). Authors of the manifesto considered precarity a new dangerous norm, not only in Poland, but worldwide.

Prognosis

Documents and manifestos enumerated goals for the precariat in Poland and for the campaign itself. Six demands for new policies were advanced. Authors demanded abolishing of precarious employment, temporary work agencies, civil law contracts and special economic zones, and stopping the privatization of health care and education. Their final postulate was to increase workers’ control over rules of employment in their workplaces (Komisja... 2015c).

Motivation

The precariat was constructed as an umbrella notion that embraced different groups that share unstable employment, unpredictable income and lack of social insurance (healthcare, unemployment benefits, pensions). It offered both positive and negative identification. Precariat’s dignity, innate kindness and determination supplemented lack of security and inability to plan one’s future (Komisja... 2015b). Both aspects evoked strong emotions: of common pride and solidarity and of anger towards unjust government.

Counter-Frame: Managers

Managers’ framing was a reaction to workers’ denunciations of labour law violations and a way to deescalate the situation. Through interception and further extension of the frame of

the precariat, they created a new frame of “collective inaction.” They did it by subscribing themselves to the precariat and insisting that, unlike in regular companies, where power inequalities are obvious, they are “in this together” with their employees (Chutnik 2015).

Diagnosis

Managers acknowledged the difficult situation of their employees, but argued that the problem lies in “the lack of sufficient resources” (Piątek 2015). The term “projectariat” was introduced, as one that was, according to employers, more appropriate for the third sector (Świątkowska 2015; Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015). It emphasized NGOs’ dependence on “projects,” short-term grants funded by private sponsors, governmental or European agencies. This new element of the diagnosis allowed managers to state that “we are all projectariat,” and that precarious working conditions were also their experience (Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015). Insecurity was the norm for everyone in the third sector, and it was reinforced by external regulations (Dymek, Lipszyc 2015).

Managers contested the notion of employment relations and power inequality within the third sector. People working in non-governmental organizations were not workers but colleagues:

I think of people working in Bęc [Foundation] as of collaborators, not employees. But it is also true that it is the president who is financially and legally responsible [for the organization]. (Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015)

I have proposed a collective discussion to look for a solution, as I treated these people as members of the team, not as mercenaries. (Klaman 2015)

The usage of voluntary labour and civil contracts supported this view, as legally they are agreements between equal parties.

Distinction between profit and non-profit activities supported managers’ claims too. NGOs were considered to be based on shared values and mission. Lack of stability or low remuneration were the price paid for self-fulfilment and participation in an important endeavour (Piątek 2015). This was clearly an important element of the ethos of the third sector. Such idealization was a tool of distinguishing the third sector from the domains of state and private business in post-socialist societies (Szarfenberg 2005). Here, the distinction between profit and non-profit was part of both diagnosis and motivation, as a statement of fact, but also as a value worth sustaining (Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015).

Prognosis

The strategic purpose of the managers’ counter-frame was to demobilize adversaries, so the task of prognosis was almost absent in their statements. Nevertheless, managers proposed certain tools in place of union organizing which they regarded as typical for “nineteenth-century capitalism” (Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015). Solution to problems of the third sector would be found through workshops, dialogue with sponsors and intra-sectoral conversation (Dymek, Lipszyc 2015; Matusz 2015a). These are typical tools of the trade for NGOs.

Managers shifted blame from themselves to external actors. They insisted that the workers' demands should be targeted at the government and sponsors, not them. Stable, long-term funding and a predictable calendar of grant openings were considered priorities (Majmurek, Świątkowska 2015; Szyłak 2015).

Motivation

Notions of a common precarious fate of workers and employers, of partner relations rather than those of employment and power, and of distinction between profit and non-profit activity constructed the community of the third sector: the projectariat. Managers claimed that equality functions on two levels: of the sector as a whole and of individual organizations. They criticized whistle-blowers in the name of the common good of the sector and dismissed their claims as illegitimate and immoral (Bodnar, Kucharczyk 2010; Dymek, Lipszyc 2015). Third sector should keep together—in managers' opinion. For them, collective identity compensated for adverse working conditions. In fact, however, this sense of community is available to leaders rather than rank-and-file workers. The latter often have difficulties with citing the aims and mission of their organizations (Kaim 2016: 14).

Third Frame: Trade Union

The frame of the precariat covered issues related to precarious working conditions. This focus was crucial in the framing contest, as it allowed managers to obscure the employee-employer divide within the third sector. In response to this interception, trade union activists created another frame by amplifying the original one.

Diagnosis

The union emphasized the distinction that had been downplayed before: one between employers and employees. Statements explicitly identified directors, members of management boards and recruiters as bosses, not workers (Komisja... 2015b). This distinction revealed power inequalities that were blurred in the first and particularly the second frame. Therefore, the message was clear: there is a conflict in the third sector.

The trade union NGO commission blamed managers for problems of the third sector. It acknowledged the systemic character of precarious employment, yet stressed that managers are responsible for working conditions and employment in their organizations (Komisja... 2016). This shift introduced new issues into the diagnosis: exploitation, mobbing, uneasy familiarity and unequal distribution of prestige.

Prognosis

To some extent the union commission agreed with managers: the system of support for NGOs was ill-constructed. Nevertheless, it voiced five demands to managers: transparency, democratization and co-management by workers, cessation of exploitation of volunteers, compliance with labour law and restrictions on the usage of civil contracts. Two additional

demands aimed at change in the funding system: financing that would allow stable employment, and which would require labour law compliance.

This structure of demands was a strategic choice. It was crucial to attribute blame to specific actors and not abstract forces, such as “the system.” Such attribution gave a sense of efficacy and influence, which is one of the conditions for successful mobilization (Badi-gannavar, Kelly 2005).

The trade union focused on organizing and solidarity—including with those who do not belong to the union. Activists repeated appeals to the workers to act, and reiterated the union’s readiness to provide assistance. They encouraged whistle-blowing and individual interventions as alternative means to force positive change.

Motivation

Class conflict, working people solidarity and shared fate constituted the motivations for action in the trade union frame. The commission re-used some elements of the precariat frame, especially intersectional solidarity and the description of common struggle:

Workers’ problems are different from those of managers and require a separate representation... We are a part of labour just as any other worker... We are convinced that precarious workers in foundations and associations have common interests with people working in other sectors. (Komisja... 2015b)

This was a response to the employers’ counter-framing: solidarity in non-governmental organizations had to be re-conceptualized as solidarity of workers. Recognition of third-sector labour as an actual working class who is in conflict with their bosses was the driving force and main motif of the trade union’s rhetoric, radically different from that employed by managers (Komisja Pracujących w Organizacjach Pozarządowych, Kaim 2016).

Table 1

Three frames used in organizing efforts in the third sector

actor	<u>Trade union</u> (We, the Precariat campaign)	<u>Employers</u>	<u>Trade union</u>
diagnosis	systemic insecurity	systemic insecurity	bad management, systemic insecurity
prognosis	change the policy through mobilizing	change the policy through debating	enforce labour law through organizing
motivation	precariat	precariat	workers’ solidarity

Table 1 sums up changes in collective action frames during the contest. The first frame, created for the “We, the Precariat” campaign, and the managers’ counter-frame were very similar. Both pointed to systemic insecurity as the main reason for the sorry situation of workers and expected the government to make policy changes. Both built upon the identity of the precariat, in case of management it was its expanded version, the “projectariat.” However, their suggested modes of action differed. While the union called for mobilization and organizing, managers proposed debates and workshops. Change in the repertoire of action and amelioration of the employee-employer divide curtailed the potential for collective action. Managers intercepted the frame of the precariat, extended it even further and turned it into a counter-frame or what we call a “frame of collective inaction.”

Interception forced the trade union to change both, the diagnosis, as it was easily adapted by employers as well, and the solution. In response, the union pointed to bad management as the cause of wide-spread precarity in NGOs, yet acknowledged the ill-constructed financing system. Still, the action was aimed at managers. The third frame made it impossible to treat the third sector as a community. Managers were explicitly blamed for the precarity of their workers. The claim was reinforced by the motivational element of the frame that referred to the dichotomy between employers and employees.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this article was to identify the conflict in the third sector in Poland and describe its dynamics in the context of collective action frames. The study shows how the usage of extended frames, such as the precariat, might blur the conflict and be rendered inefficient during framing contest. The outcome of the “We, the Precariat” campaign within the third sector is ambivalent. In organizational terms it was a misstep which contributed to mobilization lapse. Recruitment to the NGO commission fizzled out and OZZIP abandoned the notion of the precariat. However, in terms of framing contest the trade union was successful. Discourse of the third sector changed and class conflict supplemented the narration of the sectoral community. This was apparent in the 2018 debate in NGO.PL titled “Work in organizations.” All texts in the debate referred to employee-employer divide and emphasized obligations of managers towards workers (Bogacz-Wojtankowska 2018; Choroś 2018; Dudkiewicz 2018; Świetlik 2018). Identification of the conflict by the union appeared to be an important step in the development of employment relationships in the Polish third sector.

The study shows limitations of using the frame of precariat in organizing campaigns. In the precarious third sector managers easily intercepted the frame, as they were also subject to insecure working conditions. Third sector is not the only one in which the sense of community and common “higher purposes” serves to prevent mobilization of workers. In such situations, the task of trade unions is to convince workers that their working conditions may be a subject of collective bargaining at all. Other researchers indicated similar struggles in British cultural industries, care sector in the US and micro and small enterprises in Poland (Dean 2012; Little 2015; Macdonald, Merrill 2002; Mrozowicki, Domecka 2013).

Culture institutions are often under-financed, the whole sector is precarious. Intra-sectoral solidarity is based on shared love of art or a common loyalty to “the show.” Both factors make it difficult for workers to express their interest. However, unlike in the case presented here, Dean’s (2012) shows that framing based on intra-sectoral solidarity may be successful. While conflict in the British theatres was framed as, similarly to our case, employers-employees divide, appreciation for the work of actors shared by both, workers and managers, became the foundation for a joint call for the redistribution of funding.

In the sector of care relational aspects and the principle of self-sacrifice for the well-being of recipients seem to be in conflict with demands for higher pay (Macdonald, Merrill 2002). The mobilization process described by Little (2015), was the process of reframing the situation. The identity of a companion was supplanted by the one of a worker. Then,

the conflict was reframed: the government was identified as the culprit, and not the care recipients, whose interest was compatible with that of their caregivers. As a consequence, care workers' organizations successfully advocated for minimum wage regulation at the national level and access to public funding for wages in some states.

Similarly to the case described here, entrepreneurs in micro and small companies, who force precarious employment onto their workers, perpetuate unstable career patterns that they themselves experience (Mrozowski, Domecka 2013). In such sectors the frame of the precariat may be intercepted by bosses and extended to include them.

Measurements of precarity of working conditions often omit power inequalities within companies. While managers can experience precarity of their work, they enjoy better enumeration, control and prestige to deal with the situation. This fact has to be internalized by union organizations. It is important for them to deconstruct the notion of the community that embraces both employees and employers. Direct attribution of blame, not its externalization or diffusion, seems to be a crucial factor in successful framing (Badigannavar, Kelly 2005).

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