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THE ROLE OF LIMINALITY IN ORGANIZING COLLECTIVE ACTION

Introduction

The 21st century is considered by many scientists as "the age of uncertainty" [Llena, Sier, Gray, 2024], stigmatized by new global crises, particularly related to politics, economy, migration, climate and lately the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, we now witness a growing number of different forms of citizen's collective actions and groupings aimed at manifesting dissent, protesting something, and defending or fighting for rights and values important to society as a whole or specific social groups [Lupien, 2023]. Collective actions underlie many social phenomena, create crucial elements of social and political structure as part of public trust and involvement, political activity and participation in democratic processes or establishment of non-governmental organizations [Bimber et al., 2012]. Simultaneously, researchers note that in the face of these crises and changes, there is a need to formulate new strategies of collective action. At the same time, researchers stress that organized collective actions have acquired new meanings, forms, and dimensions, and they became not only a manifestation of the desire for change by certain groups of people but a change in itself [Schutz, Sandy, 2011, Ferraro et al., 2015]. Collective actions take many various forms and occur in different overlapping areas [Lupien, 2023], both geographical and virtual. They sometimes manifest a form of temporal activity while another time they exhibit long-term nature and purposes: they are normative or non-normative. And although scholars discuss a lot about various types of collective actions developed as a response to crisis – their aims, structure, and modes of operation – they pay less attention to a deeper reflection on those aspects that make people act and develop as part of collective actions in order to implement the discussed transformation and

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overcome the crisis or make a long-awaited, transformative change [Christiansen, et al., 2022]. In other words, it is about the manner in which collective actions, as organizations, realize the processes of changes, modify own and collective identities and social norms, find balance between the past and the future in the course of creating new organizational and social reality [Söderlund, Borg, 2018]. Hence the question concerning transformative potential of collective actions [Yang, 2000], which is of crucial importance in the face of crises.

The looking glass that we shall use to analyze the notion of collective action in response to a crisis shall be liminality which is understood as the central stage of transition from a previous, known situation to a new one that can be anticipated to varying degrees in different transitions [van Gennep, 1960]. Thanks to liminality, it is possible to grasp things that are liquid, temporary, fragile i.e., referring to collective action that emerges "betwixt and between" [Turner, 1969]. The recurring crises, changeability, and unpredictability of reality intensify transitional periods in organizations, namely the transition (liminal) periods meaning "neither here nor there" or "both here and there," which inhabit a "gray area" [Tagliaventi, 2019]. On the one hand, these phenomena foster the emergence of new processes, positions, and places in organizations [Söderlund, Borg, 2018], but on the other hand, they also contribute to the creation of new transitional institutional forms that serve to survive emerging crises, which Fabio Meira [2014] calls liminal organizations. It should also be highlighted that, being of anthropological origin, the concept of liminality has recently been experiencing a renaissance and has been more and more frequently utilized by organization researchers in reference to administrative changes at collective and individual level [Söderlund, Borg, 2018]. However, it has not been used in Polish research regarding organizations.

In this article, we study the All-Poland Women's Strike in Poland, an example of collective action that emerged as a crisis response against the decision of Polish government to further tighten abortion law. This example is used to answer the following research question: *What role does liminality play in organizing collective action?* We will show that liminality is today an inherent feature of collective action, and the way in which liminal experience is organized can affect the effectiveness of the process of change organized as a response to the stimuli flowing from the environment. Furthermore, we propose broadening the understanding of the concept of liminal organization by considering collective action as one of its examples, alongside proposals by Barbara Czarniawska and Carmelo Mazza [2003] and Meira [2014]. From this perspective, we shed light on new entanglements, actors, and questions regarding how a social movement develops.

Our article proceeds as follows. First, we describe the different views on collective actions and present their most important features found in the literature. Then we present the concept of liminality and its application to research on organizations and

collective actions. Next, we use our empirical evidence to argue that our research demonstrates a new perspective on the essence of collective action. We conclude by suggesting a re-visioning of collective action by looking at its essence – liminality – which influences the shaping of roles of the people involved, along with scrutinizing the tools and mechanisms on which collective action relies so that the transition can become real.

1. Literature review

1.1. Collective action

The collective action theory holds a special place and rich legacy in social studies, being one of the few concepts with a broad disciplinary extent, with a significant contribution to economics, political sciences, sociology, communication, environmental protection, as well as sciences treating on organizations.

Collective action is broadly defined as purposeful coordinated actions taken by individuals or groups in pursuit of members' perceived common interests, sharing goods, and ensuring public good [Marwell, Oliver, 1993]. Classical economic theories identify collective action as a solution to market failures and refer to the sharing of benefits and costs of collective action in the management of public and community resources [Olson, 1971; Ostrom, 1998]. The participation of individuals in social movements results from a rational analysis of costs, risks, and benefits [Olson, 1965]. In contrast, other social theories emphasize that partaking in collective action is spontaneous and irrational, which is underpinned by social and psychological factors such as a shared sense of grievance, inequality, and deprivation [Soon, Cho, 2014; Leong et al., 2020]; they also posit that the emergence of a community-based social movement is shaped by the acquisition and accumulation of resources, in particular social support, organizational foundations, and collective coordination [Leong et al., 2020].

Recent research on collective actions demonstrates changes in perceptions of what they are as organized movements, particularly in the areas of intentionality and coordination, and the weakening importance of formal organizations and structures, once considered essential to collective action [Wilhoi, Kisselburgh, 2015]. According to the researchers, the possibilities for informal organizing of collective action are growing thanks to information technology [Leong et al., 2020]. Information technology and the media, especially social media, create conditions for new forms of collective actions that can be called hybrid, as they function both in reality and online [Carodso, Boudreau, Carvalho, 2019; Wang, Chu, 2019]. These often adopt nonhierarchical and temporal structures, involving both individual citizens and institutionalized forms of goal-oriented social activity, which are simultaneously geographically dispersed yet

virtually interconnected. Thus, information technology activates new mechanisms and forms of organized action [Segerberg, Bennett, 2011] while allowing for the expansion of collective actions' scale [Carodso et al., 2019].

Among the many different features and characteristics of collective action analyzed by researchers – often inconsistently, as they are studied from different theoretical perspectives – what stands out among other elements are: the need for a rational economic actor [Chwe, 1999]; purposeful action [Carney, 1987]; collective action frames as ideas and cultural elements [Zald, 1996]; normativity [van Zomeren et al., 2008]; unity, group identification, support of collective identity, and boundaries of belonging [Kelly, 1983; Dianni, 2012]; existence of incentives for individual engagement, mobilization of supporters, and demobilization of antagonists [Snow, Benford, 1988]; connections and ties among participants, dissemination and sharing of information, recruitment, and coalition-forming [Diani, McAdam, 2003; Young et al., 2019]; subsidiarity and polycentric governance [McGinnis, 2016]; or, the need for organizations to function differently, for the development and maintenance of collective action, especially for mobilizing resources, developing activities, and identifying external opportunities [George, Leidner, 2019].

Researchers usually consider collective action – understood as organized activities – from the perspective of desired goal or process [Wilhoit, Kisselburgh, 2015] that gradually leads to desired change. In this sense, we may also refer to this process as liminal with the various stages of action being transitions between one reality to another; in the case of collective actions, these are transitions to a state that the group deems desirable.

1.2. Liminality in social studies

Arnold van Gennep [1960] defines liminality as the central stage of transition from a previous, known situation to a new one that can be anticipated to varying degrees in different transitions. Victor Turner [1967] broadens this definition by describing liminality as a state between states, a "betwixt and between", a beginning state and a final one. Originally, Turner applies the term liminality to talk about the transitional state represented by rituals. It involves the stages of transitioning out of and back into ordinary life: pre-liminal, liminal (during the ritual), and post-liminal, or a reintegration into everyday life [Turner, 1967].

The concept of liminality has gained importance in the field of social theory in recent decades. In management studies, it is particularly present in the context of precarious and fluctuating career landscape of modern organizations, both at the individual and collective levels [Tagliaventi, 2019]. Moreover, liminality is more broadly linked to the volatility and unpredictability of an organization's environment

[Meira, 2014], and the ever-increasing number of different crises that people and establishments must face daily.

Liminality is an insightful approach. However, despite liminality's concern for the role of being intangible in constituting organizations, researchers primarily focus on selected aspects of liminal experience. When examining current research on liminality and collective action, Jonas Söderlund and Elizabeth Borg [2018] distinguish a few main areas. Some are to focus on liminality in the context of change management processes in organizations [e.g. Czarniawska, Mazza, 2003], while others [e.g. Gioia et al., 2005] analyze the process of creating a new establishment by scrutinizing the production of a new organizational identity by its members. Söderlund and Borg [2018] note that some studies address the organizational level of liminality as a particular type of an in-between position: people external to and their influence on institutions [e.g., Clegg et al., 2015; Meira, 2014], or so-called liminal organizations foregrounded by Meira's study [2014], which focused on the emergence of organizational forms within solidarity economy in Brazil. The last group of studies in liminality and collective action regards research on "liminal places" [Söderlund, Borg, 2018], namely spaces of transition that emerge around or by institutions [Johnson et al., 2010].

Importantly, few studies analyze liminality in relation to the organization of various social movements. In his research, Guobin Yang [2000] argues that the transformative power of social movements depends on their degree of liminality. However, he focuses on the transformation of participants' identities. Similarly, Alexander Beresfold, Marie Berry, and Laura Mann [2018] center on the liminal experience of participants in the social movements they describe and the effect of this experience. While these studies have significantly helped scholars to notice and understand new phenomena that happen in organizations, the liminality concept can be used in a larger scope: to better understand the ways of *organizing* collective action and the nature of collective action in general. Liminality has peculiar features that make it a unique experience, namely timelessness and spacelessness, rites and ceremonies, anti-structure, *communitas*, and identity work [Tagliaventi, 2019]. In our view, these characteristics are also manifested by the organization of social movements with the character of collective action in crisis. Therefore, for this case study we will consider the example of the All-Poland Women's Strike. We believe that such an approach can enrich the current way of conceptualizing collective action.

2. Method

To analyze the organization of collective action we focused on the All-Poland Women's Strike. Data was collected for this project through a two-part phenomenological study of the All-Poland Women's Strike (APWS) activities, comprised

of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants of crisis response action organized by the APWS (n=20), the analysis of texts and visuals published by various actors of APWS crisis response action on official profiles of APWS in social media – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (n=745) – and in-depth semi-structured interviews with APWS leaders (n=8). The choice of these methods was dictated by the desire to both explore the experiences of APWS' participants and an attempt to explain them through a reflection on those experiences of people participating in APWS [Welman, Kruger, 1999]. In this way, we could capture how collective action is constructed, both in its material and immaterial aspects [Harquail, King, 2010]. The social media posts published by organizers and participants of APWS protests illustrate the experience of participating in protests, while the interviews conducted with partakers and organizers of protests show their individual reflections on their participation in collective action.

To reach the study participants, we used snowball sampling [Groenewald, 2004]. We took great care to maintain their diversity: they represented different age groups, genders, places of residence, education levels, and professions. We wanted this group to be as diverse as possible. As for APWS leaders, we initially approached the initiator of the movement, whom we first interviewed. She was the gatekeeper who then recommended further people for our interviews. Moreover, we secured the diversity of respondents in terms of places of action (large and smaller urban centers) and seniority of involvement in organizational activities of the movement. According to Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro [1998], because "doing phenomenology" means capturing rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings, during the interviews we focused primarily on how our respondents experienced participation in the APWS and what meaning and value the movement had for them. Our questions were "directed to the participant's experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme in question" [Welman, Kruger, 1999: 196]. We reached saturation after 28 interviews with APWS' participants and leaders, when the data represented a rich set of cases with adequate information for analysis [Patton, 2002]. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents and subsequently transcribed. The interviews were conducted between January – May 2021. Each interview lasted 40 minutes on average. In total, we managed to gather: 5.5 hours of conversations with the leaders and approximately 13.5 hours of conversations with the respondents. The data of the respondents, upon their request, were anonymized – in terms of personal details, age as well as place of residence and activity as part of APWS. Providing the names of locations of events described by the respondents would pose the risk of identification.

The analysis of data available on APWS's social media profiles covered three main channels: the All-Poland Women's Strike Facebook page, their Instagram profile, and their profile on Twitter. The study covered posts published on the above channels between October 23 and November 13, 2020. Both textual and visual content appearing

on these social media during this period was collected. As in the case of interviews, during the analysis of social media content, we focused on what the authors of the posts wanted to show through them and what emotions and values they communicated.

After collecting the material, we examined it with the NVivo software. The data was analyzed using in-depth thematic and deductive analysis. Following a phenome-nological approach, we focused on themes that represented structures of experience and topics prevalent in interview texts [van Manen, 1990], and then we carefully coded the texts. The analysis was carried out in three stages. During the initial phase, the researchers organized transcribed interviews and conducted an analysis of social media content using a pre-constructed categorization framework. This framework reflected the features of liminality as proposed by Victor Turner (2010) and included: anti-structure, liminars, communitas, timelessness and spacelessness, rituals and symbols. Next, during the second phase of the analysis, we focused on the manner in which individual characteristics of liminality identified with refer-ence to the Strike influence the experience of participants and organizers within the context of transformational nature of the Strike. Then, during the third stage of analysis, our focus shifted to a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. To achieve this, each researcher extensively reviewed the research material and compared the data, coding the research material based on previously established categories of properties.

3. The All-Poland Women's strike in response to a social crisis

The All-Poland Women's Strike is a Polish feminist social movement founded in September 2016. Its formation was the result of a strong social crisis, triggered by the ruling party, which initially only suggested and, soon after, indeed did severely restrict abortion law. Since 2015, a broader ideological crisis and progressive social division had been growing in Poland, which resulted in a "war" over the shape of the state and dominant social values.

Thus, the initial legal changes proposed in 2016 – which envisaged a near-total ban on abortion – became the spark that ignited the more direct conflict. A violent ideological clash happened between supporters of women's rights and a Christian-conservative group seeking to narrow the options for abortion.

The APWS was formally formed to protest the rejection of the "Save the Women" bill by the Polish parliament and the simultaneous referral of the "Stop Abortion" bill for further elaboration in a parliamentary commission in September 2016. This event marked the beginning of the first protests organized by various institutions. At one of the demonstrations, one of the participants spontaneously called for a nationwide

strike in Poland setting the date of "Black Monday" for October 3, 2016. At the same time, a Facebook event was set up by a group of feminist activists with the aim of reaching the widest possible audience with information about the planned events.

Demonstrations, pickets, marches, and protests happened in over 150 cities in Poland on Black Monday. More than 200,000 people took part in the events, the same number did not go to work on that day, and more than 500,000 people were dressed in black. The scale of the protests was the largest since 1989, which was the start of Poland's democratic transition. Significantly, the protests activated not only people in big towns but also those living in smaller cities. Local communities that were previously considered difficult to mobilize and where no protests or demonstrations had been organized before.

As a result of the protests, Sejm (the Polish parliament) rejected the "Stop Abortion" project. However, the APWS leaders decided to continue being active regarding the shape of the state and due to the desire to fight for a wider social change, related to a greater awareness of human and civil rights, but also to increase citizens' empowerment in public life. In 2017–2019, the APWS focused on inspiring civic attitudes by strengthening APWS leaders in local communities who could organize protest actions in their area. Thanks to this collective action, structures began to gradually grow in strength. In 2019, the All-Poland Women's Strike Foundation was established to provide financial support for the movement's activities as well as formal and legal support for the implemented actions.

The dispute over women's rights escalated again in 2020. At the request of right-wing politicians, on October 22 the Polish Constitutional Tribunal ruled that a woman in Poland cannot decide to have an abortion on the grounds of fetal abnormalities. This decision mobilized APWS to initiate a wave of protests against the tightening of anti-abortion laws. The structures built since 2016, the community of leaders, and social media experience played a huge role in mobilizing Polish women and men on an unprecedented scale. Importantly, all activities happened during the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and a formal ban on gatherings in Poland. Within a few days, the number of APWS leaders to date (150 in 2016) had grown to over 600 people who were involved in organizing crisis response at the local level.

The protests that started on the streets in October 2020 simultaneously happened in the virtual world. Social media provided information on dates and locations of events. For some participants – including those who did not walk on the streets due to the pandemic – social media provided a space to manifest their demands. The wave of protests lasted almost five months. They were gradually quelled, often forcibly, under the guise of concerns about the spread of coronavirus.

Finally, on 27 January 2021, the tightening of the abortion law came into force. Thus, unlike in 2016, the main demand that triggered protest activities was not achieved. At the same time, in the opinion of the main leaders of the movement, this was not a total

failure of the APWS. They perceive a gradual, broader social change, invigorated at the local level. In four years, the group of local leaders increased to 600 people. The number of people interested in the movement's activities increased significantly: "We have half a million people on Facebook, half a million on Instagram now" (O_1).

4. Findings and discussion

The examined example prompts an attempt to understand collective action anew, particularly a reflection on the essence of collective action – a re-think about what drives the collective to act. We will discuss our argument by focusing on the different dimensions of liminality and how they are manifested in the organization of collective action.

4.1. Structure and anti-structure

Van Gennep [1960] emphasizes that the process of change requires one to abandon previously familiar patterns of action, procedures, structures, and roles. Turner calls this condition an anti-structure, by which he means "the dissolution of normative social structure, with its role-sets, statuses, jural rights and duties, and so on" [Turner, 1974: 60]. Collective action is an organized structure that serves to manifest dissent against something and seeks change in the existing social order; thus, it manifests the characteristics of an anti-structure in its assumptions. By mobilizing its participants to react to the crisis, collective action encourages them to break out of everyday routine and demand changes in the reality they encounter.

In the analyzed case of the APWS, the anti-structural character of collective action manifests itself not only in the fact of its "being" but also in its organizational structure, which is specific, multi-layered, and ungraspable; whose focus changes depending on the specific moment of action; and which fulfils specific functions depending on the goals that the movement sets for itself. Until 2019, the APWS movement was a completely informal organization that emerged as a grassroots initiative in response to a spontaneous call to action voiced by a group of women activists in 2016. It was only in 2019 that the All-Poland Women's Strike Foundation was established to provide financial and legal support to the movement's activities.

The anti-structural character of the APWS fulfils one of the key principles of the movement: it seeks to mobilize people around the postulates of women's rights and the democratization of public decision-making processes by following its slogan: "Poland for all". The movement's leaders intentionally build an anti-structural movement, because they believe that structures degrade with time and halve decision-making processes.

The anti-structure of the APWS is based on three principles:

(1) The movement has no headquarters or formal board. Since 2016, only a helpdesk has developed: a nationwide support committee run by two movement members.

(2) The principle of full autonomy of local groups. The scheme and content of the activities of individual local groups are free from any interference; the use of proposals collected by the helpdesk rest with local groups and their leaders.

(3) The movement seeks to give voice to those who are directly affected by an issue or action. Therefore, women leaders in smaller towns are especially mobilized.

Thus, the organization and structure of the movement looks like contemporary collective actions, characterized by *organization-less organizing*, which refers to less or no close management of a formal institution or central organizers [Bennett, Segerberg, 2012], as opposed to traditional collective actions with clear centers of power, modes of decision-making, or formal administrative structures [Wilhoit, Kisselburgh, 2015].

However, we should emphasize Thomassen's [2009: 23] apt statement that " [w]hile liminality is 'unstructured,' a lack of fixed points in a given moment, it must at the same time be considered the origin of structure". Joining the movement's network is the moment between leaving the passive phase (before activism) and entering a new phase (activism) when leaders – influenced by their experiences in the movement – begin their "work" in their own area, namely initiate informal activities, invigorate local communities, establish their own NGOs, already according to the principles they learned and worked out and corresponding to their local needs. Thus, we believe that being in the anti-structure of the movement acts as a liminal experience for its participants.

4.2. Liminiars

Anthropologists in their research note that participants in the transition phase are usually accompanied by "guides" [Turner, 1967: 99–100], who have the task of leading through a passage and being responsible for presenting the rules of each stage, the tasks to be performed, and the rhythms to be followed [Turner, 1969, 1974]. The guides are the ones who shape the anti-structure [Tagliaventi, 2019].

Several different groups of guides can be identified in the APWS, which are tasked with mobilizing participants to action. The guides of the highest level [Turner, 1967] of the APWS are its initiators – a group of activists who in 2016 started the protests. To this day, this group actively participates in APWS, invigorates the movement's actions at a national level, and represents the APWS to the public. One of the APWS leaders presents herself in the following manner: "I am great in crisis situations, in the sense that there is no such thing as a no-win situation for me. If I were to fall off a boat in the middle of the ocean, I'll swim back to the shore on a shark" (O_1). They are constantly and equally involved in the movement's activities, acting on its

front line, but they also constantly monitor governmental plans and are whistleblowers who call for protests against any irregularities they believe occur in the public space. Besides representing the APWS, they guide local leaders by inspiring them to action, providing organizational and psychological support during activities, and mentoring them on their journey to improve as local leaders. This area of their work is well described by the following quote:

> Suddenly, information appears on Facebook: we are meeting in front of the PiS [the ruling party] office, and the person who organized the event is there. We contact her, we help her, we support her as much as we can, we are there, we organize the publicity, security, all the things that were obvious to us, but were obscured by such grassroots spontaneity (O_6).

At the end of 2021, the APWS gathered around 600 women who have been actively involved in organizing the national crisis response (in 2016 and 2020) managed by the movement and have consequently assumed the roles of local activists. These 600 women are guides – local liminars – who work directly in local communities. Many of these leaders emerged spontaneously, influenced by their personal experiences of direct participation in (or, initially, just observation of) the first demonstrations organized by the APWS. As one respondent emphasized, this was a moment of transition:

> Because the first such demonstration was of course in the company of people holding banners with these fetuses covered in blood, supposedly pro-lifers, and I was with a small child. I drew attention to this, and no one there wanted to take care of it at all, not the police or the municipal police who were protecting this first demonstration, and I decided that, well, something had to be done, so when this first larger demonstration appeared, I volunteered to help, that I would organize a table for children. And that was the beginning, when I decided that I didn't want to stand there with my child …. And let's say that's how it started. The willingness to help without belonging to any party or organization, just doing something (O_8).

Local liminars undertake the tasks of initiating and organizing actions in response to local crises and, if there is a desire and need on their part, of managing actions at the local level in response to calls and appeals from the APWS "headquarters", thus coordinating the mobilization of local communities in response to crises. Thus, local liminars form a special community at the APWS, and social media play an important role in steering this community.

The APWS's social media, especially leadership groups, have a special role in building and strengthening closeness and communality among members, which also motivates them to continue working. Moreover, it is important to consider their experiences on how to deal with the police or in court, if necessary:

The girls in general have a close relationship with each other, because this organizational group has existed for years. And that's also how it came to be, that those lonely girls from Węgorzewo were afraid and embarrassed there would just be the three of them, but suddenly they saw there are three girls like them in a hundred towns, right? So, there are more of us, and they seem to have a community of different experiences (O_1).

4.3. Communitas

One of the key features of liminality is the ties that develop between individuals who share a liminal experience with each other. These bonds are the basis for the creation of a community of experience. Turner calls this special relationship "communitas", which is to be a heightened sense of togetherness [Turner, 1969]. Communitas is a very intense experience that heightens the senses and stimulates intuition.

In the case of collective action, at its heart lies an activity by a group of people wishing to achieve a common objective [Wihoit, Kisselburgh, 2015]. This action most often takes the form of various types of protests, which serve to manifest the requirements of collective action. The *communitas* that appears during protests and manifestations most often emerges spontaneously [Turner, 1967].

The moment the Tribunal's verdict was announced was in a way the last straw for APWS participants, as their dissatisfaction with the government's conduct accumulated over the past years and mobilized to take action.

This is how it accumulates with time and erupts … at the moment when this law was tightened again to such an extent, and so inhumanly … it seemed as if in a way it was a prepared reaction and also such an obvious reaction to the fact that you have to, now you have to do something about it, yes, and walk out (U_3).

Cyberspace played an important role in the construction of *communitas* by the APWS. The APWS's Facebook and Instagram channels were used not only to communicate dates and locations of protests, along with reporting protests in real time and discuss what was happening, but also to speak directly about the need and desire to co-create a community: "you gather in your neighborhoods, in the streets, you organize, get to know each other in this way, you create your community, and this will be your super, super value for the future for all your future tasks, because we have a long, long way to go" (FB 28.10.2020).

These calls were reflected in the streets where the protests took place. Participants describing their individual experiences of partaking in the protests emphasized their communal character:

for example, the APWS has just created a project called "Safe Protest." And people come forward there…. I find it amazing that these are people who come and the only

thing they do is walk somewhere on the side during the whole protest, they perform no important function, they do not have the need to. And they just really go out of such a sincere need, they go and secure this process in this way (O_4).

For most protest participants, this experience of liminal community culminates in what Garcia-Lorenzo et al. [2018] call "reaggregation". Protest participants gain a new awareness of themselves and their needs, which is nested in a new context: the result of this transformation is a redefinition of the self and one's place in the community (Poland) through the prism of being a conscious person and fighting for one's rights. Thus, the APWS participants could no longer return to the reality they knew from before the protests, but this does not mean that they became fervent social activists overnight; instead, they faced the possibility of becoming someone else – conscious, active citizens – in the new space they co-create with others.

4.4. Timelessness and spacelessness

According to Turner [1967], during the liminal phase, participants distance themselves from normal notions of time and space. As Tagliaventi [2019] indicates, "studies of liminality beyond anthropology have built on Turner's thought, underlining the perception of time and space as core aspects of a liminal experience".

The liminal space during the analyzed protests was multidimensional. In the physical sense, this liminal space was in the streets and squares crowded with the protesters: in both large and small towns.

The symbolic significance of the physical spaces in which the protests happened was further reinforced by the fact that for many of the participants in the protests – due to the Covid-19 pandemic – this was the first time in a long time that they partook in any kind of gathering; in order to express their opposition to the government's policy and manifest their emotions, they decided to leave the safety of their homes and enter a potentially dangerous area, one contaminated by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

> I think I was a little bit afraid, of course, because it's such a situation that no matter where we go out, we are a little bit afraid that we might get infected, but at that moment it was not an issue for me … as these protests were such an important issue for me that I was less afraid of being infected and more afraid of the future of the country if I had done nothing (U_4).

The second dimension of the liminal space of the APWS was the virtual world. For some of the participants – including those who for various reasons could not or did not want to take to the streets – social media were a space to present their demands and express opposition to the government's actions. This was manifested by participating

in ongoing discussions, sharing APWS posts, using special profile picture overlays, publishing videos and photos; in short: joining the community.

Some respondents stressed that even though they themselves did not actively participate in the APWS protests, they did not remain indifferent to the ongoing protests but, instead, became emotionally involved:

> Perhaps it should be said honestly at the outset that I wasn't physically present at any protest, but I closely observed everything that was happening … Just because you're not there physically doesn't mean that you messed up or that you don't support the cause … so, physically, I wasn't at the fall protests but I was with them in spirit, so to speak, quite intensely (U_3).

In a similar vein one can interpret the notion of time in liminality. Turner [1974: 57] speaks of a sense of being "out of time", namely beyond or outside of the time that measures secular processes and routines. Delanty [2010: 31] enriches this reflection by proposing the term "moments in and out of time", in which individuals find themselves in the moment of transition. The protests that erupted at the initiative of the APWS changed the daily routines of their participants: they suddenly decided to stop their work or other activities to partake in the protests:

> I remember maybe not the media but the beeping. I was sitting at home and it was probably the first or second strike. So I was sitting at home, and I just felt something like "I am not there, and I should be there," you know, such a feeling, I mean I knew it was the right thing to do. I was sitting and I texted my friend if she could hear, she lives next door, the trumpeting, she said yes, and I asked: "Are you coming?" And she said, "I am already starting the car, hurry up" (U_17).

4.5. Rites, ceremonies, and symbols

The process of transition is often accompanied by specific symbols, rituals, ceremonies, which on the one hand, are meant to facilitate the process – marking its beginning and end – and on the other hand, to reinforce its nature [Kornberger et al., 2011].

Various rituals and symbols were visible in the APWS case. These included special hashtags that were used in social media, graphics, logos, slogans, and protest songs intended to express protesters' emotions and support their identification. The red lightning bolt stood out in a special way, and it was recognized as the main symbol of the APWS and the organized protests: "It is a symbol, above all, of strength, anger, power, and speed. And this is what I will stick to. And that's why even the person who was the creator of this "logo" … described it as a warning sign: "Don't touch women's rights or you'll get an electric shock!" (U_11).

As highlighted by researchers, to play the role assigned to it, a ritual must be "alive" [Campbell, 1972; Petriglieri, 2010]. This vitality of ritual should be understood as its ability to maintain a coherent system of narrative and symbolism that is meaningful to a community [Tagliaventi, 2019]. During the protests, its participants pinned the lightning bolt to their clothes and placed it on banners. It appeared on overlays used by the participants on social media. Some people hang the symbol in their house windows, on balconies, and drew it on cars to manifest their participation in the protests or to show solidarity with the protesters.

Conclusion

In our research, we reflected on collective action through the lens of liminality. Our research showed that liminality manifests itself in various aspects of collective action: in the structure, the actors involved in its functioning, the tools used to organize and develop it, and in various types of activities. Notably, this provided singular evidence of collective dynamics for organizational studies on liminality, which have thus far been otherwise surprisingly absent from the literature [cf. Tagliaventi, 2019].

Our research proved that the All-Poland Women's Strike serves as an example of an organized collective action in which the undertaken managerial activities and utilized tools are to evoke and intensify the liminal experience that, in the analyzed case, is the process of change from passive to active citizenship. Thus, we propose to refer to this type of institution as liminal organization, understood as a special administrative process that is deliberately constructed with the intent to evoke and intensify the liminal experience of people who participate in the actions undertaken by the organization. For that purpose, persons who co-create the liminal organization utilize a set of tools and methods that are supposed to solidify its transformational character [Góral, 2023]. One should also bear in mind that a liminal organization can struggle with tension between establishing structures as part of creation of anti-structures of the new order and the desired change, balancing between time and space of own activity and being "outside" or "between", as well as balancing between the guides in the liminal process or the rituals and ceremonies and the "ordinary" activity.

In this way we are extending previous understanding of liminal organization proposed by Czarniawska and Mazza [2003] and Meira [2014]. According to Czarniawska and Mazza [2003], the liminal organization stands out as a powerful interpretive metaphor that refers to the "portion" of the system in which outsiders and regular organization members collaborate on specific projects. On the other hand, Meira [2014] defines liminal organization as a type of human collective action, in which *communitas* is structurally integrated into the social system by exclusion. Our example

goes further, as it considers the purpose of creating collective action, which is a specific social change whose scope and effectiveness depend on how liminal experience is created, as we mentioned above.

Thanks to our example, it is possible to add liminality to the set of characteristics describing a collective action. We claim that one of the most significant premises of a collective action is its liminal character that complements the previous assumptions concerning its most important properties, including the collective action framework [Zald, 1996], coherence, maintenance of collective identity and the limits of affiliation [Dianni, 2012], connection and relationships between the participants. In discussing the organization of collective action, we foreground that an important part of organizing collective action is played by liminal experience, which is multi-phased and multi-layered: involving multiple actors, using different tools, and touching on different aspects of the action.

Lastly, future research might provide further development of the meaning of liminality as a characteristic of collective actions. Our studies raise the question of the extent in which the said characteristic is present in other collective actions, not only those related to the transition and response to various types of crisis. It is also pivotal to seek for an answer whether the "proneness to liminality" is particularly typical of non-governmental organizations that are connected with a collective action in a special way e.g., advocacy organizations. It also seems crucial to search for the ways in which liminal organizations deal with potential tensions in the process of transition.

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THE ROLE OF LIMINALITY IN ORGANIZING COLLECTIVE ACTION

Abstract

The article describes a study in which we observed a social movement to develop an argument about the role of liminality in organizing collective action. The research revealed that the way liminal experience is created can strongly impact how a social movement develops. Therefore, the process of creating liminal experience in collective action means not simply a transplantation of the "action" virus to new people and places but mainly an organized process of change in response to stimuli from the environment. Data for this project was collected through a two-part phenomenological study of the activities of the All-Poland Women's Strike. We use this study to propose a new interpretation of the organization of collective action through the concept of liminality, which allows us to propose an new take on how the process of collective action occurs. Therefore, we shed light on new entanglements, actors, and questions regarding how a social movement develops.

ROLA LIMINALNOŚCI W ORGANIZOWANIU DZIAŁAŃ ZBIOROWYCH

Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badania, którego przedmiotem był ruch społeczny, jakim jest Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet. Celem badania było pokazanie roli liminalności w organizowaniu działania zbiorowego. Badanie pokazało, że sposób, w jaki kreowane jest doświadczenie liminalne, może silnie wpływać na rozwój ruchu społecznego. Zatem proces tworzenia doświadczenia liminalnego w działaniu zbiorowym polega nie tylko na jednorazowej aktywizacji nowych uczestników ruchu czy miejsc, lecz jest przede wszystkim zorganizowanym procesem zmiany tworzonym w odpowiedzi na bodźce płynące z otoczenia. Podstawę rozważań stanowiły dane zebrane w toku badania fenomenologicznego, którym objęto działalność Ogólnopolskiego Strajku Kobiet. W rezultacie zaproponowano nowe ujęcie dla interpretacji fenomenu organizacji działania zbiorowego przez pryzmat koncepcji liminalności. W tekście w sposób szczególny wyeksponowano sposób organizowania ruchu, aktorów zaangażowanych w ten proces oraz pełnione przez nich role.

Słowa kluczowe: liminalność, działanie zbiorowe, Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet, organizacja liminalna

Kody klasyfikacji JEL: D70, D71, D79