

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of dots in various shades of gray and red, arranged in a pattern that suggests a world map or a network of connections.

Trade Unions in Transformation

An Inspiring Case of Union Organizing in a Formidable Context: The Case of TÜMTİS in Turkey

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October 2017

- In 2007, the new leadership of TÜMTİS recognized a need to revitalize the union. It made a strategic choice to grow its membership by organizing the increasingly dominant transnational corporations in Turkey's transportation and logistics sector.
- Using its associational power resources of membership participation and internal cohesion, and actively developing the support of the International Transportation Workers' Federation and UNI Global Union, TÜMTİS ran successful organizing campaigns at UPS and DHL.
- Trade Unions in Transformation is an FES project that identifies unions' power resources and capabilities that contribute to successful trade union action. This study features among two dozen case studies from around the world demonstrating how unions have transformed to get stronger.



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Abstract

This paper concerns the recent transformation and ensuing successes of a Turkish trade union of road transport workers, called Tüm Taşıma İşçileri Sendikası (TÜMTİS). In the mid-2000s TÜMTİS was mainly organized in traditional, small-sized delivery companies, which were under the pressure of the structural shift in the transportation sector towards large-sized corporations. At that time, the union had around 1,500 members with collective contracts. The revitalization began after a change in leadership in 2007. The strategic choice to concentrate on a large-scale, international firm with the support of International Transport Workers' Federation and UNI Global Union was the turning point. The ensuing United Parcel Service campaign between 2009 and 2011 ended with a collective agreement for nearly 3,000 new members. TÜMTİS won its second large-scale organizing campaign in DHL ending with an agreement for new 2,260 members in 2014. At the time of writing a third large-scale firm is on the verge of recognition. The paper argues that TÜMTİS' success rests on two types of associational power resources, namely member participation and internal cohesion, which were multiplied thanks to the capabilities of framing, intermediating and learning of the new leadership. These resources and capabilities led the way for TÜMTİS to discover and employ a power resource that was untapped before, the associational power of global unions at the transnational level.

1. The Turkish Trade Union Context

The Turkish labor movement has been one of those hit hardest by neoliberal restructuring. Turkey lacks reliable data on the number of union members before 2013, and so credible data on collective bargaining agreements is a viable measure to assess the union power.¹ Graph 1 displays the trajectory of collective bargaining coverage in Turkey expressed in terms of the proportion of the total number of employees, including the civil servants and informal workers, covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Nearly one in four employees was covered by a collective bargaining agreement from 1971 to 1987, the latter being the year when the almost continuous fall in coverage began. The measures of the anti-labor coup of 1980, especially its new union law of 1983, seem to take effect around this time. Liberalization of the economy and the introduction of the temporary and subcontracted employment in the union strongholds have also played their parts in this downturn. This graph clearly demonstrates the rise and fall of associational power of Turkish unions. By the 2010s Turkey has reached a his-

torical low of around five per cent union density, with density in the private sector at only three percent.

The strike rate is another significant indicator of labor's power. Graph 2 presents an index of the number of striking workers together with an index of average wages. The wage index presents the ratio of real wages to GDP per capita. In this way, it represents an approximate index of the wage share, which is the part of national income allocated to wages.

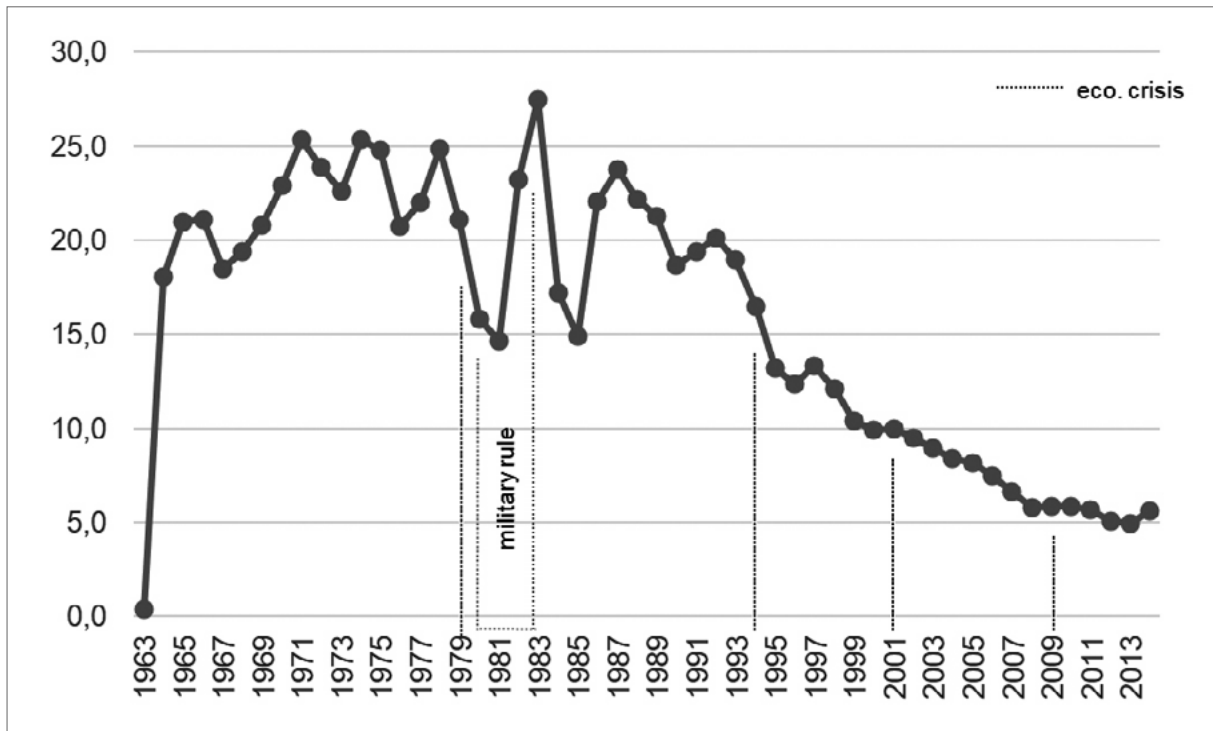
The first peak of strike action was in 1980, when the crises of 1979 hit wages severely. This wave was suppressed by the military rule, which banned strikes for three years; reduced wages to a large extent; and changed the institutional setting of industrial relations with new laws and regulations. The institutional power the unions had enjoyed in two previous decades diminished greatly. Nevertheless, union member workers, who sought to recover from the tremendous wage loss during military rule, initiated the most significant wave of strikes in 1990 and 1991, thus achieving a substantial rise in wages. The erosion of union density and collective bargaining coverage, however, continued as an irreversible undercurrent. The crisis of 1994 created similar conditions to 1979, but this time collective bargaining coverage was ten percent lower than the rate 15 years earlier. The 1995 strikes were unsuccessful and in the ensuing twenty years strike action has almost vanished. Wage shares have followed the plummeting strike rates, reaching new lows.

* I would like to express my gratitude to TÜMTİS officers and leaders, Göknur Marş (Ex-Officer); Kenan Öztürk (President); Muharrem Yıldırım (Secretary of Organizing); Gürel Yılmaz (General Secretary); Murat Küçükşahin (Organizer); Demet Dinler (Ex-Officer); and to Teresa Conrow (Teamster's Organizer) for their help and openness.

1. Turkish industrial relations regulatory regime does not provide any supportive mechanism for collective bargaining. Turkish unions have to organize workplace by workplace to extend collective bargaining coverage. To be covered by a collective contract, a worker has to be a union member, and the union has to be officially recognized in the workplace by organizing more than half of the workers.



Graph 1: Collective bargaining coverage in Turkey (%)



Graph 2: Wages and number of striking workers (index)



Source: Birelma (2017).

Since the economic crisis of 2001, the unemployment rate has never been lower than 9 percent in Turkey, while it rose above 10 percent after the crisis of 2008, deteriorating workers' marketplace bargaining power. In the meantime, following global trends, Turkish unions have also lost their societal power and come to be widely seen as archaic institutions solely defending the interests of a privileged minority among workers.

Turkey has a parliamentary system and since 2002 has been governed by pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP). The AKP has won every national election it has participated in by a significant margin, has enjoyed large majorities in the parliament and ruled the country in strong administrations. With its pragmatic combination of neoliberalism, Islamic patrimonialism, and some social democratic measures (Akan 2011), the AKP has been able to sustain its popular support among working class. The transformation of the Turkish welfare regime, which was particularly corporatist, towards a relatively more egalitarian system has been a major dynamic behind this support. Improvement of the health system and new emphasis on social assistance were among the most welcomed pillars of government policy (Bugra and Keyder 2006). On the other hand, AKP governments have consistently deepened and extended flexible and precarious employment with new laws and regulations. Subcontracted employment is the most common version of flexible employment in Turkey and the ratio of subcontract workers to the total number of employees grew from 4 to 11 percent between 2002 and 2011 (Birelma 2017).

With regard to unionism, AKP has maintained the anti-union laws, regulations and practices in place since the 1980 coup, while its attitudes towards unions are extremely selective and discriminatory. On one hand, AKP has limited the activities of left-wing, militant unions through various measures including prohibiting strikes, whereas it embraces »symbiotic syndicalism«, which means that the party has fully supported two pro-Islamic and pro-AKP union confederations, one for civil servants and the other for workers, to the detriment of other unions (Celik 2015).

AKP support for pro-Islamic labor confederations has completely changed the landscape of unions in Turkey in the last 15 years. Whereas in 2002 only 6 percent of union membership among civil servants were members of pro-Islamic and pro-AKP Memur-Sen, in 2016 the per-

centage rose to 54. For worker unions, the credible data is available only after 2013. The share of pro-AKP Hak-İş confederation in the union membership of workers increased from 17 per cent in 2013 to 32 in 2017. One such Hak-İş union is Öz-Taşıma-İş in the road transport industry. It was established at the end of 2012 during the DHL campaign by TÜMTİS and, with the support of DHL management, it began to organize to break the TÜMTİS campaign. Later, it signed up 20,291 members with the backing of the government in just four years, showing an »incredible« success in labor organizing.² All of Öz-Taşıma-İş's collective bargaining agreements were signed with the companies or subcontractors of AKP municipalities.

In 2012 AKP replaced Trade Union Law with a new one which brought minor improvements. Nevertheless, because AKP began to openly embrace authoritarianism gradually in the 2010s and the autonomy of the judiciary has been gradually eroded (Tugal 2016), the positive measures of the new law remain insignificant or futile.

This overview serves to illustrate the extremely difficult Turkish context where the power resources of unions³ not aligned with the AKP have been dwindling. TÜMTİS's history shows no exception to these general trends. In mid-2000s TÜMTİS was mainly organized in traditional, small-sized delivery companies, which were themselves under pressure from a structural shift in the transportation sector towards growing domination by large-sized corporations. In 2007, the union had around 1,500 members, who had a collective contract and were paying dues. The revitalization and transformation of the union would only begin in earnest at the end of the decade.

2. A Short History of TÜMTİS Before Revitalization

Drivers of municipality buses and trams in İstanbul established TÜMTİS in 1949. It was among the founding unions of the oldest, largest mainstream trade union confederation Türk-İş founded in 1952. Led by a polit-

2. Hizmet-İş, the largest union of Hak-İş, is a union for municipality workers. It made 135,671 new members, in other words it grew four times from 2013 to 2017 in four years, which might be the greatest growth in such a short period a union ever achieved in modern history.

3. For the power resources approach applied in this paper see Schmalz and Dörre 2015.

ically right-wing leadership, TÜMTİS expanded beyond İstanbul and organized several other cities' municipality drivers, although İstanbul remained its stronghold. Reporting its largest number of members in 1970 as 21,000, the union has never been a large one.⁴ It suffered two setbacks in its history, first in mid 1970s and then after the anti-labor coup of 1980. According to Turkish labor law, a union can only organize the workers of a specific industry, defined by the ministry of labor in a quite arbitrary way.⁵ In 1974 government enacted a new regulation which redefined industries, excluding municipal bus services from the land transport sector. This change caused TÜMTİS to lose almost half of its membership. The second setback, the coup of 1980, led to another crisis for the union, decreasing its membership even further to a critical level. Nevertheless, the union leadership praised the coup due to its right-wing and anti-communist stance (Baydar 1998).

To survive, in the mid-1980s the union engaged in an organizing drive in traditional, small-scale delivery companies in İstanbul, which employ usually fewer than 50 workers. This drive was a moderate success and in so doing, TÜMTİS revived itself as a small but solid union of small-sized delivery company workers. Due to the fact that the union's resources were extremely depleted at that point, the professional leaders were paid no more than its members, which became a custom of the union. The workers with a socialist orientation, who would come to lead the union, gave a socialist meaning to this custom and have maintained it even after the recent growth of the union.

At the end of 1980s, Turkish labor activism revitalized as demonstrated by the strike rates. TÜMTİS also experienced its own revitalization and this wave of militancy led to a significant change in the leadership. A group of workers affiliated to a small socialist party won the executive election in 1989. With their energy and militancy, the new leadership tried to organize in a large-sized delivery company employing nearly 2,500 workers in 1990, but the campaign failed after a protracted struggle due to harsh resistance from the employer, who dismissed

nearly 600 union members. However, the new leadership could count a success in the gradual spread of its membership base in small delivery companies to other cities: the union organized and opened new locals in four Anatolian cities during the 1990s.

In the first half of the 2000s TÜMTİS tried to organize in several large-scale delivery companies but these attempts also failed. The most significant success in this period was in organizing two hundred bus drivers of a subcontracted company servicing a municipality in southeast Turkey. Except for this achievement, the union could not manage to organize in a significant workplace other than its stronghold of small-sized delivery companies. Due to this deadlock, ensuing lethargy and some other political reasons internal disputes arose among the leadership. In 2007 a group led by the leader of the successful campaign in the municipality subcontractor broke from the socialist party, ran against the existing leadership, and won the executive election in that year. This change of leadership marked a crucial milestone in the union's history.

3. TÜMTİS' Transformation

3.1 First Step: Independence from Party Politics and Increased Militancy

Having a socialist leadership affiliated with a political party might give way to greater intermediating and framing capabilities for a union, which would lead to internal cohesion, greater associational power in terms of member participation, and also greater discursive power and external allies. However, it might also cause serious problems if partisan politics take precedence over unionism. This seems to be what happened in TÜMTİS in the 2000s in particular, at a time when socialist parties and fractions experienced marginalization without exception. The union could not enlarge its membership base significantly, having around 1,500 members in 2007 working under a collective agreement and paying dues. The takeover of a new cadre, who broke from the party but continued to espouse socialist ideology, brought with it a militant leadership whose priority is unionism. With a new spirit and desire to organize, the new leadership would try hard to organize larger workplaces. The continuous erosion of TÜMTİS's base in small-sized delivery companies, which were under pressure from large-

4. It should be noted that Turkish unions' declarations about the numbers of their members have been greatly exaggerated. Ministry of Labor put a digital system into force and began to declare the number of members in a relatively reliable way as late as 2013.

5. Two examples from TÜMTİS' recent history presented below will make clear how exactly this hinders the organizing of unions, especially of the militant ones.

sized corporations, was another factor reflecting the urgency and necessity of organizing. The new leadership would soon prove that they were more open-minded to try new methods of organizing.

In 2007, 250 TÜMTİS members, subcontracted bus drivers, were fired by their municipality in a union-busting move. After a five-month-long struggle, the union managed to secure the reinstatement of nearly 100 of them.⁶ In 2008, the union began to organize in two subcontractor companies working for Unilever, which triggered the firms to dismiss 87 union members. This was the first time that the union had tried to organize an international firm. After a struggle with its dismissed and working members lasting seven months, the union achieved the reinstatement of most of the workers. Nevertheless, it could not sign a collective agreement in the following months because of a court decision which determined that the firm was not a road transportation firm. This case was the first TÜMTİS campaign which enjoyed closer support from International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) thanks to the international character of the Unilever. Not only ITF but also other international union federation representatives visited the picket lines. TÜMTİS had been a member of ITF since 1964, but the support TÜMTİS received from ITF before 2008 had consisted of symbolic gestures like sending protesting messages to the union-busting firms.

In the spring of 2008 the union successfully organized nearly 300 workers of a subcontracted firm in a dock in southern Turkey owned by an international firm. The employer gradually dismissed 197 members, who built and sustained a picket line for six months. This case was also discussed in an ITF meeting in Brussels which the leader of TÜMTİS also participated in. ITF supported the case by visiting the picket line and contacting the parent company in Singapore. TÜMTİS achieved the reinstatement of all dismissed workers in the summer of 2009,

6. In July 2016, only after one week of the bloody failed coup Turkey experienced on July 15, the municipality once again attacked to get rid of TÜMTİS. Exploiting the turmoil in the country the municipality fired TÜMTİS' shop steward in an unlawful way. Afterwards the management transferred nearly 140 workers to this firm which was employing 58 TÜMTİS members at that time. All the transferred workers were members Öz-Taşıma-İş, an affiliate to pro-AKP Hak-İş confederation. After these moves Öz-Taşıma-İş gained the recognition in the workplace. This case vividly demonstrates how AKP is intolerant to the unions, which maintain their autonomy and prioritize defending workers' rights. In a municipality, which employs thousands of workers directly or through subcontractors, the leaders of the municipality did not abstain from exploiting the coup to eliminate 58 TÜMTİS members.

and at the beginning of 2010 it won a collective bargaining agreement. However, because the managers of the dock were anxious about the activist stance of TÜMTİS, in 2012 they transferred all the union member subcontracted workers to its own firm. As per the arrangement by the dock management, after this transfer, workers could not hold membership of the union, because Ministry of Labor counts dock workers as being part of a different industry from the road transport industry. All these cases reveal just how difficult to organize a workplace and sustain the organization in the context of 2000s Turkey. Furthermore, they uncover difficulties specific to organizing in subcontracted companies. The fact that most of the companies in the road transportation industry in Turkey are subcontractors reveals how shaky the ground on which TÜMTİS has been acting is.

The Unilever and dockworkers cases were TÜMTİS's first attempts to organize at international firms. ITF provided support to both cases in more concrete ways than ever before. In accordance with the significance of this first closer collaboration between TÜMTİS and ITF, a special meeting was held at the TÜMTİS headquarters in İstanbul in the summer of 2009, in which TÜMTİS leaders came together with five key ITF officials. The subject of the meeting was how to organize at the large-scale, international firms and this meeting laid the foundation for the upcoming UPS campaign (TÜMTİS 2011).

3.2 Second Step: Strategic Choice to Organize a Big Player

The real breakthrough was the daring United Parcel Service (UPS) campaign that began at the end of 2009 as a continuation of this recent dynamism. There are almost no large domestic firms in the land transport sector in Turkey except those providing subcontracted services for municipalities and around two dozen package delivery and logistics companies. TÜMTİS and other unions tried hard to organize them in the past, but all its attempts failed, breaking morale. TÜMTİS chose to organize UPS because it is an international company and had no history of failed organizing drives. The new leadership saw an opportunity to build a campaign that could use the opportunities which had come through ITF support in the aforementioned cases. UPS Turkey had nearly 2500 directly employed workers and an estimated 2000 subcontracted and franchise workers at that time.

TÜMTİS leaders, with the help of active members, reached out UPS workers in İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, the three largest cities in Turkey, using two methods. Firstly, they followed the shuttles driving the workers home and approached them when they got off the buses. Secondly, they followed delivery cars and tried to meet with the drivers and deliverymen within them. Once they found an interested worker, they met with their trustworthy coworkers in their neighborhoods, in coffeehouses or in home settings.

The UPS management noticed the drive and began firing union members in April 2010. TÜMTİS immediately responded by building a picket line of sacked workers in front of three UPS delivery centers in İstanbul and İzmir. At that time, the union had less than 400 members among direct and subcontracted workers at the firm. A total of 165 TÜMTİS members were dismissed in this union-busting process and most of them joined the picket line.

ITF showed some gestures of solidarity in this period, such as through a visit from unionists from the Netherlands, but real support would come after the ITF congress in August 2010. TÜMTİS' president flew to the congress in Mexico City by himself, without even a translator, and managed to convince ITF leadership to fully support the mobilization. The congress declared September 1 and 15 as global protest days against UPS to support the TÜMTİS campaign. Accordingly, ITF members organized protests in 23 different countries against UPS on these days (McGrath and Dinler 2011: 379). In the following weeks, ITF financed three officers, an American unionist, a PhD student, and a field organizer to work full-time for the campaign. This would seriously boost the union's human resources, as beforehand it had had no professional staff for organizing or international relations. European members of the ITF also provided a very significant solidarity fund, «an unprecedented 100,000 Euros» to support dismissed workers struggling on the picket line (McGrath and Dinler 2011: 375). UNI Global Union (UNI), who represents workers in skills and services, also supported the UPS campaign. ITF and UNI together have built a Global Delivery Network which works for union recognition and good working conditions across all the worldwide global delivery companies. Some UNI affiliates especially in Europe participated in UPS protests to support the cause.

ITF, member unions of the UPS European Works Council, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), which represents nearly 230,000 UPS workers in the US, built a communication bridge between UPS and TÜMTİS. Following this, the first formal meeting between UPS and TÜMTİS took place in İstanbul in September 2010 (McGrath and Dinler 2011: 375), followed by a series of meetings. European members of ITF contributed to the cause with protests and actions. They organized global action days and other protests such as like FNV-Bondgenoten's UPS protest at the national headquarters of DELL, a major UPS customer in Netherlands, which put UPS's public image in jeopardy. IBT, on the other hand, built the bridge with the UPS headquarters and exercised diplomacy. As Tim Beaty, IBT's Director of Global Strategies, puts it in our email interview⁷, while IBT »did not threaten disruptions in the U.S.«, it »put solving the issues in Turkey on a par with our priority bargaining issues.«

TÜMTİS maintained resistance in three picket lines in İstanbul and İzmir for nine months. Set up six days a week during working hours in front of three UPS transfer centers, in each picket-line at least one union leader was with the dismissed workers for the whole time. Picket lines served to show the determination of the union and its members to the managers, the non-members, and those union members still in employment. UPS brought new subcontracted workers to replace the dismissed union members. Workers held sit-in protests to prevent UPS from bringing new workers in the centers, which led to brutal riot police attacks on protesting workers; picketing workers would face other riot police attacks during the nine months, but they did not give up. Visits from international union delegations to this intense atmosphere impressed and mobilized the visitors to do more when they got back to their home countries. The picket lines, constantly participated in and led by TÜMTİS leaders, have also served as training opportunities for the newly organized workers on union organizing and class struggle.

The union organized several large public marches with supporting unions and organizations in eight different cities, including one in front of the UPS headquarters in

7. I am grateful to Teresa Conrow, an organizer of IBT, for making this interview possible. Ms. Conrow was one of those ITF officials, who were present in the special meeting on organizing an international firm held in TÜMTİS headquarters in the summer of 2009.

Istanbul city center. The union also mobilized most of the workers' families to visit the picket line on important days and participate in public marches. This inclusion both eased the stress of workers face at home and amplified the moral message of the campaign. TÜMTİS risked and mobilized all its financial human resources for the campaign. It collected extra financial support from its members to fund the dismissed UPS workers. Although it took time due to the slow processes of the Turkish judicial system, TÜMTİS lawyers managed to secure positive court decisions, supporting the arguments of the union and strengthening the hand of international campaign.

When negotiations broke down towards the end of 2010, ITF decided to organize a third global protest on the 16th of December. With IBT's involvement, UPS offered a meeting which led to the postponing of the protest. This second wave of negotiations concluded with an agreement between UPS and TÜMTİS in February 2011, which would reinstate all but twelve of the sacked workers. UPS declared that it would respect unionization and would not intervene in any sense.

Despite the reinstatement and declaration of respect for unionism, the union still had a hard time in recruiting enough workers, as union leaders noted. This reflects the hopelessness and alienation of the average Turkish worker regarding unionization. Nevertheless, after this six-month drive in July TÜMTİS had managed to organize 1250 workers, a majority of those who were directly employed by UPS, and got recognition from the Ministry. After the recognition collective bargaining began and led to the agreement signed in December 2011. During the negotiations many non-member workers became union members, and many subcontracted workers became directly employed thanks to the negotiations, and so when the agreement was signed, TÜMTİS had nearly 3000 members among UPS workers.

TÜMTİS vice-president for organizing, Muharrem Yıldırım, explains the background of the UPS success succinctly as following: »To be honest with you, if we were not obliged to succeed in organizing UPS, it might be impossible. It was so difficult.« By being obliged to, he points at the fact that it was a matter of survival for TÜMTİS to organize a large-sized firm at that moment due to its previous failures to do so and due to the continuous erosion of its base in small firms.

3.3 Third Step: Letting Success Breed Success

Mr. Yıldırım describes the subjective impact of the UPS victory: »It gave us courage. The union pulled itself together. People in our ranks gathered strength. We all saw that if we unite, set right goals, choose right tactics, and act in a determined way, we can do something.« In this spirit, TÜMTİS began to work to determine a second large-sized delivery company to organize, this time in an even closer coordination with ITF. Another global delivery and logistics company, the German Deutsche Post DHL, whose majority shareholder is the German government (Conrow 2015), was chosen as the second target. ver.di is the union organized in DHL's home country. This time UNI Global Union (UNI) was also part of the process from the very beginning, because ver.di is a UNI affiliate.

ITF and UNI once again financed three people to work as TÜMTİS officials. Just like their counterparts in the UPS campaign, they conducted research, wrote reports, prepared other campaign materials, and carried out daily communication with international partners of this long and stressful campaign. All possible information about DHL operations in Turkey was gathered to build a more informed and strategic campaign, the ITF officials having proposed this approach during UPS campaign, which was greatly appreciated by the leaders of TÜMTİS.

TÜMTİS leaders, organizers, and engaged members used the same methods as they did in the UPS case to meet with DHL workers. This time, hundreds of UPS workers participated in the drive. Also thanks to the growth of the union at UPS, TÜMTİS recruited and employed two professional organizers who would be active in the DHL campaign, its first dedicated staff for this purpose. After a months-long drive, the union recruited its first members because of a discontent among some workers about a meagre recent pay rise. In June 2012 DHL discovered the unionization drive and fired 37 union members; TÜMTİS responded by building two picket lines in İstanbul and Kocaeli. DHL was even more obstinate than UPS in opposing unionization, leading to a fifteen-month-long picket line campaign. The most decisive move from DHL management, which prolonged the campaign, was to support a yellow union (Öz-Taşıma-İş), established in November 2012, intended to break TÜMTİS mobilization in DHL. Due to the use of bribes and threats from the management in support of Öz-Taşıma-İş, its member-

ship numbers even surpassed the number of TÜMTİS members at one point.

However, workers, TÜMTİS, and their international allies could break DHL's resistance after an intense one-and-a-half-year campaign. The key factors for success were, first and foremost, TÜMTİS's firm stance on the picket line supported by marches and rallies, including in front of the German embassy and consulate offices, and the legal measures union lawyers took against DHL's counter-campaign including the yellow union.⁸

The UNI and ITF Global Delivery Network supported the picket line with regular visits and targeted both shareholders and customers of DHL, including the German government as the major shareholder. Protests on DHL headquarters and German embassies were held in various countries. UNI and ITF filed a complaint against DHL to the German Government, alleging a breach of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises in Turkey and other countries. To support the cause and the complaint, ITF produced two academic reports based on fieldwork which supported the workers' claims, and these were covered by German media. The OECD complaint forced DHL to open a dialogue with the unions in the autumn of 2013, which brought about the solution.⁹ In terms of customer strategy, unions and several NGOs pressured DHL's customers, including some unionized ones such as Ford and Unilever, and organized a protest at London Fashion Week (Conrow 2015: 114).

Thanks to this multi-dimensional pressure, DHL gradually relinquished and TÜMTİS could surpass the yellow union and organize the majority, nearly 1,600 workers. In October 2013 TÜMTİS acquired the official recognition from the Ministry and it signed a collective bargaining contract on April 2014 with DHL for its then 2,260 members. With the exception of seven, the sacked workers were reinstated; wages were increased by around 40 percent; and 730 subcontracted workers were transferred to regular and permanent positions. DHL's union-busting campaign was so uncompromising that it provoked both leaders and members of TÜMTİS to be as

stubborn as possible during collective bargaining, which resulted in a stronger first agreement compared to UPS.

3.4 Fourth Step: Expanding the Campaign to Sustain Success

Struggling for unionization in a highly competitive service industry, TÜMTİS's leaders are well aware that they have to keep the momentum even to maintain their recent advancements. Competition is so fierce that DHL Turkey lost many bids in the two years following the collective bargaining agreement due to a combination of higher costs, mismanagement, and fears of customer companies about working with a unionized company. When TÜMTİS signed the second collective agreement with DHL on May 2016, the company was employing almost a thousand fewer people compared to 2014. Similarly, UPS has also lost nearly 500 workers between the first collective contract in 2011 and the second in 2013. Therefore, as its leaders understood, the union has no other choice than to mobilize most of the major players in the industry. Accordingly, at August 2014 congress of ITF, TÜMTİS decided to target the second-largest firm in the Turkish delivery sector, Aras Delivery. Employing nearly five thousand workers, Aras is owned by a Turkish family, with Austrian Post owning a 25-percent share. Once again, ITF supported the drive and financed one staff person for organizing. With two organizers on its own payroll thanks to growth in membership, TÜMTİS also took on one officer for international relations.

In nearly one year by the end of 2015, TÜMTİS had recruited nearly 2000 members among Aras workers, which was enough for the recognition, and applied to the Ministry to get the recognition. This time TÜMTİS followed a less contentious strategy because Aras management had been less aggressive so far compared to the former cases. Nearly 30 union members were fired in various locations, but anti-union pressure was still moderate in general. According to TÜMTİS leaders, there are two reasons for this. First of all, the cases of UPS and DHL demonstrated that no matter how hard the managements had tried, the union managed to organize. To turn a unionization campaign into a full-scale battle is not only costly and consuming for the unions but also for the companies themselves. This fact broke the resistance at Aras. Secondly, a significant number of Aras workers saw that unionization is possible and beneficial

8. Turkish Labour Courts decided that the dismissals were unlawful because they were based on union activity and the Appeal Court had maintained this decision as announced in September 2013.

9. The complaint led to a joint statement by the German National Contact Point for the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, UNI, ITF and DHL at the beginning of 2014. See OECD, 2014.

for them, because most of them had heard about former victories and acquisitions made by their colleagues. This encouraged them to organize more easily. Nevertheless, the management refused to honor TÜMTİS' declaration of having enough members for recognition and brought the case to court.¹⁰

At the time of writing, three sessions have taken place, the last being in December 2016. Although it should have been already concluded, due to the coup attempt on July the judicial system became even slower than it already was because many judges were expelled on allegations of allegiance to Gülen community. Despite this delay, TÜMTİS leaders are optimistic about the outcome of the case and the campaign. If TÜMTİS organize Aras, it will secure its organization in the industry and can move on to other firms with a greater advantage and a much larger base of member activists. Meanwhile, in the last two years TÜMTİS has also successfully organized two smaller workplaces and signed collective bargaining contracts there. The union also organized enough workers in DHL Express, a DHL group company specialized in international delivery and employing nearly 850 workers, and applied for recognition in February 2017.

Since January 2013, the Ministry of Labor has begun to publish reliable statistics on union membership in Turkey. Thanks to the process outlined above, between January 2013, when the DHL picket line was going on, and June 2016, TÜMTİS increased its membership from 6,775 to 9,121, which represents a significant increase of 35 percent in three and a half years. While the union had approximately 1,500 dues-paying members in 2007 who were working under a collective contract, this number is nearly 7,000 at the end of 2016.

4. Analysis of TÜMTİS' Evolution and Success

From a power resource perspective, TÜMTİS's transformation and success rests mainly on tapping into associational power. In a context where all power resources were depleted or eroding further, TÜMTİS had nothing

10. This is a right of employers as granted by the labor law, which is almost always used by them to prolong the process of recognition. Although the 43. article of the labor law announces that the court will make a decision in two months, in reality, these cases last mostly no less than a year. Moreover, after the affirmative decisions of the labor court, employers appeal to supreme court, which takes another six months at least.

but its associational power to rest on and amplify. As a small but socialist and activist union since 1990s, TÜMTİS seems to have considerable associational power at the workplace level and at the marketplace level of the specific labor market of small-sized freight transport company workers. The rise and dynamism of the new leadership in 2007 intensified the associational power of the union thanks to a higher level of militancy compared to previous leadership, but, more importantly, thanks to the new leaders' capabilities of learning and flexibility. These capabilities combined with the union's militancy led the way for TÜMTİS to discover and utilize a power resource which had been untapped before the 2010s, namely associational power at the supranational level. The latter would significantly boost the union's associational power at the workplace and marketplace levels leading to significant success of new organizing.

When it comes to types of associational power, TÜMTİS has been relatively weak in terms of the number of members and organizational resources. However, in a way to compensate these weaknesses, member participation and internal cohesion of the union have been strong. Due to very limited financial resources, the union had never had a professional staff for organizing until ITF funded one for the UPS campaign. Elected leaders do the job of organizing themselves with significant support from grassroots members, and a considerable number of lay members actively support the organizing drives in their area by recruiting members and providing additional fees if needed. Besides normal fees, a considerable number of the members working in the small-sized freight transport companies contribute additional payments when union has sacked members to support financially during an organizing campaign.

4.1 Left-Wing Stance Boosting Framing and Intermediating Capabilities

The relatively high levels of member participation and internal cohesion are mainly because of two capabilities which the TÜMTİS leadership masters, namely, framing and intermediating. The union leadership has had a socialist orientation since 1990s, which gives the union a militant, activist and mobilizing stance and discourse. As outlined previously, the new leadership, which took over in 2007, put an end to their allegiance to a very small socialist party while maintaining their socialist ideology.

As Darlington (2009: 5) noted, »the relative neglect of the whole topic of left-wing union leadership and its significance for collective mobilization« is »a common feature of much industrial relations literature generally.« The two-centuries-long history of European labor movements reveals that for unions socialism tends to become elusive, becoming at best a rhetoric in the long-run (Hyman 2001: 17–37). Nevertheless, as Darlington (2009: 27) shows left-wing union leadership has an advantage to demonstrate a relatively better »ability to deliver in terms of obtaining real and demonstrable material improvements in pay and conditions«, because of its »combative stance, often involving the collective mobilization of members and the threat and use of strike action.« At the end, as Hyman (2001: 36) succinctly puts it, class unionism is an »impossibility« as much as a »necessity.«

4.1.1 Framing

Socialism serves as strong framework and advances TÜMTİS's framing capability, which gives the leadership a greater, mobilizing and liberating cause. »Framing capabilities characterize a union's ability to define a proactive and autonomous agenda« as defined by Levesque and Murray (2010: 343). To clarify, socialism here means a set of values quite similar to Darlington's (2009: 8) description of the left-wing politics of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) in the UK: »the syndicalist-type sense of a consistently adversarial attitude towards management and a commitment to the wholesale redistribution of wealth and power in society.«

TÜMTİS leadership defines and imagines itself as a part of a collective agency which has the potential to change not only working conditions but also the entire political economic system. It embraces a greater goal than bread-and-butter issues and aims for the empowerment of the working class in general by organizing in workplaces, in the entire industry, and later in all industries. The leaders explicitly declare this goal through a rather sub-political discourse that does not alienate most of the workers and resonates with their daily life and problems. What motivates the average worker to join TÜMTİS is not its left-wing stance per se. Thanks to their politics, TÜMTİS leaders have a greater commitment to unionism than the average Turkish unionist and they adopt a combative and mobilizing stance which leads to greater success in

terms of gaining material improvements. Moreover, the mobilizing way of unionism »boosts members' self-confidence and their sense of collective power, and in turn encouraged union activism and recruitment«, as observed by Darlington (2009: 20).

The important point is that this framing is not only discursive, but also practical: a discourse contradicts the practices of the speaker would be unconvincing. The fact that union leaders earn no more than the maximum wage earned by union member workers is very coherent and impressive in this sense. The modesty of the leaders and of their rooms in the union headquarters is striking. The relationship and interaction between leaders and members are not limited to collective bargaining agreements every two years as in most of the Turkish unions. The union leaders and professionals are quite accessible to grassroots members and the leaders and professionals visit and interact with members on a daily basis. Leaders believe that they »share a common fate« with their members and they work hard to act accordingly.

4.1.2 Intermediating

Another capability, intermediating, comes also into play at this point. Intermediating is the ability to »arbitrate between conflicting demands and to favor the emergence of collective interest« and »collaborative action« (Levesque and Murray 2010: 341). The emergence of collective interests, trade union identity and working class identity is not automatic, but rests on the intermediating capabilities and labor of the leaders. The relatively high level of interaction mentioned above functions also as intermediating to build collective interests and identities. TÜMTİS leadership tries hard to inform about, deal with and solve the problems of even individual workers by regular visits to workplaces. On the other hand, these visits also serve to transmit the messages of the union and demand and mobilize members' support for new organizing drives. These interactions serve to raise awareness about the fact that the maintenance of their better working conditions rests on the organizing of new workplaces. This encourages and leads members to embrace collective interest with other and potential members. Furthermore, the union tries hard to operate internal democracy especially during collective bargaining and organizing campaigns.

4.2 Special Structural Power of Transportation Workers

Despite the fact that the structural power resources of Turkish unions have been depleted, a nuance should be emphasized related to our case. In terms of structural power, especially in its form of workplace bargaining power, transportation workers have a structural advantage because of the nature of »circulation power« they enjoy, as defined by Schmalz and Dörre (2015). Silver (2003: 99) notes that transport workers »have possessed and continue to possess relatively strong workplace bargaining power.« Indeed, during the extension of the membership base in the small-sized delivery firms during the 1990s TÜMTİS organized many formal or informal strikes and they seemed to be quite effective due to structural advantage of transport workers. The union's efficacy in satisfy the demands of its members in its stronghold of small-sized workplaces has led to a greater identification among these members with the union. This membership base of workers identifying with the union, its goals and activism gave TÜMTİS its core and solid associational power to build everything else upon.

On the other hand, this workplace bargaining power based on strikes is not automatic or general in the industry. It requires the union to be organized in a significant number of firms of similar kind and size. After TÜMTİS organized large companies in UPS and DHL, it has hesitated to use strike measures in these firms, not only because a strike in these firms requires much larger strike funds. The real problem is the two dozen unorganized large-sized delivery companies, which would immediately take the orders of the affected firm due to the nature of the sector. »In case of a strike no company which has a contract with UPS for delivery would say let's wait for the strike to be resolved« as a union leader puts it. This would be devastating for the struck firm leading to serious downsizing or even bankruptcy.

4.3 Tapping Into Associational Power at the Supranational Level

Despite its distinct framing and intermediating capabilities, strong membership participation, internal cohesion and revitalization under the new leadership, by the end of the 2000s TÜMTİS could not organize in a large workplace. ITF's support to Unilever campaign in

2008 demonstrated the potential of international collaboration. When TÜMTİS chose UPS to launch a full-scale campaign in a large-sized firm, the leaders had this potential in mind.

From a power resource perspective, what TÜMTİS did in the UPS and DHL cases was tapping into associational power at the supranational level. As Schmalz and Dörre (2015) contend, beyond workplace, industry and national political level, the supranational level is the fourth level of associational power. The global union federations are the major players at this level. In parallel with the global trend, Turkey witnessed an increasing involvement of global union federations (GUF) in local campaigns in the 2000s.¹¹ In countries where domestic power resources are in decline, labor movements tend to apply transnational strategies more often (Anner 2011: 176). Although they never guarantee success, international campaigns have the potential to support the empowerment of local unions. The case of TÜMTİS should be contextualized within this general effort of revitalization of Turkish labor movement through internationalization.

With its approach of strategic organizing, ITF offered and transferred specific organizing capabilities required by the task of unionizing a giant corporation and running an international campaign. Although TÜMTİS is quite experienced in organizing small workplaces using loose and informal tactics, a giant corporation like UPS required indeed more sophisticated, elaborate and longer term strategy to organize. TÜMTİS's relatively quick transformation from a small and local union organized in small workplaces into a respected, inspirational, and integral member of international labor movement organized in global corporations uncovers that the union leadership showed a significant learning capability.

ITF also offered significant financial support to TÜMTİS to develop its infrastructural power resources. During the campaigns, ITF and UNI members mobilized their associational power resources in, such as making the TÜMTİS case a bargaining issue in the firm's original country; institutional leverage, such as through OECD complaints; and societal power resources, including holding public protests to name and shame the firm and alienate customers. However, one should emphasize that all of this

11. McGrath and Dinler (2011), Dinler (2012), Korkmaz (2013) and Fichter, Sayim and Berber (2013) explore nearly ten different cases of international organizing campaigns in Turkey.

international support would have been in vain if TÜMTİS did not have crucial and quite rare capabilities as explained above. As Seidman (2008) rightly argues, transnational labor activism is not a magical solution, but it can only succeed if it rests on the strong local activism of the local union. Similarly, Anner (2011: 71) contends that »transnationalism, without mobilization on the ground, would be unable to articulate sustainable demands at the factory level.«

ITF and UNI share resources with TÜMTİS not only because they are relatively militant and generous unions, but also because this solidarity boosts supranational associational power resources of the supporting Western unions if unions like TÜMTİS can successfully organize in the local operations of global companies with this support. In this way, in case of conflict Western unions can disturb global companies in more spots, which will strengthen their hand and expand their associational power resources at the workplace and industry level.

5. Conclusion

Although far from being perfect, TÜMTİS and its recent revitalization provide an interesting case to examine the applicability of the power resources approach and to drive lessons for the global labor movement. Just like many activist unions around the world, TÜMTİS has specific capabilities to serve as a model and inspire unions of Global North and South in their quest for revitalization. The mere fact that the German unions could not organize UPS yet reveals that TÜMTİS' capabilities might be inspirational.

TÜMTİS' revitalization and successes are still fragile and reversible, though. Being the second largest firm of the delivery and freight transport industry in Turkey, the Aras campaign will be decisive in this sense. In the normal course of events it is more than likely that TÜMTİS will obtain recognition in Aras and DHL Express in 2017, which will turn it into a larger-scale trade union commanding much larger resources and will open the way for the organization of all major firms in the sector. On the other hand, the rise of right-wing authoritarianism and arbitrary rule in Turkey renders not only TÜMTİS but all egalitarian and democratic forces of the country increasingly feeble. In fact, just after the writing of this paper, in March 2017, Turkish Court of Appeal made a shocking decision involving fourteen TÜMTİS leaders and members of Ankara local. In 2012, the local court sentenced them to prison terms between 1.5 to 6 years due to a complaint by a logistics company, where TÜMTİS had been organizing in 2007. The imprisonment was for the »crimes« of »increasing the number of members and thus obtaining more dues« and »obstructing the freedom of work.« After the approval of the Court of Appeal, which is shocking even in terms of the diminishing Turkish standards, fourteen unionists are imprisoned. TÜMTİS leadership is organizing an international campaign for a new trial and despite they have been shocked, they underline that this will not have any negative impact on their ongoing organizing drives. TÜMTİS' fate will be dependent on the possible extraordinary transformations awaiting politics in Turkey. However, no one could ever deny or erase their inspiring struggles and victories in the last decade, in which »we may discover insights into social evils which we have yet to cure« (Thompson 1963: 13).



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Imprint

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Hiroshimastr. 28 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

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With *Trade Unions in Transformation*, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) aims to direct trade union discourse at successful union work. Using the power resources approach, two dozen case studies analyze how unions were able to secure victories. For us, the Global Trade Union Programme of the FES, and our partners, learning from positive experience opens opportunities to reflect about strategic opportunities for unions in a rapidly changing environment. This project thus aims to analyze and strategize union action, including the needed transformation and mobilization of power resources within and outside the organizations.

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ISBN
978-3-95861-912-8