



# TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION

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SUCCESS STORIES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

MIRKO HERBERG (ED.)

CHANGE & WIN

A large, stylized compass rose is centered on the page. It has multiple points of varying lengths. A prominent arrow points towards the upper right, following the curve of a dashed arc that spans across the middle of the image. The background is a solid blue color.

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SUCCESS STORIES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

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CONTENT

Introduction ..... 6

**1. Crossing the Divide Between the Formal and Informal ..... 10**

1.1 In Uganda, unions are helping to drive transport workers into  
decent work ..... 11

1.2 Kenya’s private guards gain security through union organising ..... 16

1.3 Can union organising help save Nigeria’s textile industry? ..... 21

1.4 Street Vendors in India: From invisibility to centre stage ..... 25

1.5 High level militancy and unusual alliances bring rare victory for  
South Korean workers ..... 29

**2. Facing Global Capital ..... 34**

2.1 Are major sports events opportunities for innovative trade union  
action? The example of Brazil ..... 35

2.2 Beating multinationals in Turkey: Success through solidarity and  
international support ..... 39

2.3 Russian automotive unions score gains despite massive challenges .... 42

2.4 UAW and IG Metall: Supporting workers’ rights from Bavaria to  
Tennessee..... 46

2.5 Weaving a union network around the garment sector – An example  
from Central America ..... 49

2.6 Organising and innovating – The winning strategy of Argentina’s  
pharmaceutical trade union ..... 53

2.7 United aviation workers land a victory (South America) ..... 57

2.8 The rookie union that took on the coffee behemoth and won:  
The case of Starbucks Chile ..... 61

<b>3. Political and Social Alliances .....</b>	<b>66</b>
3.1 Latin America's biggest trade union is back on the streets (Brazil) .....	67
3.2 The fall and rise of Uruguay's trade unions .....	72
3.3 When unions make history: The UGTT's role in Tunisia's transition to democracy .....	76
3.4 After a difficult liberation, South Africa's largest trade union ponders the future .....	79
 <b>4. Transforming Unions Towards New Horizons .....</b>	 <b>86</b>
4.1 CUT-Brazil, a trade union centre at the forefront of the feminist struggle .....	87
4.2 A soft approach: How unionists paved an »ASEAN way« to success ...	92
4.3 The power of diversity - The Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) .....	96
4.4 Forced into a complicated transition (Vietnam) .....	101
4.5 South Africa's largest union tackles threat of globalization to workers' rights .....	105
4.6 Embarking on a long, bumpy road to success (Malaysia) .....	109
4.7 Teachers' union fights to preserve its rights through labour reform (Honduras) .....	113
 Imprint .....	 118

## INTRODUCTION

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With »Trade Unions in Transformation«, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung contributes to shifting the narrative about trade unions. Moving away from the standard depiction of unions as victims of globalization, this project highlights that unions do have agency and power. The stories of successful trade union action we are telling in this brochure demonstrate how labour can and already does shape globalization.

At the same time, we acknowledge that the labour movement is under attack. The conditions under which trade unions operate are worsening practically everywhere: Repressive political regimes and conservative backlashes are on the rise, technological change threatens to displace (unionized) jobs, while informal and precarious labour is becoming increasingly »normal«.

However, trade unions are neither helpless nor passive! All trade unions do have power. Power comes in different forms and shapes. The concept of »power resources« distinguishes four types of power unions can draw from. The resolute collective action that mobilizes the associational power of workers is at the heart of labour agency. Labour power may also reside in its place in the production process, that is, unions may make use of their structural power to disrupt or withdraw labour. Thirdly, unions have power within institutional arrangements, including through labour laws and within tripartite bodies. Finally, unions can mobilize societal power by building alliances with social and political actors or by influencing public debate, for example when they successfully link their struggles to broader social norms and values.

Importantly, trade unions have a strategic choice to apply, develop or neglect their power resources. It is their decision to use or not use them, to innovate or to stand still. The rapid changes of the capitalist mode of production in the 21st century and the pressure it puts on working people forces trade unions to adapt or to lose relevance.

Against this background, »Trade Unions in Transformation« tells 25 stories of how unions have innovated and how they were successful in their struggles (or have embarked in a promising strategic direction). The stories we present here cut across sectors, continents, levels of engagement and types of organizations and thus display the richness and variety of trade union action. Authored by journalists, the stories capture the essence of case studies originally written by labour

scholars or unionists themselves. These original, full stories are available for further reading at <https://www.fes.de/lnk/transform>.

Collecting and examining all these stories of transformation allowed us to identify four main topics, along which this brochure is organized: Crossing the Divide between the Formal and Informal; Facing Global Capital; Building Alliances; and Transforming Unions towards New Horizons.

## SECTION 1: CROSSING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL

The stories of Ugandan transport workers, Kenyan security guards, Nigerian textile workers, Indian street vendors and South Korean cleaners in Section 1: Crossing the Divide between the Formal and Informal have one element in common: they show how workers in non-standard forms of employment eschewing traditional forms of trade unionism were or are organized. In the process of including »informal« workers, new types of organizations have emerged, organizations that are »hybrid« in that they cater to both formally employed workers and workers in informal or precarious work arrangements. Combined with organizational flexibility, a more inclusive understanding of solidarity and of who is a worker enabled unions to approach workers in informal arrangements, bring their strength into the equation of a struggle, and come up with innovative ways of collaboration and interest representation. These stories strongly indicate that a new expression of labour as agents actively shaping the world of work is about to emerge.

## SECTION 2: FACING GLOBAL CAPITAL

Section 2 on Facing Global Capital focuses on unions taking on Multinational Companies and parts of their value chain. Case studies include those of Brazilian construction workers preparing the FIFA World Cup, Turkish Transport workers in DHL and other logistics companies, Russian as well as German and American automotive workers, Central American textile workers, pharmaceutical workers in Argentina, South American airline workers and Starbucks employees in Chile. The exposure to global capital may leave workers vulnerable, but at the same time opens up new strategic opportunities. Applying different strategies and drawing on multiple power resources, unions leverage their power against Multinationals.

For example, unions make use of their structural power by taking advantage of the time-bound nature of globalized production, including in auto assembly lines or deadlines to finish World Cup Stadiums. Attacking the corporate image of a garment brand or a coffee chain makes use of societal power, especially when people's sense of justice is evoked successfully. As the OECD Complaint Mechanism in the Chile case highlights, leverage increases if institutional mechanisms can be thrown into the equation. Here again, associational power is a pre-condition for success and has to be mobilized both at the local and the transnational level. Building alliances beyond the worksite and across borders adds complexity but opens the chance to escalate the conflict. In sum, a common sense of purpose and solidarity, sharing of responsibilities and a long-term strategy are indispensable elements of building up power.

### SECTION 3: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ALLIANCES

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Section 3 on Political and Social Alliances presents how unions and union confederations in Brazil, Uruguay, Tunisia, South Africa and Indonesia have built sometimes complex alliances with a broad set of social actors, including social movements and NGOs, or long-term relations with political parties to achieve their goals. Both types of alliances are crucial for building up societal power, for extending unions' spheres of influence and for making progress in different political arenas. The stories provide insights what capabilities unions need to build successful alliances and make them last. One recurring issue and success factor is that unions should be autonomous vis-à-vis their partners.

### SECTION 4: TRANSFORMING UNIONS TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

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Section 4 on Transforming Unions towards New Horizons puts emphasis on how internal political processes are changing unions and enable them to embark on previously uncovered territory. The story of the Brazilian National Confederation CUT makes yet another compelling argument for women empowerment, which make unions stronger and more relevant to society. The stories of the ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC) and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA) show how unions represent the interest of their



members at the regional level. Furthermore, the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUM-SA) are working on deep structural changes that, if successful, will reshape the face and identity of the unions. Malaysia's MTUC has also opened a new chapter by representing migrant workers' interests. In Honduras, the deepening of internal democracy allows the teachers' union to withstand political repression and stay true to its mission.

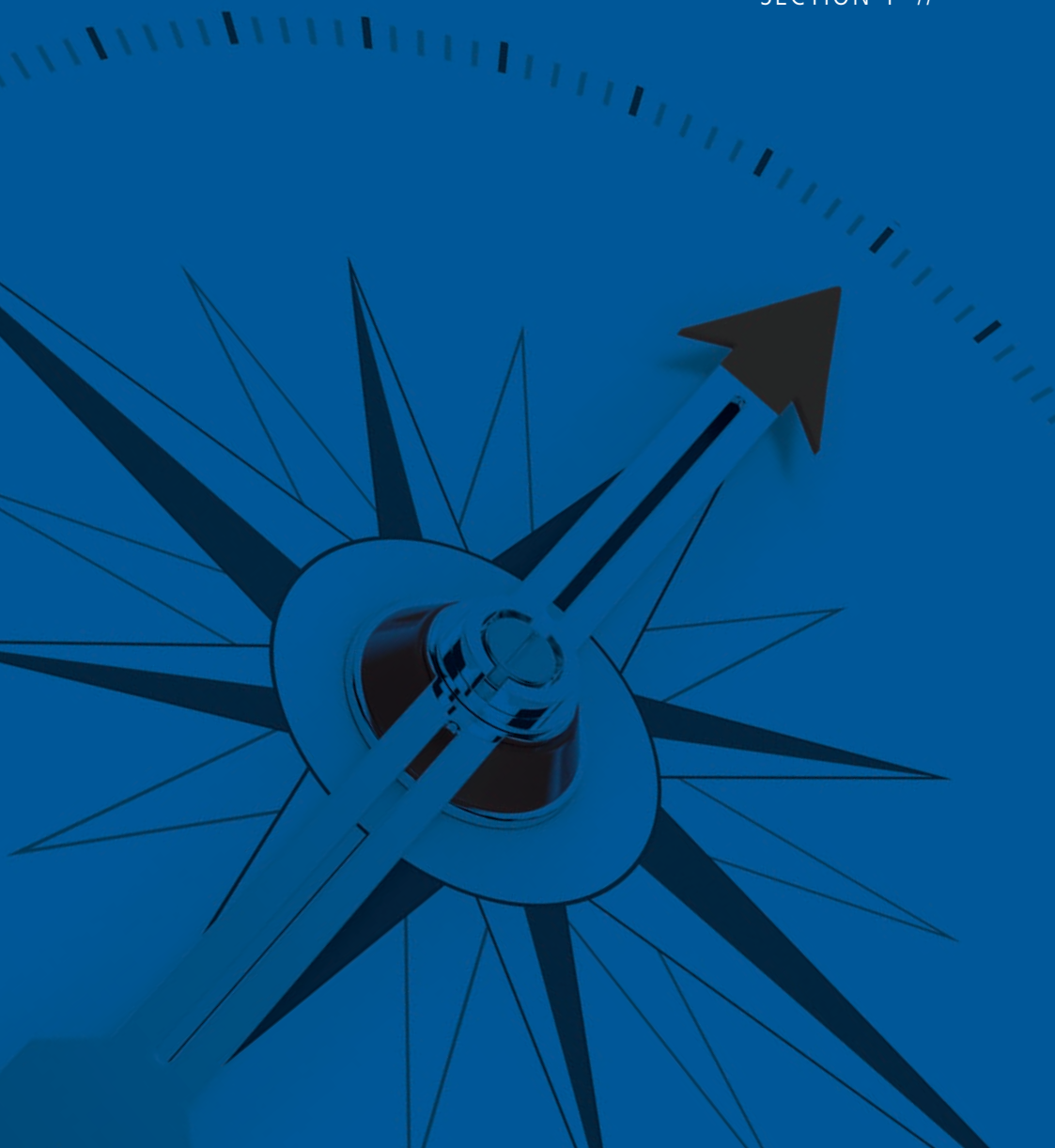
All stories collected here demonstrate that numerous unions succeeded in mobilizing and making use of their power resources. By doing so, they achieved material and political gains for the workers they represent. Whether all these »wins« are sustainable is yet to be seen, but they do inspire us as we seek to build new collaborations with our trade union partners. We hope that the stories of »Trade Unions in Transformation« will be as much of an inspiration to our readers as they were to us. Our efforts will have been worthwhile if you rediscover your union's power resources and help to mobilize them!

Mirko Herberg  
March 2018

# CROSSING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL

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SECTION 1 //





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## 1.1 // IN UGANDA, UNIONS ARE HELPING TO DRIVE TRANSPORT WORKERS INTO DECENT WORK

// BY DIANA TAREMWA KARAKIRE

Three years ago, Samuel Mugisha almost quit his job. As the driver of a motorbike taxi (known locally as a boda-boda) in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, rampant police harassment was having a huge, negative impact on his daily earnings. But today, Samuel is thriving as a member of the 38,000-member Kampala Metropolitan Boda-Boda Association (KAMBA).

Launched in January 2014, the association is one of the newest members of Uganda's oldest trade union, the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU), which today is leading the drive to represent informal transport workers and help secure decent work for all of its members.

After decades of ever-declining numbers of formal transport workers, the ATGWU is on the up. It now has close to 60,000 members, with the significant intake of informal transport workers such as minibus taxi drivers, bicycle taxi drivers and boda-boda drivers giving the union a new lease of life.

«It hasn't been easy. Many hurdles stood in the way of this formalisation, but we have covered a lot of ground so far,» says Usher Wilson Owere, the national chairman of the ATGWU. «The journey is still long but we are taking one step at a time.» Since it was founded in 1938 as the Uganda Motor Drivers Association, the ATGWU has faced various hurdles, but perhaps the biggest threat to its existence came from the plummeting membership numbers that followed the collapse of state-owned passenger road transport services.

Like elsewhere in Africa, the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in Uganda during the mid-1980s resulted in mass job losses, particularly in the public sector. For the ATGWU, large-scale redundancies at the public bus companies that formed the bulk of its membership base decimated the union. By 2006, things were so bad that membership fell to an all-time low of around 2,000 (mainly airport worker) members.

»After structural adjustment programmes and privatisation, Uganda was [facing] a new form of raw capitalism, in which you were either rubbed out or [you had to] build your own power,« explains Owere in the report »Transforming transport unions through mass organisation of informal workers: a case study of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU), Uganda« by J. Mwanika and D. Spooner.

#### REGROUP AND REBUILD

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It was at this point, sometime in the mid-2000s, that the ATGWU decided to regroup and rebuild – and the inclusion of informal workers was key to this. Although it wasn't until 2015 that the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the landmark Recommendation 204 to help facilitate the formalisation of the 50 per cent of workers in the world who operate in the informal economy, in 2006 the new ATGWU general secretary, Aziz Kiirya, did just that.

Kiirya knew that in order to regenerate the ATGWU, his trade union would have to organise and represent informal workers – estimates put the number of boda-boda drivers in Kampala alone at anywhere between 100,000 and 250,000, in addition to the capital's 50,000 minibuses drivers – and so he changed the union's constitution to include them.

»The ATGWU strategy for organising informal economy workers was based on an understanding that these workers are in many cases already organised, not within the trade union movement, but through credit and savings cooperatives, informal self-help groups, community-based organisations, and, most importantly, associations,« says the report.

The Airport Taxi Operators Association was the first such association to affiliate with the ATGWU back in 2008, closely followed by a number of other national and regional organisations such as the Long Distance Heavy Truck Drivers Association and the Entebbe Stages and Conductors Association.

For Uganda's informal transport workers, unionisation has »had a dramatic impact« according to the report, including »a reduction in police harassment, substantial gains through collective bargaining, reduced internal conflict within the associations, and improvement of visibility and status for informal women transport workers«.

Kampala's airport taxi drivers, for example, have secured standardised branding for their taxis, an office and sales counter in the arrivals hall, proper parking facilities, and rest areas, amongst other collective bargaining gains. Meanwhile, other members have benefited from having union membership cards, particularly when crossing borders.

The ATGWU received a major boost in 2013 when the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) launched a project to improve the capacity of unions across Africa, Asia and Latin America to represent informal transport workers.

Key objectives included training organisers and also improving work conditions for women in the sector. The number of women working in the very male-dominated transport sector in Uganda is very small; KOSTA, for example, only has 45 women conductors and just 13 drivers out of a membership of approximately 36,000.

Juliet Muhebwa is one of KOSTA's female conductors. Although the AGTWU has formed a women's committee to support the needs of female transport workers, Juliet says they still face the same issues affecting informal women workers across the world, namely long working hours, low pay, dangerous working conditions and the threat of violence, harassment and intimidation.

She describes the attitude towards women working in the sector as »largely negative, which discourages new workers« although the workshops and training has been held by the AGTWU for women workers to deal with some of these issues.

## MORE WORK TO DO

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In February 2015, the union established the ATGWU Informal Sector Committee, comprising the chairs and secretaries of all the affiliated associations. This has helped the members not only get to know one another but also to improve systems and procedures within their respective organisations.

There is still more work to do but the AGTWU has experience in overcoming major challenges. In 2013, Ugandan authorities passed a law prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people. Although trade unions were officially exempted from the



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law, in August of that year, police occupied and later shut down the ATGWU's offices where taxi drivers and conductors had gathered for a meeting the police considered illegal because they weren't not considered 'workers'.

The ATGWU responded strongly, threatening to call a strike and bring the whole of Kampala to a standstill if the legitimate rights of these workers were not recognised.

The ITF even wrote to the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni and as tensions threatened to escalate, the police backed down and the union called off the strike.

»The confrontation and subsequent victory proved to be a pivotal moment in the organisation of informal workers for the ATGWU,« says the report.

»It was not only a victory against police interference in the business of the associations, but against the day-to-day police harassment and extortion suffered by informal transport workers.«

But even the ATGWU recognises that it has »only just scratched the surface« of what still needs to be done, ranging from the huge number of people still in the informal economy to tackling the reluctance of white collar unions to accept informal economy members as workers of equal standing.

At present, affiliated association members still do not enjoy full union membership and a lack of voting rights deprives informal workers of the right to fully participate in trade union activities. There are a number of barriers preventing this: for example, full ATGWU members must pay two per cent of their salary in union dues. This poses a very real problem for informal workers who experience daily income fluctuations – many don't even have bank accounts.

»We are members but in a way we are more outsiders,« says Juliet, the bus conductor. »We want to be brought closer. It's the only way we will get more empowered.« The reform of the ATGWU constitution to ensure the total integration of informal workers into the ATGWU was a key topic at the 2017 Quinquennial Delegates Conference of the ATGWU.

But for informal workers like Frank, the difference being affiliated to the AGTWU has made to his life has been huge.

»Previously, almost half of my earnings were going into bribing police officers to let me operate. That pressure is off my back now,« says the 32-year old father-of-three.

Because he is able to save more money, Frank says he can now pay his children's school fees. He has also been able to help his wife start a grocery business to supplement their household income.

»I was more pessimistic about the future three years ago,« he says while leaning on his crimson-red bike. »Now I see better times ahead«.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Transforming transport unions through mass organisation  
of informal workers in Uganda

Authors: John Mark Mwanika & David Spooner

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13643.pdf>



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## 1.2 // KENYA'S PRIVATE GUARDS GAIN SECURITY THROUGH UNION ORGANISING

// BY NGUGI NJOROGÉ

»Three key success stories can be told of the KNPSWU: the massive growth in union membership, the ability to build internal cohesion and solidarity, and the strategic utilization of institutional power.«

Private security guard John Wafula spends his 12-hour work day on the look out for any that could harm visitors to the Nation Centre building in the heart of Kenya's capital, Nairobi.

The heavily built 47-year-old father-of-three looks smart with his closely cropped hair, his clean boots and his well pressed uniform. He finishes work at 6pm before starting the hour-long commute from the Central Business District to his family at home in Kawangware.

With a monthly salary of 20,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately 196 US dollars) Wafula is one of the 45,000 security guards that belongs to the Kenya National Private Security Workers' Union (KNPSWU), and he is happy with his membership.

»It was very tough 10 years ago. The working conditions were bad and low pay was order of the day. But now things have changed thanks to vibrant representation by our union,« Wafula tells Equal Times.

Given how common labour unrest is in Kenya – with public sector workers such as doctors, nurses and teachers all striking recently for better pay and working conditions – Wafula's positive words are a testament to the gains made by the union, which has worked hard to ensure shorter working hours and better working conditions for its



members – security guards at private houses, public buildings, businesses and events. Since 2009 Kenya's private security industry has mushroomed, after the country became a target for frequent terror attacks from Islamist extremists from neighbouring Somalia.

Charles Arori, a workers' representative for a local branch of the global security firm G4S, says improvements in the welfare of private security workers has increased the pay of some workers by as much as four times in the last 10 years.

»The number of wrongful terminations has also gone down because the union has taken up those cases, and our members are rarely subjected to long working hours without holidays,« says Arori.

»Many firms which did not normally send statutory [social security] contributions now do so and there also training sessions for guards by their employers.«

#### TURNAROUND OF FORTUNES

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The dramatic improvement of the welfare of Kenya's private security guards is the subject of a report written by Kenyan researchers Jacob Omolo and Emily Odhong: »Developing and Utilizing Power Resources: The Case of Kenya National Private Security Workers' Union.«

The KNPSWU was founded in 1960 as the Night Watchmen Union with a mandate to secure, promote and protect the rights of private security guards in Kenya.

But until recently it was beset with poor leadership – with the majority of KNPSWU officials drawn from sectors other than private security – and it experienced a massive loss of membership as a result.

Since tackling these issues, union membership has risen from just 327 people in 2011 to over 45,000 in 2016 out of the estimated 450,000 total of private security guards employed in Kenya and 2,000 registered companies.

»The informal sector accounts for a fairly low proportion of the membership of the union,« notes the report, »estimated at less than five per cent. This means that upwards of 95 per cent of the members are drawn from the large, medium and small private security firms in the formal sector.«

In addition, about one-third of the KNPSWU members are women, an impressive number that shows the sectors ability to diversify, modernise and »break gender stereotypes,« according to Arori.

The report also notes that »formal sector firms operate alongside informal sector

firms [in Kenya], and the segmented market structure with high, medium and low-end clients means that the interests and levels of achievement of the basic needs of the union members are completely at variance.«

Several years of fractured union representation had condemned guards to poorly-paid, insecure work in an industry characterised »by subcontracting, outsourcing and market segmentation pitting big, medium, small and micro-sized firms«.

However, thanks to effective union leadership there has been marked turnaround in the fortunes of the sector's workers.

»Three key success stories can be told of the KNPSWU,« the report declares.

»These are massive growth in union membership, [the] ability to build internal cohesion and solidarity, and the gaining of and strategic utilization of institutional power.«

#### BUILDING WORKERS' POWER

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The KNPSWU has managed to build internal cohesion in both its leadership and amongst the rank and file, »moving from a history that was dotted with leadership wrangles, coup d'états, and splinters and mergers to a relatively stable union,« the report states.

To develop a common ground and to ensure collective interest out of the conflicting demands, the union crafted a campaign message, which clearly stated it is a union »formed, owned, run and led by private security guards themselves and not outsiders.«

»This really worked magic and gave new and existing members a sense of confidence in the leadership of the union,« KNPSWU general secretary Isaac Andabwa tells Equal Times.

The main benefits of having a union run by the guards are increased grassroots visibility, the strengthening of the structures and training of shop stewards, the reinforcement of bottom-up processes, as well as an emphasis on the social importance of the work of the guards.

The areas of welfare enhancement targeted by the union in its campaign strategy included basic issues such as salaries, working hours, overtime payment and leave entitlement.

At the time of the campaign, for example, most of guards earned basic wages as low as 37 US dollars a month, which is about one-third the legislated minimum

wage of 110.31 US dollars. In addition, guards worked an average of 71 hours per week, contrary to the 52 hours provided for in the Regulation of Wages (Protective Security Services) Order of 1998, without overtime pay. And annual leave entitlements were administered through off-days rather than actual leave days.

KNPSWU has gained considerable institutional power by increasing its membership and improving internal cohesion in this way, which in turn has allowed it to influence policy through social dialogue, the establishment of a wages council for security workers in 2013 and through the negotiation of various collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

The absence of government regulation, poor union representation and years of corruption had hampered efforts to demand better pay for guards as rogue security companies abused the rights of their employees with abandon, according to Andabwa.

But all of this is slowly changing. For example, the KNPSWU successfully lobbied the Kenyan government to ensure all public procurement entities obtain a mandatory certificate from the Ministry of East African Community, Labour and Social Protection (MEACL&SP) confirming adherence with statutory minimum terms and conditions of employment before being awarded any service contract.

Furthermore, at a meeting held late December 2016 at the State House, President Uhuru Kenyatta ordered the Ministry of Labour to shut down all private security companies that flout the law on minimum wages.

Lobbying measures »were aimed at increasing the policy influencing ability of the union while at the same time enhancing its representational ability,« says the report.

At a grassroots level, union membership is no longer a cause for victimisation for private security guards, who in previous years would be dismissed, discriminated against, transferred or penalised because of their involvement in union activities. Andabwa says the union has secured the commitment of stakeholders at the highest levels to carry out reforms to improve the welfare of private security guards, including the stratification of pay based on organising security workers into three different bands (roughly based on whether they work in high, mid or low-end security firms).

The KNPSWU general secretary also says that the recently enacted 2016 Private Security Regulation Act, which the KNPSWU lobbied for over a number of years, will further boost the sector's operations by providing for the regulation of the private security industry (for example, by ensuring the registration and licencing

of all private security companies in Kenya), and a framework for cooperation with state security organs.

Andabwa admits there is a long way to go to ensure security guards enjoy world class working conditions but progress is being made.

»My dream is to ensure our security guards are empowered to the fullest to ensure they effectively complement the work of our security agencies,« says Andabwa.

»There is no resting until we get there.«

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Developing and utilizing power resources:

## The case of Kenya National Private Security Workers' Union

Authors: Jacob Omolo & Emily Odhong

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cqi-bin/qbv.cgi?id=13755&ty=pdf>



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### 1.3 // CAN UNION ORGANISING HELP SAVE NIGERIA'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY?

// BY BELINDA OTAS

Funke Omoniyi Johnson is the founder of Mama Tee Fashion and Saidat Taiwo Oshodi is the proud owner of Sai Tai Enterprises Nigeria Limited. They are both self-employed tailors based in Lagos, Nigeria's bustling commercial capital. Between them, they have amassed a total of 55 years in business. One would expect this is enough to propel the growth of their business, ensure their financial safety and secure their future. Instead they are struggling to keep their heads above water due to the continuous decline of Nigeria's textile sector.

It is for self-employed tailors like Johnson and Oshodi that the National Union of Textile Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) continues to fight, in the hope that one day the industry will regain its glory days. However, the NUTGTWN is also engaged in its own battle to stay relevant in a very unpredictable sector. Own-account tailors need the NUTGTWN to defend them on the policy frontlines, while the NUTGTWN needs informal workers in its ranks to ensure its power base and relevance in the larger trade union movement.

At its peak in the 1980s, the Nigerian textile industry was a vibrant and thriving sector, boasting more than 150 textile factories and employing over 350,000 people. It was the third largest in Africa after South Africa and Egypt, and Nigeria's »second largest employer after the government,« according to »Trade Union in Transformation: A Case Study of The National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria«, a report by Ismail Bello, deputy general secretary of the NUTGTWN.

With an annual growth rate of 67 per cent between 1985 and 1991, and an employment rate of approximately 25 per cent of Nigeria's manufacturing workforce, this period is often described as the textile sector's 'golden era'. At the time the NUTGTWN was regarded as one of the most powerful and influential unions in Nigeria. At its peak, its membership included over 75,000 workers, enabling the union to »mobilise on critical issues like wage negotiations, defending workers' rights, improve working conditions and seeking industrial justice for its members,« says Bello. But »the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the 1990s as the framework in which economic policy is set,« led to »market liberalisation and economic deregulation, with attendant consequences for local industries, particularly the textile and garment sector.« Bello further elaborates: »The current state of things started on a massive scale in the mid-1990s. In 1997, Nigeria became a signatory to the World Trade Organisation, which meant that Nigeria fully liberalised the textile market. Before then, the Nigerian textile market was largely safeguarded and protected. But the membership of the WTO opened the space for textile imports at a time when the machinery in the industry was ageing and it was not prepared for the massive competition it witnessed.« According to Bello, »the impact was almost immediate and dramatic,« leading to years of factory closures, job losses and general decline. In addition, »the internal issue around electricity supply, availability of funds and protecting the local market,« all played a part in the sector's slump and stagnation.

#### NEW STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

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Over time, the decline has had a reverberating effect: a workforce of over 350,000 in 1980 stood at just 27,000 in 2016, while the NUTGTWN's membership has dwindled by more than half to approximately 35,000. With a shrinking membership of industrial workers – which meant loss of power and clout – the NUTGTWN needed a strategy to ensure its survival, one that would also help transform and strengthen its position within Nigeria's labour movement and its ability to influence government policies and affect change at a critical time.

As a result, the NUTGTWN decided that reorganising internally and »expanding the scope of its membership base beyond factory workers to include self-employed tailors« was one way to achieve this goal. »For a union to look at a new terrain beyond the factory walls to organise people who work on their own was

new. It was something that drew attention, and was a very striking development,» Bello says.

He explains further: »If the union had sat back and just watched [the decline of the textile industry], its structural power would have diminished. So to organise the self-employed tailor was a way of compensating for the decline in structural power and build on associational power to ensure the union maintains its relevance in collective bargaining and representation of workers.«

So how does the NUTGTWN help self-employed tailors? According to Oshodi, it gives him a voice. »Alone, the government won't listen to you but when you have the support of a mother union you are affiliated to, the government will definitely hear you. They also speak for us on issues like double taxation [state and federal taxes] and power supply.«

For Johnson, who has been a NUTGTWN member for over a decade, the union has been central to her professional development: »Apart from getting us organised, they conduct seminars and conferences on leadership training, new trends in fashion, business and financial literacy on how to survive when we no longer have the capacity to keep working, and how we can benefit from each other.« As well as training, Bello says the NUTGTWN helps self-employed tailors by engaging with the government on the issues most important to them. »[For example] the way illegal textile imports affect the textile manufacturing; it also affects the self-employed tailor. If garments are illegally imported into the country, where will tailors have the opportunity to showcase their skill?« Securing suitable work spaces and dealing with the impact of foreign imports is also a key issue for Nigeria's informal textile workers. Johnson and Oshodi tell Equal Times that their trade has become more difficult with the import of fabrics and garments from other countries, particularly China, which is notorious for producing sub-standard counterfeits of local designs. Asked if a ban of Chinese imports would help rejuvenate the industry, Oshodi is emphatic. »I'm 100 per cent sure of that. They in China have access to power supply. We have to buy diesel to power our generators in order to be able to ensure production. This leads to higher prices. If the government can come to our aid, I think the garment and textile industry will be resurrected and



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things will be fine for the ordinary man.«

Unfortunately, Bello knows that the challenge facing the NUTGTWN is protecting its workers in the absence of protectionism. »In the age of globalisation, the country's hands are already tied to all kinds of agreements – multilateral and bilateral. On regular basis, we engage with the government at all levels. Recently, the Nigerian government came up with a new industrial revolution plan.« Bello says the plan, which aims to turn Nigeria from a net importer of goods to a self-sufficient manufacturing nation, is »likely a product of our advocacy and the advocacy of other people who are concerned about industrial revival in Nigeria.«

Bello says there are a number of issues which the government should tackle as a matter of urgency. »We think it's important the electricity issue is fixed, for the imports that come into the country to do so legitimately and with the right quality. They cannot violate copyright issues because there are designs that are local, which people steal and smuggle into the country. All of those things kill businesses and affect the industry.«

Implementation is also key. »What's left is to be able to act on some of the ideas that have been put forward,« says Bello. However, he remains positive that Nigeria's textile industry can once again be competitive if the right environment is provided. »As a union, we are not giving up.«

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



A case study of the National Union of Textile,  
Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria

Author: Ismail Bello

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13818.pdf>

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## 1.4 // STREET VENDORS IN INDIA: FROM INVISIBILITY TO CENTRE STAGE

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// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

India without its street vendors would be unthinkable. From their rickety sidewalk stands, open-air cooks feed the nation.

Vendors selling everything from vegetables, saucepans and light bulbs, to string, furniture and blocks of ice push their handcarts down every lane of the subcontinent. But these seemingly quaint scenes played out on the pavements of India's cities and villages don't convey the harsh realities endured by many of the country's 10 million hawkers and their families. For decades, they have experienced harassment, humiliation, sudden evictions and confiscation of property.

Only recently has that changed. Over the last 10 years, the living and working conditions of India's street vendors has improved significantly. Thanks to the tireless initiative of dedicated activists and the clever use of associational power, they are now a force to reckoned with.

### HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

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During the 1990s, Indian labourers suffered massive layoffs, rural livelihoods were disrupted and there was mass migration to urban areas. Many of the men and women arriving in the cities ended up joining the informal economy as street vendors. Despite providing goods and services to millions and contributing significantly to



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the urban economy, they remained invisible. Street vendors were not counted in official statistics, and did not appear in the media or research publications. Nor were they taken into account by urban planners or municipal administrators. Instead, they were seen as a nuisance. In many cities, unrealistic licensing obligations made vendors illegal by default, exposing them to bribery and extortion.

## THE NEED TO ORGANISE

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By the mid-1990s, hawkers and peddlers faced increasing attacks and many NGOs believed the time had come for them to organise and ensure their protection. What was needed was to change the perception of street vendors in the minds of administrators, legislators, elected representatives, urban planners and the public at large.

That would require not only the participation of local groups, but a national movement. In 1998, NASVI, the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (later the National Association of Street Vendors of India) was formed.

Among those who helped establish the movement were activists from ADITHI, an NGO working for the empowerment of women in rural Bihar; SEWA, the Self Employed Women's Association; and Nidan, a street vendor advocacy group founded earlier.

## SUDDENLY, A TOPIC FOR POLITICS

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NASVI set out by commissioning a study »Hawkers in the Urban Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities«, which was published in 2001. This landmark report became the basis for all public discourse and action related to street vendors, not only in India, but internationally as well.

Confronted with the findings of the report, and aware of the growing influence of street vendors, the central government in New Delhi set up a National Task Force on Street Vendors. In 2004 it bore fruit after cabinet adopted a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors.

For the first time in India's history, street vendors were officially recognised as contributors to the urban economy. The ideas in the document, which largely came from NASVI and its allies, gave a formal framework for securing the livelihoods of a sizeable proportion of India's urban poor.

### SPEEDING THINGS UP

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As street vendors felt empowered and NASVI's membership base swelled, the next challenge was to ensure implementation of the policy. Because India is a federation, this required the cooperation from individual state governments.

Things moved slowly. By 2009, NASVI decided that more pressure was needed to see the policy implemented. As millions of street vendors marched and went on strike, and hundreds of thousands sent letters to local lawmakers, the movement proved how essential their services were to a hungry nation. Finally, on September 2013, the Indian Parliament passed the Street Vendors Act. The Upper House followed suit on February 2014.

This landmark legislation, perhaps the first of its kind in the world, accorded unprecedented institutional power to street vendors and was destined to affect millions of lives.

Apart from ensuring their protection, the Act stipulated training programs to educate street vendors on things such as their rights and responsibilities, food safety, hygiene, and waste disposal.

The Act states that in the future, vendors will have a say in their own affairs. In each municipality, a Town Vending Committee will be the main policy making body for street stalls.

Representatives of street vendors will constitute 40 per cent of its membership. Women will also comprise at least 33 per cent of the street vendors' representatives.

State Governments were expected to frame rules and schemes within one year. But by early 2017, only 11 states had done so. Today, NASVI is continuing its campaign to ensure that the Act will be implemented in the furthest corners of India.

HOW NASVI MADE IT HAPPEN

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NASVI’s campaign to put the plight of street vendors into the spotlight and mobilise politicians to take action, was surprisingly effective.

Several factors led to its success. Under its dedicated leadership, NASVI kept on refining and reinventing its methods. NASVI also understood that the strength of street vendors was in their numbers. If NASVI was to speak for millions, and their voice was to be heard, attracting as many members as possible would be crucial. By addressing street vendors’ legal and regulatory concerns, NASVI looked at things such as providing access to microcredit, skills training, health insurance and other related facilities. This earned NASVI tremendous respect, strengthening its associational power.

A series of studies, media campaigns and advocacy activities further enhanced the group’s power. Apart from that, NASVI always looked for innovative ways to create a positive image in the minds of the public about street vendors.

One unique way to achieve that was the introduction of an annual Street Food Festival in New Delhi in 2009. The festival has fostered great appreciation of the lives of street vendors and their essential contributions to the city’s fabric. Now in its eighth year, the food festival has also greatly enhanced the self-esteem of the vendors themselves.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Towards a better deal for street vendors in India:  
The case of NASVI

Authors: Arbind Singh & Sachin Kumar

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13641.pdf>

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## 1.5 // HIGH LEVEL MILITANCY AND UNUSUAL ALLIANCES BRING RARE VICTORY FOR SOUTH KOREAN WORKERS

// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

In the recent history of union activities in Korea, two episodes stand out: On the 8th of March 2011, visitors to three of the most prestigious private universities in Seoul witnessed extraordinary scenes. Hundreds of women – most of them old enough to have grandchildren – were marching on campus, loudly demanding »We want to live as human beings!«.

It was the cleaning staff of the universities that had gone on strike. For months, the cleaners had demanded higher salaries. Their wage was hardly enough to make ends meet. On top of that, the women felt ill-treated. They were often forced to eat their lunches in the toilet stalls because the universities refused to provide them with a room to take their breaks.

The colleges washed their hands of any responsibility, pointing to the fact that the women were employed only through subcontractors, not directly by the institutions. The universities assumed that the elderly, working class women posed no threat.

They were wrong. Through clever strategising, the cleaners and their organisers were able to win the broad backing of civil society groups and win their fight against their employers, the universities. Through this fight, cleaners achieved the pay raise which exceeded the level of statutory minimum wage for the first time, and this affected that in July 2011 the Minimum Wage Council put forward recom-

mentation for a substantial increase in the minimum wage – which traditionally sets the standard wage for cleaners.

#### TRAGIC GESTURE AND BASIC AGREEMENT

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May 17th 2014 marked another notable event in the history of the Korean workers movement. An escalating conflict between the Korean electronics giant Samsung and its after-sales staff culminated in a tragedy: Yeom Hoseok, a 33-year old repairman for Samsung appliances and an official of the Samsung Electronics Service Workers Local committed suicide.

He was protesting against increased repression of workers by Samsung Electronics, which was trying to uproot the union. By choosing to die, Yeom wrote in a suicide note, he hoped to help his union win its fight for better working conditions. Yeom's death came amid rising tensions between Samsung and repair workers which – similar to the cleaners – were employed through subcontractors. As in the case of the cleaners, Samsung Electronics was denying any responsibility for the wellbeing of the contractors.

Then Yeom took his own life, which led to widespread media coverage of the labour dispute at Samsung Electronics. A month later, his union achieved a basic agreement on securing the right of union activities and on wage increases.

#### WORKERS UP AGAINST POWERFUL FOES

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Although different on the surface, the two cases have much in common, casting a spotlight on the precarious conditions faced by many Korean workers. They also provide lessons on how to organize, be it by engaging the community or using existing unions as policy advisors.

The prevalence of triangular employment relationships is a characteristic feature of Korea's labour market. In this arrangement, a worker enters an employment contract with a contractor, but the work itself is performed at the workplace of the principal company.

For example, of over nine thousands engineers working in its after-sale department, Samsung Electronics services employs only 270 as regular employees. The remaining 8670 are formally employed by so called »Great Partnership Agencies«.

The same applies to cleaners. Of the 1.1 million cleaners and janitors employed in Korea, around 70 per cent per cent work for sub-contractors. These workers – the vast majority of whom care women with an average age of 60 – rarely earn more than minimum wage.

By 2016, 44 per cent of the total workforce in Korea were employed under such precarious employment arrangements, with far less rights than regular employees. Freedom of association is linked to employee status in Korea. Workers who try to exercise their right to association beyond corporate boundaries get punished. Collective actions against contracting companies (principal companies) are considered an »obstruction of business« and face criminal penalties. As a result, in 2016, only two per cent of precarious workers were union members.

#### PRECARIOUS WORK AS THE NORM IN KOREA?

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The practice of subcontracting in Korea grew in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, when many domestic small and medium-sized enterprises became subcontractors of the Chaebols, the large Korean family-owned business conglomerates.

The Korean government acted as facilitator. To save the Chaebols, Seoul pushed ahead with neo-liberal policies and repression of labour rights. This led to unbalanced power relations between capital and labour. While user companies can exert the power to terminate a contract, which results in the dismissal of workers, collective actions against the user company are banned.

In an attempt to push back against this, Korean unions have attempted to organize contract workers and bargain collectively on their behalf. They implemented two policies – labour market unionism and community unionism – that have been identified as the core collective bargaining innovations responsive to today's labour market.

#### POWER THROUGH SOLIDARITY

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In the case of the cleaners, the elderly ladies prevailed because their organizers were able to engage the people the women were cleaning up after. When the Seoul & Gyeonggi Local of Korean Public Service Union launched an organizing



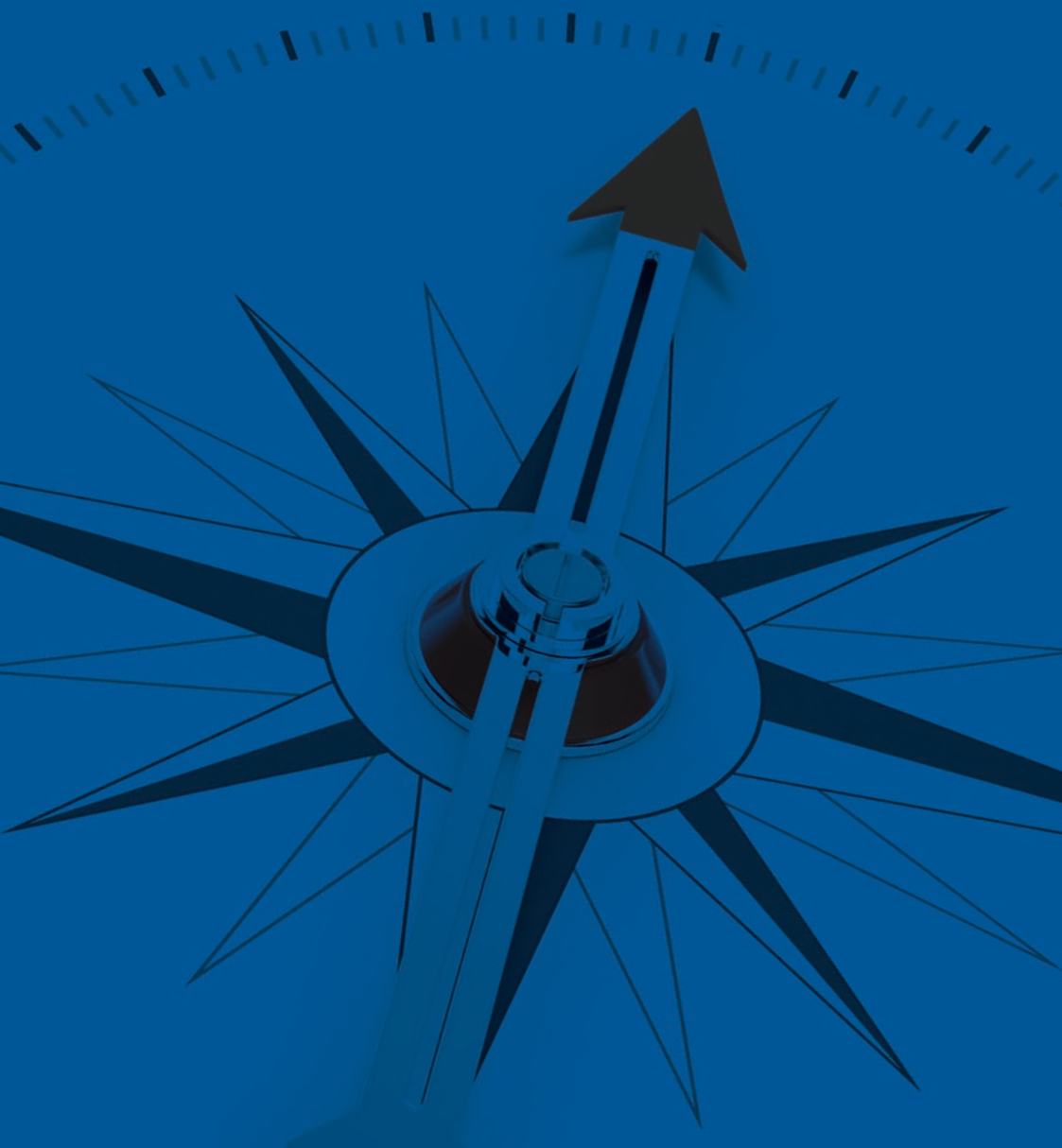




# FACING GLOBAL CAPITAL

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SECTION 2 //





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## 2.1 // ARE MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATIVE TRADE UNION ACTION? THE EXAMPLE OF BRAZIL

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// BY MATHILDE DORCADIE

The hosting of both the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil forced the country's trade unions to seek new methods of organisation and cooperation.

Brazil has been involved in the organisation of two major sporting events over the last 10 years: the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics in 2016.

From the awarding of these events by their organising committees to the competitions themselves, a major portion of the national economy dealt with the resulting investments and employment generated, but also with meeting the standards and deadlines set by FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The construction sector benefited most from this external economic stimulus. Thousands of workers laboured for several years to construct not just stadiums but ports, airports and other transport infrastructure such as roads and subway, tram and bus lines.

The run-up to a mega sporting event is a moment of exceptional structural power for trade unions. Governments, organising committees and construction companies need the full cooperation of workers in order to ensure the timely completion of such prestigious international projects. With so much at stake, any form of industrial action not only has the potential to cause major delays; it could also cause



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serious reputational damage. As a result, mega sports events provide trade unions with fertile ground for successful campaigns that can yield lasting improvements for workers, such as better pay and better safety standards.

But these conditions also presented Brazil's trade unions with unfamiliar challenges, forcing them to seek – with the support and experience of other trade unions from around the

world – new methods of organisation and cooperation.

Sociologist Maurício Rombaldi, professor at the Federal University of Paraíba, discusses how these events affected working conditions in his study of union strategies during the Decent Work Towards and Beyond World Cup 2014 campaign, launched by the Building and Wood Worker's International (BWI). It is titled: »Trade Unions in Transformation – Mega Sporting Events in Brazil: Trade Unions' Innovative Strategies for the Construction Industry«.

Although new to Brazil, similar campaigns had been organised in London for the 2012 Olympic Games and in South Africa for the organisation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Local unions were supported by various international organisations, such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which also launched a campaign called Play Fair, which was aimed at protecting another workforce: that employed to manufacture – in Brazil and around the world – sporting goods and accessories related to the event.

The goal of such campaigns is to ensure respect for the Decent Work Agenda on the basis of the principles of the International Labour Organization, in particular by promoting the exchange and development of innovative strategies among the country's various local unions, as well as improved international integration.

One of the challenges trade union leaders faced was having to negotiate with unfamiliar parties, in this case FIFA and IOC organising committees.

Workers on the World Cup and Olympic Games projects were most likely to be awarded public contracts by traditional construction companies such as Odebrecht, OAS, Camargo Corrêa and Andrade Gutierrez. Standards and deadlines, however, were set by FIFA and the IOC.

As Rombaldi notes, although these are officially non-profit organisations, financial interests (particularly those of sponsors and partners) nevertheless affected working conditions. The question of deadlines, which were extremely strict, increased the pressure experienced by workers – although time constraints also acted as a lever for trade unions and forced parties to negotiate more quickly.

The study demonstrates that Brazilian trade unions have generally operated separately from one another, and were therefore unaccustomed to conducting joint negotiations. The main job in implementing the Decent Work Campaign was therefore to unite trade union organisations usually segregated by both geography and sector.

Brazilian unions hoping to join the campaign had first to agree to align themselves with an international agenda focused on major sporting events. »The mediation of a foreign organisation thus established, by consensus, an unprecedented national agreement among Brazilian trade unions, which affected negotiations undertaken locally,« writes Rombaldi, who highlights concessions, especially on wages, which unions would not likely have won without the capacity for joint action.

Other results included several strategic agreements and the drafting of a manifesto, the first joint statement of demands by Brazilian construction-sector workers. This served as the basis for a unified national programme for better working and living conditions for workers, which was subsequently presented to the government. This rapprochement also resulted in a strengthening of links between Brazilian construction unions and the BWI; between 2010 and 2012, the number of unions affiliated with the BWI increased from five to 25.

#### TRADE UNIONS NEVERTHELESS FACED CERTAIN DIFFICULTIES

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First, the author shows that Brazilian trade unions have sometimes been unable to oversee or control workers' actions. He points to several »wildcat strikes« on construction sites that forced union leaders to adapt to situations workers initiated without prior consultation.

Second, the internationalisation process was neither homogeneous nor linear. This is due in particular to the diversity among the various trade union centres, both in terms of their historical and political affiliations and the sectors concerned. »Beyond the internal divisions observed between unions from different places, there was also a notable disarticulation between unions and confederations. Prior to

2011, there was no significant experience of national negotiation on issues such as a unified wage agreement among the Brazilian states, despite recurrent demand,« says Rombaldi.

The Decent Work Campaign followed the same strategies for the 2016 Olympic Games as it had for the World Cup, but worked along different axes. Joint union negotiations focused more on development of a safety protocol for construction sites than on wages, for example. Rombaldi observes, however, that political differences between unions have not disappeared, while some union structures haven't survived.

In concluding his study on trade union experiences in dealing with major sporting events, the author stresses that »the specifics of national trade unionism significantly influence the strategies to be adopted by as well as results to be expected from an international trade union strategy.«

International trade union organisations now face the major challenges of World Cup competitions in Russia and Qatar. The BWI and the ITUC have already launched a campaign entitled No World Cup in 2022 Without Migrant Workers' Rights.

They have already met with FIFA leaders, who have recognised »a share of responsibility«.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Mega sporting events in Brazil:

Trade unions' innovative strategies for the construction industry

Author:      Maurício Rombaldi

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=14146&ty=pdf>

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## 2.2 // BEATING MULTINATIONALS IN TURKEY: SUCCESS THROUGH SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

// BY JENNIFER HATTAM

TÜMTİS have set »a great example« for Turkish trade unions about the importance of international workers' solidarity.

As global firms like UPS and DHL began to dominate the national market in the 2000s, the Turkish transport workers' union TÜMTİS, largely made up of employees of small-scale delivery companies, saw its membership base start to slip away. The union decided on a bold move, target UPS, though the general secretary in charge of organising Muharrem Yıldırım describes it as more of a matter of survival: »It was so difficult to organise UPS, if it hadn't been necessary, it might have been impossible.«

TÜMTİS's success in signing a collective bargaining agreement with UPS in 2011 – a victory won after nine hard months on the picket line – made the union a model for others struggling against an increasingly difficult organising climate.

»In Turkey, the legislation on paper has a lot of trade union rights, but in practice, there are thousands of barriers to keep workers from claiming these rights,« says TÜMTİS president Kenan Öztürk.

TÜMTİS ran up against some of these barriers in its first attempts to make inroads at international firms, struggles documented in a case study prepared by academic Alpan Birelma and released by the German Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in March 2017. When, for example, TÜMTİS tried to organise at two Unilever

subcontractors in 2008, a court ruled that the companies did not fall under the union's purview because they were not road transportation firms. Turkish labour law allows a union to only organise the workers of a specific industry, as defined – often in an arbitrary way – by the Ministry of Labour. Another attempt to organise workers at a port-loading company subcontracted to a dock owned by an international firm foundered when the employer transferred the subcontracted employees to its own firm, making them dock workers and thus ineligible for TÜMTİS membership.

Though unsuccessful, these union drives helped lay the groundwork for TÜMTİS's future victories. New leadership at TÜMTİS, which was independent from its prior socialist party affiliations, allowed for a greater militancy in the union's organising work. During the port dispute, for example, TÜMTİS kept a picket line for six months. TÜMTİS also actively solicited the support of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which was made possible by the transnational character of the companies where TÜMTİS was attempting to organise workers. For example, the ITF supported workers in the port dispute by visiting the picket line and writing to the parent company in Singapore. As a result, TÜMTİS leaders came together with five key ITF officials in 2009 for a landmark meeting on how to organise at large, multinational companies.

When TÜMTİS decided to tackle organising UPS, they drew on this newly strengthened relationship to initiate an international mobilisation, including simultaneous protests in 23 different countries against UPS. Members of ITF also provided a significant solidarity fund to help support dismissed workers on the picket line, and sent delegations to visit the striking union members.

»Our work in Turkey was important, but the international solidarity from the ITF and the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) played the most important role in our success,« says Öztürk. »It set a great example for trade unions in Turkey about the importance of an international workers' movement in solidarity with each other. Many other unions have now started developing better relations with international federations as a result.«

The UPS victory also created momentum for TÜMTİS's next big organising campaign at DHL. TÜMTİS drew on the lessons of success and internal cohesion to tackle another multinational, again working in close collaboration with ITF, which brought international pressure to bear against the German government, the company's majority shareholder. The year-and-a-half-long campaign highlighted another challenge for independent trade unions in Turkey: the rapid recent growth



of pro-government union confederations. DHL management pressured workers to ally with one such union in an attempt to break TÜMTİS mobilisation.

In the end, TÜMTİS's determination won out, and the Ministry of Labour granted the union the official recognition to sign a collective bargaining agreement with DHL. Subsequent successful campaigns at the Turkish firm Aras Kargo and at DHL Express are pending recognition. So too, however, is TÜMTİS's demand for a retrial in the recent conviction of 14 of its leaders in a case dating back to 2007 that is being seen as a threat to all independent unions' ability to organise in Turkey.

»The ITF is helping TÜMTİS to fight these convictions both in the court system and by mobilising international union support,« says Noel Coard, ITF head of inland transport. »Our colleagues in Turkey often face violence and imprisonment. The attacks not just on labour rights but on our fellow trade unionists must, and have been, actively resisted.«

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



An inspiring case of union organising in a formidable context:  
The case of TÜMTİS in Turkey

Author: Alpan Birelma

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=13754&ty=pdf>

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## 2.3 // RUSSIAN AUTOMOTIVE UNIONS SCORE GAINS DESPITE MASSIVE CHALLENGES

// BY NATALIA SUVOROVA

Given the current level of economic uncertainty in Russia, trade unions decided to prioritise securing their employees' jobs over improving their working conditions. On 22 February 2012, the workers of the Volkswagen plant in Kaluga, a city in central Russia around 190 kilometres south-west of Moscow, reached an important milestone. After three months of intense talks, the management acceded to union demands and signed a collective bargaining agreement that provides employees, including white collar workers, with a roughly 10 per cent pay raise starting in April, and a gradual increase in salaries to adjust for inflation next year. Most of Volkswagen Kaluga's 4600 workers haven't seen their pay rise in over two years due to the heavy economic recession in Russia caused by annexing Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014. International sanctions fueled inflation and led to a spike in consumer prices, so the agreement was more than welcome by the employees at Volkswagen Kaluga, where the average monthly pay is 45,000 rubles (approximately 800 US dollars) for white collar workers and 33,000 rubles (approximately 585 US dollars) for assembly workers.

»We tried to somehow compensate for what has previously been underpaid, to bring salaries to the normal level,« says Elena Kryukova, deputy head of the Kaluga department of MPRA, the Interregional Trade Union Workers' Association. The MPRA focuses on organising workers in foreign car firms and initiated the talks. The union wanted more, but the result, for Kryukova, is a »happy middle ground«.

STRENGTH AFTER STRIKES

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Attracted by Russia's rapidly expanding car market, Volkswagen, Ford, and other major international automakers opened car plants in the country in the 2000s. They initially refused to bargain with labour unions but over time, as the economic success of the firms grew, so did the discontent of the workers. They were unhappy with their low pay and poor working conditions – particularly in comparison to their colleagues doing the same work in the European Union.

After a few years of unsuccessful attempts to achieve formal recognition, and despite the long-term presence of German works council representatives, the MPRA at both Volkswagen and its main parts supplier Benteler saw no alternative but to call its members to strike and engage in severe protest actions to force management into collective bargaining. In organising protests, MPRA unionists relied on the experience of their Brazilian colleagues, which they learnt about thanks to the regular participation in joint seminars organised by the German union IG Metall. The MPRA was also able to grow in stature by exploiting the »close interconnections« of MPRA unions at both the Benteler and Volkswagen plants – not only in terms of the issues surrounding working conditions and anti-union sentiment but also in exploiting the dependency of both firms on the local economic value chain.

Only after tensions resulted in an open conflict in 2012 – when striking workers at Benteler stopped the trucks with components from going to the assembly line, costing the company an estimated eight million euros – did the Volkswagen management accept the MPRA as the negotiating union, Sarah Hinz explains in a 2016 report titled *Shifting powers in Russia's employment relations: Alternative trade unions challenging transnational automotive companies*.

»For VW (Volkswagen) management the risk was high that the demands and ability to follow through on the threat of strikes were supported by large parts of the workforce. They had reason to fear the union would mobilise its members at the producers' plant for strategic protest action to get the management to negotiate with the union,« Hinz writes.

Since the 2012 strike, Volkswagen's management has grown more willing to negotiate with trade unions, Kryukova says. »In precarious situations, when [the management] doesn't know how the team will behave, they try to ask for our advice, and not as a mere formality.«

As Hinz notes: »Successes achieved are ostensibly the result of utilization of work-

ers' structural power to bargain at the workplace resulting mainly from the economic and local circumstances foreign firms face.«

As a result, trade unions at foreign car plants are considered amongst the most effective in Russia, even though they tend to focus on individual workplaces »as the absence of employers' associations prevents negotiations for sectoral or regional agreements, further impairing unions' organizational power,« according to Hinz.

#### RECENT GAINS

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Some of the latest MPRA achievements at Volkswagen Kaluga include shorter working hours for the same money (1,875 hours per year, instead of the legislated 1,973 hours); the right for unions to discuss important social policy decisions before the management implements them; and an improved grading system for workers based on their job tenure instead of their personal relationships with the manager.

These gains were made possible partly because foreign companies are better organised than Russian ones and less tolerant of rules violations, says Alexei Etmanov, chairman and one of the founders of MPRA. Etmanov has helped organise strikes at the Ford Sollers plant near St Petersburg since 2005, and supported the MPRA efforts at Volkswagen Kaluga. He recalls situations at Russian car manufacturing plants where unscrupulous supervisors would manipulate workers by agreeing to hide a worker's misconduct from their superiors in order to control them and to prevent any demands for better work conditions.

»[Foreign companies] maintain strict discipline in accordance with the Labour Code: being late is reprimanded, coming to work intoxicated ends up in immediate dismissal. This allows us to build a working relationship with the management,« says Etmanov.

Sometimes in employer disputes the unions are able to utilise the power of the Russian state, which generally acts as an independent actor in employment relations. In March 2017, the ASM, one of the three trade unions at Volkswagen Kaluga, called labour inspectors to the plant following an unresolved issue regarding job safety. »It is better to resolve issues within the house, but if we see that the issue is being delayed or not resolved, then we reserve the right to apply to state bodies,« says ASM chairman Alexander Abrosimov. After the inspection, the management – though highly displeased – agreed to resolve any further issues.

Independent trade unions in modern Russia face a number of challenges to their efficacy. One is the existence of alternative labour organisations, created and controlled (to various degrees) by the management to rival independent unions. In case of the Volkswagen plant, the ASM is one of two trade unions organised to counter the influence and power of the independent MPRA, which is still the largest out of three and counts almost 1200 members – nearly twice as much as the ASM (550 members) or the recently created MNIP RAS (60 members). The three unions work independently, which also makes it difficult for them to reach common goals – especially given that all three organisations together count less than 50 per cent of the workers at the plant.

Another factor is the poor retention of members. Many workers only join unions during periods of negotiations, but quit membership as soon as the goals are reached. Workers are ready to participate, say the unions, but they are not ready to pay one per cent of their salaries towards union dues as a result of the number of financial pressures workers face. »We are understanding that,« says Kryukova, although the union acknowledges that more needs to be done to hold on to new members.

But in spite of the difficulties facing the automotive industry, trade unions are not backing off from their demands for decent work. »After all, during sales growth nobody shared profits with us,« says Etmanov. Now the workers who helped Russia's car industry grow over the years finally want a fair slice of the pie.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Shifting powers in Russia's employment relations?

Alternative trade unions challenging transnational automotive companies

Author: Sarah Hinz

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13815.pdf>

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## 2.4 // UAW AND IG METALL: SUPPORTING WORKERS' RIGHTS FROM BAVARIA TO TENNESSEE

// BY ARI PAUL

In a sense, a closer relationship between IG Metall and UAW was long overdue, especially in a global auto industry that even put the two unions »under the same corporate roof« with the merger of Chrysler and Daimler AG in the 1990s.

The year was 2015. The place was far from the cold Great Lakes region where the United Auto Workers (UAW) holds most of its power, and it was an ocean away from IG Metall's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

The state of Tennessee, with its low union density and business-friendly labour laws, might at first glance seem like an odd place for these two famous auto workers unions to announce what they called a Transnational Partnership Initiative (TPI) – a joint-venture between the two unions to perform labour education for the media, the public, lawmakers and employers in their respective countries – but in other ways, it made perfect sense.

The UAW and its 408,000 members have built their strength in the Great Lakes region where the American automobile manufacturing industry is centred, but foreign makers prefer the mostly union-free environment of the American South. And while that trend has always been in some ways problematic for unions, it has also been seen as an opportunity: former UAW President Bob King had vowed to pour energy into organising workers in the South, not only to grow his union but also to erase the idea that the South was by definition some sort of union-free area.

The two unions had in fact been collaborating for years, but the TPI made things pub-

lic, as both unions vowed to improve wages and working conditions for workers at German-owned plants in the South and to push for the introduction of German-style works councils in order to promote a new form of labour/management cooperation. Sören Niemann-Findeisen of IG Metall explained in a phone interview that »we have to be as global as our companies, and this is particularly true in our industry«. The main goal, he said, was to help lower the hurdles to unionisation in places like the American South by addressing problems at US manufacturing sites early on in the process. For example, at one German auto supplier operating in the US there was intense resistance to a worker organising drive, however, IG Metall was able to talk with its owner in Germany, who Niemann-Findeisen said, didn't want to have any kind of anti-union image.

Niemann-Findeisen also didn't write off the South as hopelessly anti-union, citing the Spring Hill Tennessee General Motors plant where the UAW enjoys a 90 per cent density rate even in a right-to-work state (i.e., while by law the union must represent all workers in the bargaining unit, non-members have the right to refuse payment for those services).

In a report titled *Transnationalising Unions. The Case of the UAW and the IG Metall* by Michael Fichter, findings show that while successes in the stated goals have so far been limited, it was a necessary step in changing an outmoded domestic focus of auto union organising. Success is critical, the report noted, even for unions like IG Metall, which operate under relatively friendly labour laws.

The report states: »Even if the IG Metall maintained a high level of membership density in Germany, it was dealing with corporations operating with value chains around the globe and capable of organizing production wherever most conducive to profitmaking. With their technology, these corporations have the capacity and the incentive to be able to produce better wherever cheaper, in most cases avoiding unions, and as long as there were »union-free« zones around the world, the associational and institutional power IG Metall would be potentially threatened. The union had to begin finding approaches to changing this situation. A first step in this direction – to work together with the UAW – seemed to offer a plausible way of testing the viability and conditions of such an approach.«

The two unions had strategised on organising German manufacturers in several states, but the most-high profile transnational effort to come out before formalising the relationship in 2015 was the UAW's failed attempt the previous year to organise workers at a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The failure to get a majority of workers to vote for unionisation came in large part due to the

heavy anti-union political sentiment in the local government, a massive anti-union campaign by business lobbies, as well as from local Volkswagen-management.


As the report noted, the drive at Volkswagen was given a high priority for the joint coalition, but the German side of the equation had not anticipated the ferocity of the anti-union sentiment in the South. As Niemann-Findeisen himself noted, Germany is not without companies that resist union drives, but the anti-union legal industry in the United States has more money and resources and has more influence over local governments.

Yet, the report still saw this as growing pains, and was quite positive overall about the abilities of the two unions to foster growth together down the line. Rather than being discouraged, this episode firmed up the resolve of both unions. The two unions extended and deepened their ties even further, establishing the TPI as an information and educational centre that would foster exchanges between workers from the same company at production sites in Germany and the US and conduct informational seminars. Direct and ongoing contacts on a broad organisational basis help to keep both unions informed regarding relevant developments in both countries. And it did not take long until a glimmer of good news saw the light of day. In late 2015, a smaller section of that Chattanooga plant, the robotics repair workers, voted for UAW representation. Despite continuing refusal by VW to respect the law and enter into collective bargaining negotiations, this has been a big first for UAW representation in the South. However, everybody involved has no illusion: the joint-union venture will need to do a lot more education in places like Tennessee and to raise consciousness amongst workers if it is to boost representation in the South.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION

 Transnationalizing Unions:  
The case of the UAW and the IG Metall

Author: Michael Fichter

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=14342&ty=pdf>

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## 2.5 // WEAVING A UNION NETWORK AROUND THE GARMENT SECTOR – AN EXAMPLE FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

// BY CHRIS DICKSON

An international workers' union has been rewriting the relationship between garment sector workers in Central America, their employers, national governments and international brands, thanks to savvy communications and global consumer support.

La Liga Sindical Internacional para Responsabilizar a las Marcas (International Union League for Brand Responsibility) was created in 2012 out of a merger of several unions active in the maquila sector in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Maquila is the Spanish term used to describe factories in the region that import materials duty-free, assemble or manufacture finished goods, then re-export them immediately, often to the same country.

The organization is in its early stages, but has already succeeded in bringing pressure on those ultimately responsible for working conditions – the international brands, not just the local bosses.

La Liga, as it is better known, is now developing a global structure to unite union efforts internationally and articulate a credible discourse, which is crucial for building public support for the trade unions and the workers.

The network's success has led to international expansion as far as Asia, where many workers suffer from the consequences of the same corporate structures and market dynamics, and where La Liga's expertise and experience may be of assistance.

## FRUIT OF THE LOOM IN HONDURAS, AND THE FOUNDING OF SITRAJERZEES

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Fruit of the Loom (FOTL) is a leading US producer of cotton t-shirts, underwear and sportswear. It has plants in El Salvador, southern Mexico and Honduras. In the latter, where it was established in 2006, it has nine plants and 10,000 workers.

In 2007, workers at the company's Jerzees plant in Honduras formed a union. FOTL responded by dismissing most of those involved. But in January 2008, thanks to international workers' complaints and the support of the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), the 145 fired workers were reinstated with back pay. In April of that year, the union was formalized as the Sindicato de trabajadores de Jerzees (Union of workers of Jerzees, or SITRAJERZEES), and negotiations on a collective agreement began.

But during negotiations in 2009 the company announced the closure of the factory, citing market difficulties despite the apparent anti-union motivations. Several organizations jumped in and helped raise international public awareness, including Canada's Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN), the WRC, and the US student organization United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS). Then US universities started boycotting garments produced in Jerzees.

By the end of 2009, 110 of the 140 US universities that traded with FOTL had suspended procurement and cancelled million-dollar contracts. In November 2009, SITRAJERZEES and the country's Central General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, or CGT) signed an agreement in Washington, DC, establishing the reopening of the factory under the name Jerzees Nuevo Día, meaning »New Day«. Around 1,200 workers were reinstated.

The union, renamed SITRAJERZEESND, now boasts the best social and economic benefits of the maquila in the region. Its workers earn up to 600 US dollars per month, well above the national and regional minimum wage of approximately 260 US dollars in Honduras and 210 US dollars in nearby El Salvador.

In El Salvador, two other trade unions sought to copy the Jerzees model in their relationship with FOTL, but with mixed success. The Sindicato de Trabajadoras, Trabajadores, Sastres, Costureras y Similares (Union of men and women workers, tailors, seamstresses and similar, or SITRASACOSI) reached an agreement with FOTL to guarantee freedom of association and led the creation of a dialogue committee. But their efforts failed to secure the reopening of a factory closed in 2014, leaving 1,200 workers jobless.

But La Liga helped secure some level of victory for the workers. Through an in-

ternational investigation, it identified several major brands involved, notably HBI, Lacoste and Levis, as well as FOTL, and discovered the corporate owner of the El Salvador plant, the Mexican group Argus-Kaltex. This investigation and a global campaign ensure these companies paid the 1.7 million US dollars owed to the workers involved.

## CAMPAIGNS AND STRUCTURE

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The milestone 2010 success of SITRAJERZESND was an inspiration to form La Liga, the latter's president Estela Ramírez said.

»We realized that we faced the same problems in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic,« he said. »We organized and managed to hold a regional union meeting in Honduras at the end of 2011.«

In February 2012, trade unions from these countries met and agreed to the creation of La Liga, with the support of other allies from further afield, such as the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), as well as USAS.

La Liga's first two campaigns involved the companies Adidas of Germany and Gildan of Canada. The first, under the slogan »Adidas Workers United!«, was accompanied by a statement from La Liga, demanding that international brands be held accountable for their suppliers' practices, and to start negotiations on working conditions.

In 2014, the president of La Liga travelled to Germany and made a presentation to Adidas shareholders. He described the practices in supplier factories back in Central America, and outlined several of the disputes with the unions there, including some that had been resolved, and others still on-going.

The Gildan campaign was launched under the slogan »United, we demand respect for our labour and human rights«. Trade unions from Honduras, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Haiti participated.

The international campaigns highlighted the difficulties of maintaining effective communications across language differences and different local priorities. In response, La Liga established its Technical Team and a Founding Coordinating Committee. The latter comprised delegates from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, as well as Cambodia, Bangladesh, India and Indonesia. In 2014 it held its first world meeting in Hong Kong.

THE FUTURE

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A structure such as La Liga is extremely complex, incorporating a web of communication between and within unions as well as allied institutions, and across different countries, languages and time zones. For this reason, decisions are often made by individuals than according to institutional procedures. This can have negative medium- and long-term consequences, as it can allow the management of power and resources to drift away from the people and the workers, and become concentrated in the higher echelons, which goes against the principle of the unions. The creation of union networks around brands and the same multinational employer in Central America, however, was a good strategic choice and leveraged the structural power of the unions. The social power accumulated by trade unions in their respective countries also boosted the impact of the international campaigns. The union capability that has been most developed through La Liga's campaigns is an increase in learning and experience, even if this has not always translated into an increased associative power – meaning more members. It is noteworthy that those organizations with higher membership when they joined La Liga are the ones that proved best able to overcome the challenges they faced. All of its triumphs and learning experiences make La Liga a clear example of how successfully to build a transnational union network. It is an inspiration and encouragement to other unions on how best to explore international alliances and campaigns.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY // TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Building power in global networks:  
The International Union League in Central America

Authors: Karla Molina Montalvo & Gilberto García Dueñas  
Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13862.pdf>

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## 2.6 // ORGANISING AND INNOVATING – THE WINNING STRATEGY OF ARGENTINA'S PHARMACEUTICAL TRADE UNION

// BY LUCIA HE

On Bayer Argentina's 100th anniversary, a group of company employees mobilised at a celebration event being held at the exclusive San Isidro Racecourse on the outskirts of Buenos Aires.

While half of them dressed as guests in cocktail attire, the other half carried drums and whistles pretending to be performers. They were demanding that Bayer's manager rehire a colleague that was fired. »Okay, I'll sign the hiring [papers] right now, but please leave the event,« was the manager's response.

This group of workers were part of the Association of Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives of Argentina (Asociación de Agentes de Propaganda Médica, or AAPM in Spanish), a union that, in spite of an increasingly hostile environment towards unions in Argentina, has been able to gain new members and improve the working conditions of its existing members over the past decade using a set of key strategies. »The AAPM was able to reorganise its base, widen its framework of alliances, and rethink the union's role in a transnational industry,« writes Bruno Dobrusin, a member of the national trade union centre, the Argentine Workers' Central Union (Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina, or CTA in Spanish), in a recent report titled The union struggle against the obstacles of trans-national capital. Argentina's pharmaceutical sales representatives union and its current challenges. »For the past decade, the union has gone through a significant transformation and has



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kept a strong base of affiliates in an industry that increasingly needs fewer pharmaceutical sales representatives,» says the report.

AAPM currently has more than 8,000 members, which represents 73 per cent of the total number of pharmaceutical workers in Argentina. By comparison, median union density for other industries in Argentina is of 40 per cent. The AAPM's union density is particularly impres-

sive for a growing and significantly transnational industry. In 2011, 38.9 per cent of Argentina's pharmaceutical market was represented by multinational companies.

Key to the AAPM's growth has been a strategy of political realignment. When the union was founded in 1935, it participated in the General Confederation of Labour (Confederación General del Trabajo, or the CGT in Spanish), one of the largest labour federations in the world, currently representing three million workers. Historically, unions like the AAPM and those that are a part of the CGT have been politically aligned with Peronismo, Argentina's most prominent political movement which is often associated with workers' rights and social justice. But, after political changes pushed the CGT towards a new direction, the AAPM decided it was time to leave the federation.

»The labour situation completely changed in the 1990s with the neoliberal model that took root in Argentina during the government of Carlos Menem. There were more privatisations, dismissals and increasing job precarity. Traditional unions couldn't address the needs of the working class within this new model,« says Ricardo Peidro, general secretary of the AAPM.

The AAPM thus joined a new alliance, the CTA. Amongst its main distinctions, the CTA promotes a wider organisational model that allows direct affiliation of workers, regardless of union membership or employment situation.

»We knew that a union model that only accepted workers who were formally employed wasn't enough,« says Peidro. »A union should also represent workers in the informal sector, the retired, the ones who don't have a job – these people are also the working class. It's unacceptable that if a worker is let go from his job, a union won't represent him anymore. That's why we joined the CTA.«

## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

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Since its incorporation into the CTA, the AAPM has been able to widen its scheme of alliances, building relationships with different social movements, tenants' organisations, workers at recovered factories and other groups that had previously considered out of bounds. This allowed the AAPM to increase its coalition power.

»To incorporate the strength and assertions of colleagues who are left out of the formal labour market gave us much more power when presenting our demands to our employers. When there is a certain conflict with the employers and we're able to surround them with different sectors, we are much stronger than if we were divided or were only representing one sector,« says Peidro.

Besides its political realignment, the AAPM also decided to focus on minimum wage negotiations. While the minimum wage in the pharmaceutical industry had been constant at 682 Argentine pesos (about 44 US dollars at the current exchange rate) for years, average salaries for workers in the industry had been increasing and were significantly higher than the basic salary. This was mainly due to a growing industry – between 2005 and 2013, pharmaceutical sales more than doubled in Argentina from 1,903 million US dollars to 4,952 million US dollars. Nonetheless, union leaders at AAPM understood that negotiating a minimum wage would benefit the union as a whole.

»Focusing on minimum wage negotiations allowed the AAPM to gain a lot of legitimacy over the most vulnerable workers, the ones that are just entering the industry, who are usually younger and less interested in unionising,« says Dobrusin. »It also improves the situation in terms of firing, since firing costs are calculated based on the minimum wage.«

»Firing employees was a daily practice for the pharmaceutical industry. Firing a worker that had worked for 20 years for a company was extremely cheap, so for us it was indispensable to negotiate the minimum wage,« Pedro says in agreement. Thanks to these negotiations, the AAPM minimum wage in 2014 was 15,700 pesos (1019 US dollars), compared to the national minimum wage of 4,700 pesos (305 US dollars).

## INNOVATION DISRUPTION METHODS

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The AAPM is known not only for its negotiation tactics, but also for its mobilising efforts and innovative disruption methods. Between 2006 and 2014, the union

organised 39 industrial disputes. Of these, only six escalated to strike action. The rest involved different tactics like the disruption of Bayer Argentina's 100th anniversary event.

»We had to think of new disruption methods different from the traditional ones like striking. We're not like the oil refinery unions that can block the refineries and inflict million dollars losses to their employers,« says Peidro. »But the pharmaceutical industry really cares about its image, so that's why we started mobilising to international conferences organised by the industry, or writing reports that revealed fines that the businesses were issued for breaking regulations.«

While the AAPM has been able to strengthen its influence in Argentina, Dobrusin believes that in order to maintain this power, the union needs to start thinking global.

»The AAPM needs to be more active in building transnational alliances. That's going to be key for it to build more resistance in an industry that's totally transnational. Even the smaller labs need to think about their strategies in a global framework,« says Dobrusin.

»The key will be to join international federations and to seek alliances with similar unions that are organised in the same companies abroad. The AAPM is slowly incorporating these practices, which will be key for the union's future,« he says.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// SINDICATOS EN TRANSFORMACIÓN



La lucha sindical frente a los desafíos del capital transnacional.  
El sindicato de visitadores médicos en Argentina y los retos actuales

Author: Bruno Dobrusin  
Read more: <https://www.fes.de/lnk/dobrusin> (Spanish only)





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## 2.7 // UNITED AVIATION WORKERS LAND A VICTORY (SOUTH AMERICA)

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// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

One evening in late May 2014, a high level manager of South American airline LAN Peru waited until all his senior workers had left for the day before marching into the mechanics' hangar.

Armed with threats and money, he demanded the mechanics cease their public protests and work-to-rule campaign immediately, or else the Airline would take away the airplanes – and their jobs.

Any worker who abandoned the campaign would receive a sizeable cash gift on the spot. The 220 mechanics of LAN Peru had been engaged in a five-month campaign for better pay and working conditions. The airline – a subsidiary of LATAM Airlines – was profitable. Yet the mechanics, on whom the safety of the planes depended, had not had a pay rise in 10 years.

Since the start of protests, LAN Peru had adopted an extremely hostile stance towards its workers. Expect surprises, the leaders of the mechanics' union SITALANPE had warned their members. »They will try to divide and thereby weaken us.«

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»PLANES CAN'T FLY WITHOUT US«

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So when the [high level manager] walked in on them, the mechanics didn't budge. Determined to win, and outraged by the threatening attitude, the men stood their



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ground. »Go ahead,« they said. »The planes can't fly without us.« A week later, the mechanics voted unanimously to go on strike. Eventually, just hours before kick-off for the FIFA World Cup in Rio de Janeiro – an extremely busy time for all South American airlines – LAN Peru gave in.

All temporary workers were given fixed-term contracts, and any workers who had been fired would

get their job back. Most of the mechanics would also receive a 50 per cent salary increase, along with a bonus.

By drawing strength from unity, and pressing the company's vulnerabilities in a strategic campaign, the mechanics had prevailed.

#### NAVIGATING THROUGH STORMY TIMES

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Another memorable victory for aviation unions in South America against LATAM airlines began with a series of seemingly innocuous social events.

Throughout 2008, cabin crew employed by LAN Argentina, a subsidiary of LATAM airlines established in 2005, began to meet regularly in social settings. They went to see football games, had coffee and mate and sometimes even hit the nightclubs of Buenos Aires.

Everyone had fun, but that was not why the group was meeting. The gatherings were carefully planned to build trust among the workers represented by Argentina's cabin crew union, the Asociación Argentina de Aeronavegantes.

As LAN Argentina expanded rapidly, it hired mostly young people with no aviation experience or experience being members of a union.

Trying to side step any dealings with Aeronavegantes, the only legal union for all cabin crew in Argentina, LAN Argentina established its own »yellow« union, ATCPEA. By firing non-conformist employees, the airline created a climate of fear. By 2006, most LAN Argentina cabin crew were too frightened to speak to anyone from Aeronavegantes.

Aeronavegantes kept denouncing LAN in the media as part of attempts to force the airline out of the country. LAN employees felt they had no choice but to distance themselves from the union. In response to these developments, in 2007 the Aeronavegantes leaders decided on a change of course and reached out to the now 380 strong LAN cabin crew.

Aeronavegantes embarked on a step-by-step relationship building campaign focused on building trust with LAN employees. As with the Peruvian mechanics, the union could count on the full support of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and its strong network of Latin-American unions.

#### NEW TRUST, SUCCESSFUL BATTLES

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By September 2009, the slow approach with the LAN staffers paid off. Aeronavegantes had established a power base amongst the cabin crew.

The union felt strong enough to dare a strike of all LAN Argentina aviation unions, which would close the airport and delay flights. ITF's LATAM network supported the strike, with pilots, cabin crew, ground staff and supervisory unions demanding that LAN negotiate wage increases jointly instead of separately. LAN gave in, and its cabin crew walked away with a 21 per cent wage increase.

In the years that followed, LAN kept on trying to oust Aeronavegantes. By claiming that union elections had been rigged, it tried to install its own loyalists in leadership positions. A court eventually ordered new elections, with the Aeronavegantes activists winning by a high margin.

In 2010 LAN pilots, cabin crew, supervisors, mechanics and ground staff won another wage increase of 30 per cent. In 2015, LAN Argentina finally agreed to a legal collective agreement with Aeronavegantes. It was signed in January 2015 and remains in place today.

#### STRONG ALLIANCE AGAINST POWERFUL OPPONENT

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The success of South American unions in improving wages and conditions for workers in the region's largest and, arguably, most anti-union airline provides important lessons on how to build transnational union power.

LATAM's international unions network includes pilots, cabin crew, ground staff

and mechanics from 11 countries, 33 unions and six union federations, all supported by the global federation of transport unions, the ITF.

Drawing on the support and advice of such a vast network, both the Peruvian mechanics and the Argentinian cabin crew were able to increase and leverage their power. The workers were successful because they were committed to democratic union structures and developed strong relationships of trust with each other.

Through their patient, unwavering work they were able to force LATAM, the largest multinational aviation company in South America, to make seemingly impossible improvements in working conditions for thousands of aviation workers – a brilliant feat.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



## The power of aviation unions in South America: The ITE LATAM union network

Authors: Dina Feller & Teresa Conrow

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13817.pdf>



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## 2.8 // THE ROOKIE UNION THAT TOOK ON THE COFFEE BEHEMOTH AND WON: THE CASE OF STARBUCKS CHILE

// BY JORDI SERRAT

Over the course of the last decade, Chile – a country with high levels of youth unemployment and precarious work – has witnessed the birth of a new trade union within Starbucks, a company whose founding principles make it reluctant to accept unionisation. It's a move that has taken both Chileans and outsiders by surprise. Led by young trade union novices, its members have achieved an unprecedented success: the signing of the first collective bargaining agreement with a Starbucks workers' union.

In 2009, staff at Starbucks Chile formed the US coffee giant's first union in Latin America. It was an organisation far removed from the traditional idea of workers' unions. Its members are mostly university students in their twenties; they don't have experience with trade unions yet they are schooled in Chile's student protest movement, which began in 2006 and represents the largest social movement in the country since the end of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1990.

The commitment and shrewdness of this group of young people, together with their skilled use of social networks and new technologies, resulted in a world-first in 2015: the first collective bargaining agreement negotiated by a Starbucks union.

The history of the Starbucks Chile union must be understood in terms of the

socio-political context facing the country during the first decade of this century, which was marked by protests by high school and university students against the education model inherited from the military regime.

Andrés Giordano, the first – and serving – president of the Starbucks Chile union, agrees, arguing that in 2009 the »process of social agitation« by the student movement favoured the creation of the workers' union.

»There was a climate of unrest that made it possible for young people – we are in the majority at Starbucks – to react by proposing a form of organisation that meant we were no longer just individual employees,« explains Giordano, who was a student leader between 2004 and 2007.

The young workers – many of whom are working to fund their education and who see a job at Starbucks as a stop-gap measure – found themselves part of a company with a peculiar corporate philosophy geared towards customers who perceived the brand as a status symbol.

#### SOCIAL NETWORKS AND INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS: THE KEYS TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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The study titled *La experiencia del Sindicato Starbucks Coffee en Chile* (The Experience of the Starbucks Coffee Union in Chile), notes how, for customers, »the experience of the Starbucks culture is complemented by the declaration of »responsible consumption« by the company« offering an approach based on business ethics, environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

To reinforce this message and the spirit of belonging to the company, Starbucks workers are internally referred to as »partners,« a standard part of the lexicon of so-called »happy companies«. In this context, the multinational regards any union initiatives as redundant.

Starbucks first launched in Chile in 2003, with one coffee shop in Santiago. Six years later, the company had 40 premises spread across three cities. The rapid growth of Starbucks also saw the first disagreements between staff and the organisation, which the company resolved with dismissals and reprisals against staff who complained.

It was at this point that workers began to organise themselves via email. »Using access to institutional emails, they organised »leisure« meetings in spaces outside the shops,« something that didn't arouse any suspicion, since such meetings took

place under the umbrella of the Starbucks culture. The meetings were used to thrash out the details of creating the union.

The process culminated on 9 April 2009, with the constitution of the Union of Starbucks Workers before a certifying official, establishing an organisation with 15 people. This was followed by collective bargaining between the union and the company. A first round took place in 2011, followed by a second in 2013. Both ended without an agreement, due to the company's refusal to accept the proposals of the workers' representatives. The staff also carried out two strikes, one in 2011 lasting 18 days and another in 2013 lasting 11 days to show their discontent and as a means of applying pressure.

A third round of collective bargaining began in 2015. However, in contrast to previous rounds, the union took a decision that would prove decisive in securing its interests. It submitted a complaint to the National Contact Point (NCP) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which in Chile is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking it to look into whether Starbucks was complying with the good practice guidelines for multinational companies.

The OECD concluded that the union was positive for protecting the rights of staff and negotiating new contracts.

Backed by the NCP declaration and with all measures exhausted, a new strike began on 20 May 2015. However, this time, the action ended abruptly after three days, with the signing of the first collective bargaining agreement by a union of Starbucks workers.

For Giordano, the NCP resolution was fundamental in changing the company's attitude: »A ruling is news that lasts for one day, a declaration by the OECD holds considerable weight. It goes beyond the borders of Chile and has a global impact. This created sufficient pressure on the company to agree to negotiate a contract, a meagre contract but a contract nonetheless.«

As Giordano explains, the agreement was decaffeinated in the extreme, including a bonus for trainers of new staff and a monthly food allowance of 22 US dollars.

However, in spite of this, it laid the foundations for future negotiations and legitimised members of the union with respect to other staff at the multinational's affiliates. As the months have passed, the issues discussed by the union and the company have diversified.

Moreover, the success of the Starbucks Chile union has set a precedent for the

South American country, with workers at two other fast-food chains (Papa John's and Johnny Rockets) forming their first unions in 2016.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

// SINDICATOS EN TRANSFORMACIÓN



Recursos de poder en el Sindicato de Trabajadores  
de Starbucks en Chile

Author: Felipe Andrés Labra

Read more: <http://nuso.org/media/articles/files/68c2bc4d-7bca-45a4-891d-33954e8755f7.pdf> (Spanish only)

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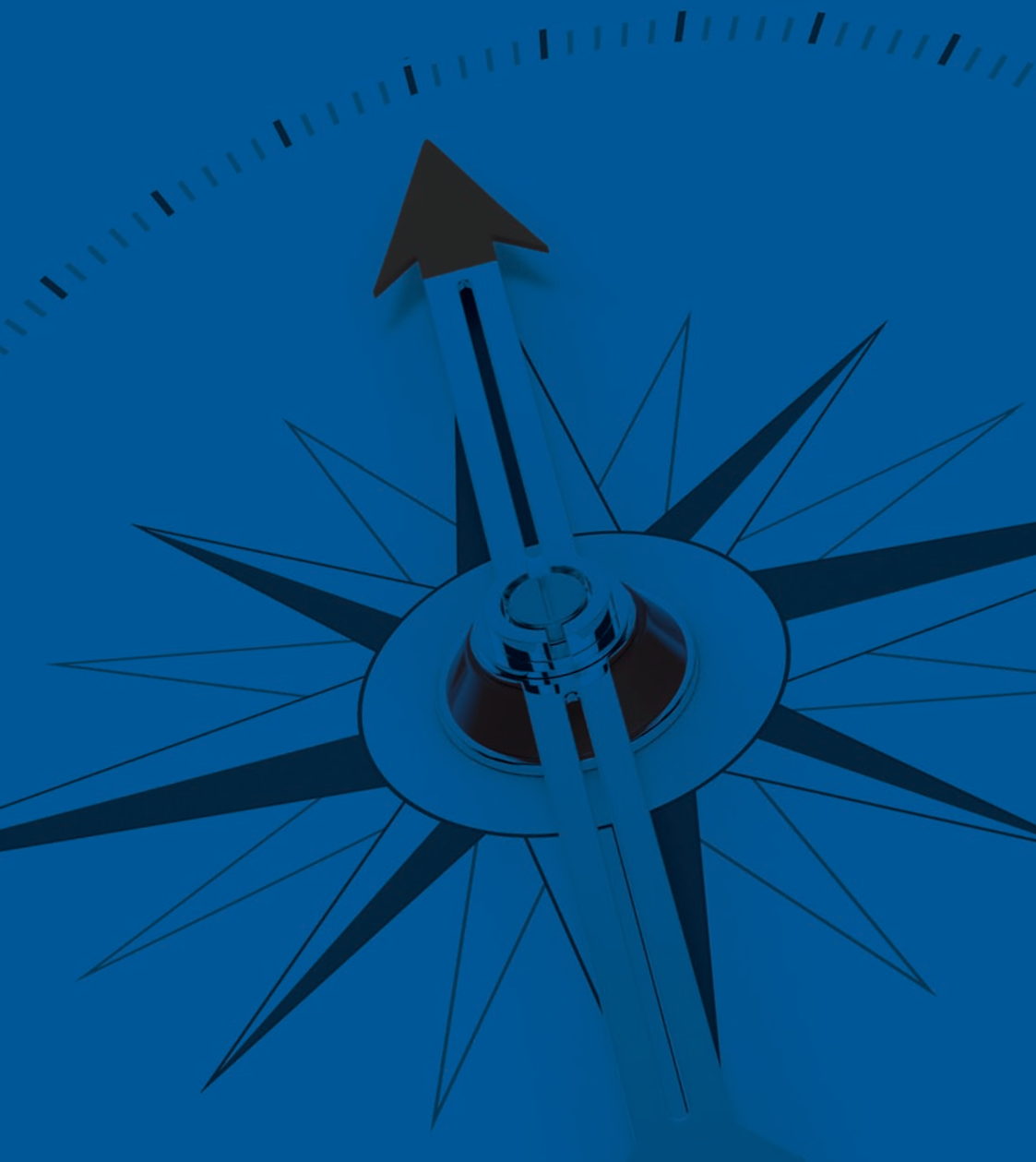




# POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ALLIANCES

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SECTION 3 //





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### 3.1 // LATIN AMERICA'S BIGGEST TRADE UNION IS BACK ON THE STREETS (BRAZIL)

// BY SANTI CARNERI

The CUT's social power is at its lowest level for years, but it still enjoys the prestige of having been the driving force behind a decade of gains that have translated into increased workers' rights, fewer inequalities and greater collective bargaining power. The CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) is the largest trade union centre in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world. It has a membership of 7.8 million workers, and more widely represents some 24 million workers.

Its magnitude and power were decisive in the victories secured by the Workers' Party (PT) in four successive presidential elections, firstly with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2006 and 2007–2010), followed by Dilma Rousseff (2011–2014 and 2015–2016).

This gigantic trade union has now reached a crossroads: despite being responsible for a good portion of the most progressive agenda during the PT's time in office, its social recognition steadily waned as the protests against Rousseff's governments grew. Now it is looking to go back to its roots, heading the opposition to the neoliberal measures being pushed by the government of Michel Temer, who took over the presidency after Rousseff was impeached.

The CUT's social power is at its lowest level for years, but it still enjoys the prestige of having been the driving force behind a decade of gains that have translated into increased workers' rights, fewer inequalities and greater collective bargaining power, according to the study: Trade Unions in Transformation – The CUT's Ex-

perience During the Workers' Party's (PT) Governments in Brazil (2003–2016) by researchers José Dari Krein and Hugo Dias:

#### THE HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICA'S BIGGEST UNION

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»I don't agree that the 1980s was the ›lost decade‹, as it is so often referred to by the Right. It was a loss for capital, because for the workers it was a remarkable decade. The Workers' Party (PT) was founded in 1980, the CUT in 1983 and the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in 1984,« explains Marxist sociologist Ricardo Antunes, professor at the State University of Campinas in the state of Sao Paulo. To tell the history of the CUT is to immerse oneself in the rise of the ›New Trade Unionism‹, as it is known in Brazil today. The trade union centre was founded in spite of the ban imposed by the dictatorship, which only permitted trade unions controlled by the state itself and that did not represent the workers' interests. According to the report by Krein and Dias, the CUT emerged out of the prominent role played at the end of the 1970s by workers' movements emboldened by a new concept of trade unionism, based on the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), such as freedom and independence, as well as more class-based and combative action. In other words, the CUT emerged fighting against the dictatorship and for democracy in the country.

#### THE LULA GOVERNMENTS

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Lula's victory in 2003 gave the trade union movement the hope of being able to overcome, at least in part, the unfavourable environment created for Brazilian workers during the 1990s. But for the CUT, the government's beginnings, against the background of an economic crisis, was too conservative in many respects, according to the study by Krein and Dias. At the same time, however, it began implementing policies such as the Zero Hunger programme and introducing institutional participation and dialogue with organised social movements.

At that time, people who the State had never listened to before started arriving at the Palácio do Planalto, the seat of government, in Brasilia. Indigenous people from the most remote parts of the Amazon, landless farmers and workers of all kinds started to take part in some of the country's political decisions.

The CUT was confronted with an apparent paradox. It assumed the government's defence for the first time in its history, even though it did not fully agree with the economic policy reforms at the time. This ambiguity led to the emergence of groups further to the left, which were pushing for a more critical stance towards the government.



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In 2004, Brazil's economy started to recover, initially thanks to the

commodities boom and then the growth in the domestic market. The trade union centre defined its strategy and closed ranks with Lula in response to the right wing's first attempts to remove him from the presidency.

The institutionalisation of the CUT against a backdrop of growing employment enabled it to spearhead changes in the labour market and to strengthen its structural power. Examples of this include 10 consecutive years of pay increases as well as the increase of the minimum wage – to reduce inequality and increase the purchasing power of workers – in addition to the launch, in 2004, of annual ›Working Class Marches‹, held alongside other trade unions. On these marches, CUT's demands – in in harmony with other trade unions – were put forward around strengthening democracy and the valorisation of work. On the three first marches, an increase to the minimum wage was on the top of the agenda.

Another major gain was the law passed in 2008 updating the regulations from the 1930s and finally recognising trade union centres, although this had undesirable consequences for the CUT. According to the analysis of Krein and Dias, the passing of this law led to ›an increase in proliferation of different trade unions and the consolidation of fragmented trade unionism at all levels‹.

#### WEAKENING SUPPORT FOR DILMA

The Brazilian trade union movement, including the CUT, started to see a serious decline under Dilma Rousseff's rule, when the economy started to slow and the annual growth rate went from 7.6 per cent in 2010 to zero in 2014.

The government's failure to implement a viable development project, the persistent international crisis and the end of the cycle of growth in domestic consumption triggered the start of the criticism levelled against the CUT.

Although it remained in the same political camp as the PT, the trade union began distancing itself from government, spurred by the lack of dialogue, the policy of providing fiscal incentives to big companies, the overall economic policy direction and other sources of disagreement.

Despite this distancing with the unions, Rousseff's candidacy in the 2014 election was strongly supported by the CUT and social organisations, which were eager to secure her victory in the face of the growing rise of the right wing.

But an illustration of how the CUT was weakened by its closeness to the ruling party is the loss of its role as an institution capable of voicing the public's main grievances, as demonstrated by its marginal role in the social unrest of June 2013, when the Confederations Cup was held amid mass demonstrations.

The report examining the CUT concludes that the union's experience underlines the importance, despite the institutional gains, of maintaining social alliances based on an overall agenda that reflects the interests of the most vulnerable members of society.

#### GOING BACK TO THE STREETS TO STOP TEMER

The conservative government of President Michel Temer plans to reform the retirement system, among other measures, as part of a strict structural adjustment programme involving major public spending cuts over the next two decades.

»What we have done is to present a way of saving the pension system from collapse, to rescue the benefits of the pensioners of today and of the young people who will retire in the future,« said Temer, in a speech delivered to a group of business people at an official ceremony in March. The president insisted that the reform is essential and urgently needed to avoid bankruptcy. Temer's proposal has sent the CUT back to the streets, back to its roots. Mass trade union protests have returned to the country's big cities. The trade unions are opposed to the government reform.

On 15 March 2017, São Paulo began the day without buses and a metro service at half throttle. Schools and universities came to a standstill in Rio de Janeiro along with a number of banks. In Brasília, a large march was held and the demonstrators

occupied part of the Finance Ministry headquarters. The protests were called, with the support of the CUT, by Frente Brasil Popular (Brazil People's Front), Frente Povo sem Medo (People without Fear Front) and the CTB (Central dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras do Brasil).

THE 15 MARCH PROTEST WAS FOLLOWED BY TWO MORE:  
ON 31 MARCH, AND ON 28 APRIL.

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On the 31 March demonstration, thousands of workers protested against the reform of the retirement system, as well as against the fiscal adjustments being proposed by Temer, and the legalisation of sub-contracting. Although the general strike of 28 April – the first one in two decades – did not paralyse the country, trade unions say that the strike had been supported by 40 million workers, which accounts for 45 per cent of the Brazilian labour force. The strike was held in response to the progress of Temer's labour reforms in Parliament and the regression of social rights.

Brazil's largest trade union centre is faced with the challenge of consolidating its position as the champion of the rights won by workers over the last decade.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



The CUT's experience during the Workers' Party's (PT) governments in Brazil (2003–2016)

Authors: Hugo Rodrigues Dias & José Dari Krein

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13761.pdf>



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## 3.2 // THE FALL AND RISE OF URUGUAY'S TRADE UNIONS

// BY CHRIS DICKSON

Trade unions in Uruguay enjoy an enviable strength in the Latin American context. The only trade union confederation in the country, the *Plenario Intersindical de Trabajadores-Convención Nacional de Trabajadores/PIT-CNT* (Inter-union Workers' Plenary-National Worker's Convention), counts an impressive membership of 40 per cent of the country's salaried employees. Its numbers give it great weight in collective bargaining, and even include members in cabinet, parliament and other institutions.

The PIT-CNT's central position in Uruguay's political life is largely due to its links with the coalition of left-wing and progressive parties which has ruled the country for three consecutive terms since 2005: the *Frente Amplio/FA* (the Broad Front).

»The FA and the PIT-CNT are animals born from the same placenta,« according to José Mujica, the country's president from 2010 to 2015. »The role of organized workers was and always will be crucial in society's transformations, and never more so than under a left-wing government,« he explained. »Each plays their role, but is aware that their future is at stake, and bad times for one means bad times for the other,« he said of the relationship between politicians and the unions.

In the case of the FA and PIT-CNT, theirs is an old one. As early as 1984, when the FA was an opposition force and many of its leadership were banned from politics, CNT president José D'Elia was also the vice-presidential candidate for the FA, as well as later leading the PIT-CNT. Ever since, the history of the two organizations has been closely connected – including the run up to the FA's victory in 2004 elections.



## THE TRADE UNIONS' YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS

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Before the golden age they are enjoying now, Uruguayan trade unions had to endure their time in the political wilderness. Unions were banned during the brutal military dictatorship, which ruled from 1973 to 1985. After that, a succession of conservative governments carried out a series of neoliberal policies that deregulated working conditions and introduced more flexibility into the labour market. This weakened the union movement, and caused union membership to fall.

But the injury to Uruguayan trade unions was not fatal, and they found ways of making their voices heard in spite of the circumstances. Their key tools were the referendums, binding popular consultations defined in the national constitution, which allowed the PIT-CNT a central role in slowing down the government's privatization efforts.

»At a time when trade unions were diminished in practice as a consequence of their persecution, there was no collective bargaining,« explained Juan Castillo, General Secretary in the PIT-CNT between 2008 and 2012. »Unemployment was high and the government didn't represent us, but they enjoyed wide popular support and we realized that the mechanisms of popular consultation were the way to counter the most negative aspects of the right's neoliberal policies.«

## THE KEYS OF URUGUAYAN UNIONISM'S SUCCESS

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Two factors explain the survival of Uruguayan unionism during its harshest years, and the good health it enjoys now: the strong democratic tradition in the country, at least compared with other nations in the region; and the institutional solidarity that the PIT-CNT preserved against all odds.

Uruguay is a small country with fewer than 3.5 million inhabitants, which has been able to combine a strong democratic tradition with a solid trade union culture. Since the early 20th century, trade unions have been beneficiaries of a welfare state and democratic system, and have in turn been instrumental in cementing and deepening those institutions.

While the governments of its two giant neighbours, Argentina and Brazil, were launching top-down social and labour reforms while strictly regulating union activity, Uruguay accomplished something unique in the region: to build a welfare state from early on, and to lay the foundations for a democratic culture endowed

with a solid party system, as well as representative and militant trade unions. The solidarity of the country's trade unions was forged in the 50s, with close co-operation and alignment between organizations. This was consolidated in 1965 with the Congreso del Pueblo (People's Congress), a meeting of representatives from the most important social and cultural organizations. The CNT was formally established the following year, at an event attended by virtually all trade unions. In 1983, towards the end of the military dictatorship, workers' organizations held a popular demonstration on May 1st which drew 250,000 people, and founded the PIT.

This institutionalized solidarity between Uruguayan trade unions was not imposed by government policy or regulation, but was built by the trade unions themselves. The principle of a single, indivisible movement of trade unions is based on the sentiment of »one for all, all for one«. Moreover, trade unions' cooperation and solidarity were part of the inspiration for the 1971 creation of the FA, as an alliance of centre-left and left-wing political parties.

»Arguably it was the left, during its period of unification in the late 60s and early 70s, who took on almost completely the approaches that organized civil society had articulated in the 60s – most notably in the case of the so-called People's Congress,« said Milton Castellanos, leader of the PIT-CNT and director of Instituto Cuesta Duarte.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRADE UNIONS' POWER

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Given this historical background, the alliance between the Frente Amplio and the trade unions comes as no surprise. Eduardo Bonomi, labour minister in the first FA government and one of the key people in the design and implementation of the alliance, explained: »Since the very formation of the team which drafted the FA platform for the elections in 2004, it was assumed that the relationship with the trade unions would be crucial and strategic, as a consequence of their historic political commitment, but also due to electoral dynamics.«

»Most of the electoral platform, and not only those aspects related to working conditions, were discussed and agreed with the trade unions, and actually several of them became flagship policies of the first left-wing government,« he said. »This also explains the high number of union leaders who ended up occupying important positions in the new government, including several ministers.«

After the crisis that engulfed the country and the region in 2002, the first priority of the FA government was to reestablish decent employment and salaries. It passed more than 50 labour-related laws, notably: collective bargaining laws for public- and private-sector employees; protection of trade union activities; regulation of domestic employment; an eight-hour workday for rural workers; and regulation of outsourcing.

But not everything is a bed of roses for Uruguay's trade unions. Conservative media, speaking for a large segment of society, has labeled them »one of the populist state's three powers,« alongside the government and the FA. And the ongoing economic problems could put a strain on the unions' alliance with the current FA government, as pressure increases to cut budgets and deregulate, against the traditional interests of the trade unions.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Uruguay:  
Building trade union power

Authors: Álvaro Padrón & Achim Wachendorfer

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13845.pdf>



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### 3.3 // WHEN UNIONS MAKE HISTORY: THE UGTT'S ROLE IN TUNISIA'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

// BY LINA BEN MHENNI

With 600,000 members out of a working population of around four million people, the UGTT is the largest, and most influential, organised force in Tunisia. Despite numerous challenges, most notably the economic and security situation, Tunisia has received widespread acclaim for its relatively peaceful transition to democracy following the 2011 uprising that resulted in the overthrow of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. In recognition of this achievement, the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet – made up of the Tunisian Bar Association, the Tunisian Human Rights League, the UTICA employers' organisation and the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) – was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. The role of civil society, and notably that of the UGTT, was key in the process of peaceful transition to democracy. In a recent study, entitled *Trade union power and democratic transition in Tunisia – The UGTT: a unique story, an unprecedented experience*, Sami Adouani and Saïd Ben Sedrine shed light on how the UGTT managed to tap into its unique history and ample resources to keep political dialogue alive at times of crisis and to ensure Tunisia's successful transition from decades of autocracy to an emerging democracy. The UGTT was formed in 1946, when Tunisia was still a French protectorate, and it played a key role in the post-World War II struggle for independence. When Tunisia finally won independence in 1956, the UGTT had two key aims, note Adouani and Ben Sedrine: »To improve the living and working conditions of workers, and to bring influence to bear on the direction and programming of public development policies.«

In fact, the report asserts that, along with other major civil society organisations, the UGTT was closely intertwined with the nascent state and supported its socio-economic programmes.

The relationship between the UGTT and the state was ambivalent, however, during the decades of authoritarian rule that followed (Habib Ben Ali Bourguiba from 1957 to 1987 and Ben Ali from 1987 to 2011). While the UGTT managed to work with a certain degree of autonomy, it also experienced violent repression at various junctures and served as a temporary sanctuary for opponents to the regime.

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#### BUILDING DEMOCRACY, STRENGTHENING WORKERS' POWER

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When the protests against Ben Ali began in December 2010, the UGTT, after a moment of hesitation by its leadership, threw the full weight of its resources behind the revolution, a process pushed by the regional and local trade union associations that »opened their premises to protesters and made their voices heard in national and international media«. Propelled by the grassroots support for the revolution, the UGTT supported protests across the country and organised general strikes.

The UGTT's decision to support the January 2011 lawyers general strike in particular marked a new era of alliance-building for the trade union centre and formed the bedrock for a post-revolution civil society alliance that would transform »the popular protest movement into a political initiative aimed at defending the revolutionary dynamic,« according to the report.

Following the fall of Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, the UGTT's influence grew as it led the national dialogue in an urge to resolve escalating political conflicts and secure the drafting of the country's new constitution. Uniting civil society stakeholders in support of the dialogue proved key to progress on the political level. The role played by the UGTT during the revolution and initial transition translated into a surge in numbers: now with around 600,000 members out of a working population of around four million people, the UGTT reinforced its position as the largest, and most influential, organised force in Tunisia.

A look back at the UGTT's history helps to understand how it could reach this position of strength. Throughout its history, the UGTT has been able to forge its identity as a unitary trade union, bringing together different political currents, say Adouani and Ben Sedrine. That way, it was able to broaden its social power base and increase its associational strength, developing »expertise in conflict manage-

ment». It was this experience with balancing different interests and negotiating consensus that can be considered to be at the root of the UGTT's key mediation role during the transition, according to the study.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?


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Tunisia is still going through a period of transition and the challenges that lie ahead are huge: the economy is in crisis, unemployment is high – particularly amongst young people – and terrorism is a threat to stability. As Adouani and Ben Sedrine put it, »political stability was achieved at the expense of the social question« during Tunisia's transition to democracy.

With the initial enthusiasm of the revolution waning, the UGTT needs to adapt accordingly, the authors say. Making greater inroads into the private sector, where it remains under-represented, addressing precarity in the informal sector, and investing in young people and women, will be some of the issues the union will have to tackle in the coming years. Adouani and Ben Sedrine also suggest that the UGTT needs to change its approach towards the public sector, since its »current union vision and practices do not promote fairness, efficiency and quality in public service, thereby potentially harming its image in Tunisian society«. Finally, the UGTT will need to maintain »its ability to transcend diverging interests« if democracy is to be a lasting success. The post-revolutionary UGTT will need to »find new sources of power if it wants to retain its power«.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY // TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION

 Trade union power and democratic transition in Tunisia  
The UGTT: A unique story, an unprecedented experience

Authors: Sami Adouani & Saïd Ben Sedrine  
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## 3.4 // AFTER A DIFFICULT LIBERATION, SOUTH AFRICA'S LARGEST TRADE UNION PONDERS THE FUTURE

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// BY CHRIS DICKSON

It has been a momentous few years for the (NUMSA). Since 2014 it has survived the organizational break from the country's biggest trade union federation, faced dissent from within and without, and seen membership grow to the largest of any union in the history of the continent.

But it has struggled to find a niche in its new, more independent incarnation, on both institutional and societal levels. A bid to form a new trade union federation was launched in April 2017, after a number of delays. Attempts to create a united front of workers and grassroots organizations have stalled amid politicking and a lack of connection to communities. And the avowed objective to find a new, wider social relevance for the movement has not yet found a clear direction or voice.

### THE RACIAL TWIST TO SOUTH AFRICA'S CLASS STRUGGLE

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South Africa's labour movement has a particular history, as the country's overwhelmingly black workers for decades laboured under the double oppression of apartheid and capitalist exploitation. The question of which to tackle first has long divided workers' rights movements.

In 1973, the question came to a head. The eastern coastal town of Durban was



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racked by a wave of strikes, which gave birth to the combative Metal and Allied Workers Union, marking the end of »Apartheid's golden age«.

In the words of veteran sociology professor Edward Webster, writing in 1985: »For the first time in South African history, a mass-based, non-racial, industrial union was created, giving birth to a working class politics.«

Through the 1970s and 80s, the country's workers became increasingly organized, as the class struggle made better progress than the fight against apartheid. NUMSA was formed in 1987 out of the merger of four unions in the metal and automotive sectors, and quickly became a leading force within the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The unions needed political support, and COSATU found natural allies in the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. In 1990, as the negotiations that would dismantle apartheid got under way, the three organizations formed the Tripartite Alliance.

The alliance marked a shift away from NUMSA's class-based strategy, and put the political liberation of the country's black and coloured population at the heart of its Freedom Charter. But the partnership with the rising powers gave the unions a seat at the political table.

#### THE ALLIANCE YEARS, AND THE »PARADOX OF VICTORY«

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For the next two decades, under successive ANC governments from 1994, COSATU fought alongside the rest of the alliance to improve the lives of union members and the rest of the country's black and working class.

But already during the 90s, some unionists were uncomfortable with government policies. A 1996 programme to boost employment in fact ended up eroding job security among workers, according to activists and academic observers. The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy liberalised trade and fi-



nance, privatised or corporatized basic services, and allowed for outsourcing of non-core operations by employers.

This deregulation was seized on by all employers, producing what labour lawyer Jan Theron called »informalization from above« in previously well-organized sectors including mining, nursing and the post office

Pragmatic voices among NUMSA cadres saw these compromises as necessary. But others were increasingly frustrated with how much the unions had to concede in order to be kept on board: the »paradox of victory,« in the words of sociology professor Sakhela Buhlungu.

That frustration grew under Presidents Thabo Mbeki (1999–2008), and led to high hopes of his successor Jacob Zuma (from 2009). But these were quickly dashed as the government failed to significantly change the course of its economic policies.

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#### THE »NUMSA MOMENT«

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The union has always seen itself as fighting for more than just better working conditions. Its ultimate objective is a new, independent working-class politics to be pursued in all spheres: corporate negotiations, media narratives, party politics and grass-roots communities.

This ambition initially led NUMSA to support the unions' political partnerships, but then led to its disenchantment with the Tripartite Alliance, which it said was incapable of championing a truly pro-workers and pro-poor agenda, whether measured by class or by race. »The government failed to secure economic power for the black majority,« NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim said.

At a special congress in 2013, NUMSA opted to withdraw from the governing alliance and withhold its dues from the SACP, a split that has been referred to as the »NUMSA moment« in South Africa's labour relations.

»It is clear that the working class cannot any longer see the ANC or the SACP as its class allies in any meaningful sense,« Jim was quoted as saying in news reports at the time.

Although the bulk of COSATU members remained on board with the alliance, in 2014 NUMSA was expelled from COSATU officially for violating the COSATU principle of »one union, one sector« by organising throughout value chains.

#### A NEW VOICE FOR THE FUTURE

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NUMSA has been successful in striking out alone, further increasing its membership and securing recognition with the authorities and employers' forums. But how far it has been able to achieve, or even define, its subsequent achievements is another matter.

Membership, a key metric of associational power, has gone from strength to strength, adding up to 340,000 members compared to 220,000 in 2009. Already the country's largest-ever union before the split, NUMSA has recruited tens of thousands of new members in new sectors including transport and healthcare and was able to reach out to young workers.

Media coverage has portrayed the newly independent union as the voice of the workers for matters ranging beyond economic conditions to those of wider social concern. This improved societal power has in turn translated into further membership gains, for example in the transport sector.

By careful framing of its struggle, the union has also made some new allies. When Chinese dumping threatened the auto sector, for example, the union portrayed the issue in a nationalist light, prompting the government to support the whole sector, including the employer corporations, against the foreign threat.

The youth is another good example of improved societal impact. NUMSA's Youth Forum has provided a point of engagement with the nation's youth movement more widely, and union leaders have met with protesting students several times in recent months.

#### HOWEVER, THE UNION IS STILL STRUGGLING ON SEVERAL FRONTS.

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In its traditional role as representing workers' interests and dedicated to a socialist transformation project, it is launching a new Federation to rival COSATU, alongside nine other unions who left and uniting 57 organisations in total, many of them newly found or independent unions organizing precarious workers. But many of these organisations have reported administrative difficulties in formal recognition. »It has taken more than two years only to register« with the Department of Labour, said Thobile Ntola, President of the South African Public Service Union. COSATU unions »were adducing all sorts of requirements to slow down the process,« he said. Because of these and other artificial delays, his union was not part

of the official bargaining forum with employers in its sector, he said.

The new union of unions was launched in April. Its main principles are independence from political parties, democracy, worker control, and cooperation. The new union will not be a member of any political party, but nor will it be apolitical, said Zwelinzima Vavi, the convenor of its steering committee, and the ousted former general secretary of COSATU.

But in the meantime, the union has also been working on deepening its political impact at grass-roots level through another initiative. The United Front (UF) was established – initially with COSATU backing in 2014 – to improve cooperation with community-based organizations.

The UF has run into its own problems, as most members of its committee turned out to be NGO directors or employees, with little direct experience of the working-class communities they were supposed to represent. This legitimacy problem and a lack of coherent strategy and common agenda have stalled the project for the time being.

## GROWTH POTENTIAL

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Across South Africa, an estimated 74 per cent of workers remain not unionised, a significant opportunity for a reinvigorated workers' movement. As difficult economic conditions prevail and disenchantment with the ruling political parties is high, this represents further potential support for the right movement, even beyond the traditional base of industrial workers.


The numbers are also there in terms of membership. But greater internal intermediation and learning are essential to give the workers' movement nationwide coherence, and external alliances and outreach is needed to improve its traction with new members, the media, and society more widely, including academia.

In particular, NUMSA needs to mend its bridges with the academic community. For decades it was considered the flagship of South African workers' movement by the country's social scientists. But recent tensions have led to open disputes, such as an unprecedented attack on academics at the NUMSA 2016 congress. More needs to be done on both sides to make room for more constructive engagement. Paraphrasing the general secretary, it is the duty of the working class and its leaders to reach the hearts and minds of academics to support their project of emancipation.

This does not mean that the union should stifle all internal dissent. Factional dynamics can be a source of enriched debate, and of cooperative factionalism. But not if the strife becomes exclusionary or degenerative, as has recently been the case. NUMSA is still the country's leading workers' organization, with more members than any other in the history of the continent, and who strongly see it as their political home due to the process of emancipation since the split from COSATU. To turn this into real progress, it will need to reach deep into its own history of dialogue and consensus, as well as its radical political roots, to stay relevant and effective for the future.

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 An assessment of NUMSA's attempt to develop its political and organisational independence, 2012–2016

Author: Miriam Di Paola  
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# TRANSFORMING UNIONS TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

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SECTION 4 //





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## 4.1 // CUT-BRAZIL, A TRADE UNION CENTRE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE

// BY NAZARET CASTRO

Parity has, after a 30-year struggle, become a fundamental gain for women members of the largest trade union in Latin America, CUT-Brazil. Prioritising their identity as women (over and above their political orientations), rallying the support of male trade union leaders and building an effective women's collective have been crucial to the progress made. But many challenges remain, at a time when the political climate is raising fears of reversals in the field of equality.

In 2012, measures were taken to ensure that female trade unionists would achieve parity in the biggest trade union in Brazil and Latin America, the CUT (Central Única de Trabalhadores), in a country where women's representation in parliament, for example, is amongst the lowest in the world, and the lowest in South America.

The measures, implemented in 2015, were »the result of a long process of building power,« according to social worker Didice Godinho Delgado, the first coordinator of the CUT's National Committee of Working Women (CNMT) and author of the study *Building Workers' Power with Gender Parity: the case of CUT-Brazil*.

The CUT is the largest trade union centre in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world, bringing together 30.4 per cent of all unionised workers in Brazil, according to the study headed by Godinho. Gender parity has turned the CUT into a vanguard trade union within the women's movement and an exception »not only within the trade union movement of Brazil, but the whole of Latin America and,



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perhaps, the world,» says Junéia Martins Batista, who heads the National Women's Secretariat (SNMT, previously CNMT) of the CUT.

»We understand that working women are even more exploited than men, working the same if not more and earning less,« the CUT president, Vagner Freitas, said in a recent declaration. Many trade unionists like him supported the principle of parity from the beginning.

But not all of them: »There was some resistance from men, because the initial idea was that, in order to establish parity, a number of men would have to be excluded from the leadership,« points out Janeslei Aparecida Albuquerque, the CUT secretary of relations with social movements. »The solution found was to increase the number of secretariats to include a parity of women, without excluding any of the men. In other words, the numerical issue was resolved, but there is still a long way to go to ensure more women have political prominence and hold decision-making roles,« she adds.

»That's why we want a woman in the presidency of the CUT,« says Martins. For Godinho, parity has been »decisive in building institutional power for women« and has strengthened the internal democracy within the trade union, as »there can be no democracy without women«. Can men not defend women's interests? »They can and they must,« says Martins, but it is not enough. »It is essential that women also hold power, that they go from having influence to having real power.« Having more women in positions of responsibility within the CUT has meant that »women's issues have become the trade union centre's responsibility«.

Parity has proved successful in placing issues such as childcare facilities, collective launderettes and the extension of paternal leave on the trade union agenda, as well as furthering the debate on work-life balance and shorter working hours. But as Godinho explains, it took thirty years to secure it: first of all, one or two women were symbolically included in each committee, which conferred a »symbolic role on these women, as if they were the representatives of women in general,« according to Godinho. Then, in 1991, the CUT adopted a minimum quota for women, which enabled »a qualitative change in the balance of power,« Godinho adds.



The building of networks was essential during this long struggle: all the bodies related to women built a network, the women's collective, and held regular meetings to converge positions and share strategies. There is great diversity amongst the women in the CUT, a combination of different identities (social, ethnic, political), but they have proved capable of giving priority to their identity as women. They also succeeded in winning the support of male leaders, which was central to advancing their cause.

#### CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

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»Not all of the women trade unionists in the CUT are feminists, although their number is on the rise and they are fighting against all forms of discrimination, based on a feminism that links gender, class and race,« maintains Godinho. Since its foundation in 1983, the CUT has been responding to the »new trade unionism« model, engaging with social movements in working class neighbourhoods and with women's movements, for example.

»There is a mainstreaming of rural and Afro-descendant women's issues within the CUT,« explains Martins. Rural women have always been prominent in the CUT: the current vice president, Carmen Foro, is a rural woman, which means the rural agenda reaches the central head office. In addition, Martins recalls, »the debate concerning rural women links up with environmental issues: the need to care for the land that produces our food and to value the work of producing food, which family farmers provide us with, not the big companies.«

With regards to black women workers, the CUT established a secretariat to combat racism in 2009. Its secretary, Maria Júlia Reis, explains: »When you are a woman and you are black in this country, the situation is all the more difficult.« Gender and racial inequalities »are structural pillars of the inequality in Brazil,« explains Godinho, so they have to be addressed in tandem. Indigenous women, for their part, have not yet been directly included in the leadership structures of the CUT, although »we ended up engaging with them through the Women's March [earlier this year]«, points out Albuquerque.

In addition to black and rural women, the CUT integrates the diversity inherent to the women's movement: women from poorer neighbourhoods, urban and rural workers, academics, young women and LGBTI. This mainstreaming is combined with the women trade unionists' capacity to build bridges with the academic

world and to work in partnership with social organisations. The CUT is developing training programmes in conjunction with public universities and has contributed to the theoretical debate held by the Feminist Think Tank on Productive and Reproductive Work, which feminist activist Vera Soares qualified as »one of the most interesting experiences arising from the interaction between the CUT, feminist activists and feminist academics«. In this way, the CUT »has become a constituent of the women's movement« rather than a simple ally, according to Maria Betânia Ávila of the NGO SOS Corpo Feminismo e Democracia (Feminist Institute for Democracy), from Recife.

#### RISK OF GOING BACKWARDS

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But much remains to be done. »Sexism is cultural and has to be tackled on a daily basis, in the everyday practices of the trade union movement. They are the most difficult barriers to break, because many women in the CUT continue to replicate the overload of domestic tasks, the double or triple shift. Sharing domestic and care tasks equally is still a challenge for us,« says Martins. In Brazil, according to official statistics, in 2014 women worked a total of 59 hours a week, combining social reproduction work (unpaid domestic and care work) with their work outside the home. They worked, on average, six hours more a day than men.

The challenges for the trade union are even greater in the current political climate. The CUT regards the government of President Michel Temer with mistrust, considering it to be illegitimate and the consequence of a misogynistic campaign against the first woman to reach the presidency of the country, Dilma Rousseff. »The coup we experienced here has all the hallmarks of machismo, misogyny and patriarchy,« says Albuquerque.

A conservative magazine, a mouthpiece of the right, published a report on the new »First Lady« under the heading: »Beautiful, demure, stay-at-home wife«, highlighting what this government perceives as the ideal woman. It is also with »embarrassment and shame« that Albuquerque recalls Temer's speech on 8 March, in which he praised women's financial awareness based on their housekeeping skills. »The reforms this government is imposing are particularly damaging for women,« adds Albuquerque. »The PEC 55, which limits public spending, will mean an end to many public policies linked to equality. The reform of the retirement law, which sets the state pension age at 65 for both men and women, ignores the fact that

many women start working very early in life,« says Martins, who is confident that these reversals can be overturned through social struggle.

This political climate could affect the dynamic within the CUT but, according to Godinho, the changes underway »have already reached a good level of consolidation«. As Godinho, the report's author concludes: »There is no turning back.«

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Building trade union power with gender equality:  
The case of the Unified Workers' Central of Brazil

Author: Didice Godinho Delgado

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=13794&ty=pdf>



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## 4.2 // A SOFT APPROACH: HOW UNIONISTS PAVED AN »ASEAN WAY« TO SUCCESS

// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

Acts of confrontation such as sit-ins, strikes, and demonstrations are common tactics adopted by unions trying to win labour disputes. What better way to show the power of a united workforce than on the street?

Things work differently in Southeast Asia, where patient dialogue has offered a surer way to success than through heated showdowns. That, at least, is the experience of union representatives trying to make their voice heard at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Since its formation in 2007, the ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC) has successfully influenced the discourse on regional integration towards a more socially aware ASEAN. The methods it applied provide valuable insight on how trade unions can develop and use their power in different ways to shape the political, economic and social landscape.

### A SPECIAL WAY OF GETTING THINGS DONE

ASEAN is an intergovernmental body led and driven by the governments of its 10 member states Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

In 2007 – 40 years after the formation of ASEAN – its member states adopted the

ASEAN charter. It was an attempt to create an EU-style community with a single free-trade area for the region's 650 million people.

The charter proclaims the so-called ›ASEAN Way‹ – an adherence to flexibility, consensus, informality, openness, and pragmatism – to guide the member states' relationships and interactions. This ›ASEAN Way‹ comprises non-binding rules, non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect of national sovereignty. It ensures that regional concerns do not supersede domestic concerns.

There have been numerous Free Trade Agreements implemented within ASEAN since its formation. By the end of 2013, 90 bilateral and multilateral FTAs had either been signed, negotiated or proposed within ASEAN.

Through all this feverish economic activity, the social dimension of regional economic integration was all but forgotten. Although ASEAN features a Socio-Cultural Community which seeks to address human and social dimensions, ASEAN efforts to promote decent work, social justice, social welfare and environmental sustainability have been lackluster at best.

Despite remarkable economic growth – regional gross domestic product has nearly doubled between 2007 and 2014, making ASEAN the world's seventh largest integrated market – income inequality persists within and between member states. More than half of the projected employment gains in member countries will be in vulnerable employment.

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## STRATEGIC DECISION

It is against this backdrop that the leadership of three Global Union Federations – Union Network International Asia-Pacific Regional Office, Building and Wood Workers International Asia-Pacific, and Public Services International Asia-Pacific – came together in 2007 to formally establish the ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council. The idea was to influence the discourse and decision-making on regional integration towards a more socially just ASEAN.

A consensus-based organization, ASEAN will only engage with groups that play by its rules, and adhere to non-confrontational and constructive dialogue. It was thus a strategic decision of the three global union federations to embrace ›non-conditional‹ social dialogue as its main approach to engaging with ASEAN.

»It was decided at the outset that the soft approach – regular and sincere social dialogue – is the most appropriate in forging partnerships in ASEAN and in en-

gaging with ASEAN governments. ASETUC's actions are more strategic: it is very patient in its engagements,» says Christopher Ng, Regional Secretary of Union Network International-Asia-Pacific Regional Office, one of the three founding federations.

#### THE FRUITS OF PATIENCE

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Through its work, ASETUC made sure that labour issues were not lost amongst all the NGOs and civil society organizations that are competing for the attention of ASEAN bodies. It proved able to leverage its power – the ability to persuasively articulate the need for change – and develop cooperative relationships between trade unions and other groups like NGOs and civil society organisations. The possibilities for mediation in terms of consensus-building, and for framing discourses and strategies in a larger context, have proven crucial to the success of ASETUC. Although ASETUC is still not accredited as a civil society organization in ASEAN, its continuous and patient initiatives have earned it de facto recognition from several national government and ASEAN bodies who recognize its industrial relations expertise.

From the outset, ASETUC played a long game, concentrating on what could be achieved in the future by shaping a socially just ASEAN. Without doubt, ASETUC has been able to raise a legitimate voice of and for labour in relevant ASEAN bodies and organs.

Some of the results of ASETUC's work can already be seen and measured:

- At the regional level, the ASETUC-initiated annual Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue Conferences have been embraced by the ASEAN senior labour officers and labour ministers who agreed not only to participate in these conferences but also to actively engage in the organization of these conferences until 2020. At the national level, ASETUC implements its tripartite social dialogue initiatives through national conferences.
- ASETUC's occupational safety and health guidelines for the retail sector have been translated into various languages including Bahasa Indonesia, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese and Japanese, and have been adopted by the labour ministries of several ASEAN countries.

- ASETUC leaders have been regularly invited, either as resource persons or participants, to many events organized by a number of ASEAN bodies. In May 2016, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, the overarching ASEAN body on human rights, has officially granted ASETUC a consultative relationship status in recognition of the latter's expertise on workers' rights and decent work, areas where the former lacks competency. This suggests that ASETUC's legitimacy and competency in advocating for social and labour dimensions in ASEAN policies and processes is gaining wide recognition.
- National unions are now more knowledgeable about developments within ASEAN and the impact of ASEAN integration on workers thanks to education campaigns launched by ASETUC.

Important insights and learning opportunities can be drawn from ASETUC's experience in gaining a voice of and for labour in ASEAN. By remaining open to experimentation and adopting innovative strategies, ASETUC has used its existing power resources – associational and social power both at the regional and national level – to develop and maintain real institutional power within relevant ASEAN bodies.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Institutionalizing labour's voice in ASEAN:  
The ASETUC initiative

Author: Melisa Serrano

Read more: <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=13753&ty=pdf>



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### 4.3 // THE POWER OF DIVERSITY – THE TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS (TUCA)

// BY CHRIS DICKSON

The Trade Union Confederation of the Americas, TUCA, (in Spanish: Confederación Sindical de Trabajadoras/es de las Américas, CSA), is a regional branch of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). It represents North America, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. The confederation is comprised of 57 national organisations in 23 countries, which represent over 50 million workers/members.

Since the beginning of the decade, TUCA has become increasingly visible in implementing a strategy of class struggle action at the hemispheric and global level. The climate was indeed conducive to such a project and it was developed within a regional dynamic that offered an alternative to neoliberal globalisation. In the context of a prolonged and multifaceted international crisis, it emerged as a very dynamic socio-political stakeholder in tune with the guidelines promoted by progressive and left-wing Latin American governments, which were flourishing at the time.

As progressive political coalitions went through a crisis and new regional right-wing forces gained a stronghold, the trade union movement of the Americas was faced with a huge challenge in both its national chapters and at the regional level – the challenge of coordinating the various resistance efforts that were already taking place, defending the progress made and rights gained, and constructing an alternative approach to overcome neoliberalism, primarization and extractivism. TUCA was set up in 2008 as part of a process to unify the institutions of the



global trade union movement in the ITUC in 2006. It arose from the merger of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (ORIT-CIOSL) and the Latin American Confederation of Labour (CLAT/CMT), together with other independent groups. However, it was also the result of changes in regional trade unionism from 1990s onwards, which brought about a significant shift in its political and ideological orientation.

The mobilisation against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) led to new forms of struggle and a renewal of the hemisphere's trade union movement. At the same time, it created a common ground and served as a catalyst for bringing together different traditional ways of trade union action at the national level. This convergence facilitated the foundation of TUCA, whose current main policies are a trade union self-reform, the rejection of free trade agreements, gender equality in trade union representation and the creation of social partnerships.

#### ORGANISING A SEEMINGLY UNFATHOMABLE ENTITY

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TUCA's main challenge is to reconcile the interests of heterogeneous trade union movements of differing significance and size, with diverse traditional ideologies and national realities. It should also be noted that 80 per cent of TUCA's members are concentrated in four countries – Brazil, the United States, Argentina and Canada. These represent not only different levels of organisation, different capacity-building measures/types and power resources, but at times also very divergent demands which have an influence on temporary action, long-term strategies and the definition of demands not always shared by everybody.

As a confederal organisation, it does not directly represent workers belonging to one or several areas of activities or territories, but rather groups together national trade union organisations. It thus does not take part in tripartite social dialogue spaces or sectoral collective bargaining. Its focus is on regional and international activities. Its strength as an association is thus indirectly determined by the clout and organisational capacity of its members. And more directly, by how efficiently it organises the myriad of national demands and traditions into a common regional agenda. Essentially, it depends on its ability to mediate and its organisational agility.

A characteristic feature of its internal structure are participatory bodies such as the Committees (of women and of young people) as well as Working Groups. These

simultaneously function as internal democratisation mechanisms and technical focus groups which bolster its strength as an association, institution and social force. TUCA has carried out action that seeks to exert influence mainly in the area of international labour standards. Particularly notable in terms of its work within the United Nations system is its participation in the ILO, and COP of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. TUCA does not have official delegations; its influence is political. It develops a coordinated strategy together with the national delegations from the region which act as the workers' representatives at the International Labour Conference. It has a strong influence within the Workers' Group in the Governing Body of the ILO, which is tasked with elaborating the agendas of the tripartite body. TUCA's working groups provide a core of technical and trade union personnel who drive intervention in the ILO.

#### CONSTRUCTING A JOINT POLITICAL VISION

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TUCA's strategy is comprised of two axes which work together: socio-political trade unionism and self-reform. Both are focused on broadening the trade union movement's representation base, promoting democratisation and defining objectives which go beyond the economic-corporate demands of traditional trade unionism.

At the beginning, its programme, summarised in an alternative development proposal, comprised four dimensions to ensure it is comprehensive: the political, economic, social and environmental areas of action. The discussions evolved around these four elements; participants proposed new topics, added nuances or revised old concepts until a consensus was built over the content of a document. The result was the Development Platform of the Americas (PLADA) – TUCA's current political and programmatic tool.

The PLADA required a huge organisational and consensus-building effort on a wide array of topics within a group of national trade union organisations which is extremely heterogenous due to members' different traditions, sizes and levels of representation, but fundamentally also due to the wide range of labour conditions and policies on the continent.

TUCA sought to involve the continent's most important social movements throughout this process. The platform consolidated and widened the range of alliances and achieved considerable political recognition. The PLADA was used to

underpin different processes that were developed in the ILO, UNASUR and COPs. 2014 saw its public launch in Chile (with an event organised by TUC Chile and attended by President Bachelet) and then in Uruguay, together with President Pepe Mujica and several ministers.

Global trade unions form another key component of this policy of creating alliances; they appear at two levels: externally (coordination in international trade union federations at the global and hemispheric level) and internally (TUCA's statutes provide for the global trade unions to participate in ordinary congresses, the executive committee, the working committees and groups with a right to speak but without voting rights).

In parallel, the policy of self-reform helped to build consensus over problems which affect the working class and trade union movement across the continent. In terms of gender equality and equity, the implementation of representative parity in all of TUCA's organisational entities, the creation of the Working Women's Committee of the Americas and the call to the first Working Women's Conference (2015) was a big success. There is thus coexistence between internal mechanisms of democratisation and gender parity in steering and forming multi-sectoral alliances which counter, at the regional level, any hegemony of certain corporate, anti-democratic, patriarchal and exclusionary trade union traditions at the national level.

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#### KEYS OF SUCCESS: ALLIANCES, SOCIO-POLITICAL TRADE UNIONISM, SELF-REFORM AND COORDINATION OF LEVELS OF ACTION

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So, one must ask whether it is possible to extrapolate TUCA's experience to other regions in which ITUC is present? Of course, there are no automatic answers to this question, and regional specificities and local traditions should be taken into account. Nevertheless, certain organisational and guidance mechanisms have yielded positive results in Latin America, making it possible to replicate them by adapting them to the specific characteristics of each region. Among these, we would highlight the construction of regional platforms with participative methodologies which promote programme-related unity, intervention in regional integration processes, fraternal collaboration with social movements and a counter-hegemonic rhetoric anchored in regional traditions of struggles and ideology. One of the lessons learnt from analysing TUCA as a case study is that, faced with

weakness in terms of structural power, making use of the resources of associative power (by broadening representation as well as boosting internal participation and democratisation) and social power (by forming a broad range of alliances with related sectors and involving social struggles and political projects that widely spill over the limits of trade union action) can offer an alternative strategy to models anchored merely in traditional trade union approaches.

The current forms of work division and organisation require the trade union movement to take the coordination between different levels of action (local, national, regional and international) very seriously and to pay strong attention to new subject groups that appear on the labour market and become increasingly active in the political and social spheres, in particular women, migrants, self-employed, the unemployed and the workers of the social and informal economy. To do so is a prerequisite for movements that seek to be more than mute guests at banquets where large transnational corporations run the show.

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New horizons for the hemispheric trade union movement:  
The Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA)

Author: Cecilia Anigstein

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13861.pdf>

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## 4.4 // FORCED INTO A COMPLICATED TRANSITION (VIETNAM)

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// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

The first wildcat strikes in the 1990s in Vietnam were perceived as nothing more than a nuisance for the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL), the sole official trade union in the country.

But as the wave of industrial action reached a peak of nearly 1,000 strikes and work stoppages in 2011 without any involvement from the VGCL, the union leadership could no longer ignore what was happening.

Worried about becoming obsolete and losing the trust of workers, the VGCL understood the urgent need of elementary change to the way it operated.

VGCL's problem was that it was stuck in the past. While its standing in state enterprises was still strong, the economic reforms introduced by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) to transform a controlled market into a free market economy had resulted in the rapid diversification of economic structures.

New economic actors had also emerged. In sectors like the garment and electronics industry, private and foreign investors are taking over equitised state enterprises. The labour struggle, too, had long shifted to the private sector.

VGCL is and was a huge organization. By 2013 it had 9.2 million members. But recruitment was often done in collaboration with employers: The trade union displayed a top-down attitude, undermining trust in VGCL.

Until it reformed itself, VGCL could and would not be seen as an honest representative of the entire, changing workforce.

## CONTRADICTING TASKS

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The strike wave that rattled Vietnam in the first decade of the 2000s was organised by the workers themselves, without any contribution from the VGCL. Participants were developing a class consciousness, but did not feel the need to affiliate with any kind of trade union.

The strikes were successful because the treatment of workers in those companies had been deplorable beyond doubt. The self-organised strike-actions had made the grievances public and visible, exposing the VGCL's inability to address such blatant violations of workers' rights.

VGCL was facing a huge dilemma. If it wanted to remain relevant, it had to establish strong unions in the new emerging sectors, and regain the trust of the labour force by changing its strategies and tactics.

At the same time, it also had to fulfill its duties under Vietnam's political system. Adopting a necessary new approach in representing the working class was threatening to disconnect the union from the CPV and the state.

The VGCL leadership eventually understood that recruiting new members was not enough. The union needed to change its structures, its methods and its whole mentality to cope with the challenge at hand.

## USING POLITICAL INFLUENCE

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VGCL's main advantage is and was its strong position in the Vietnamese political system. VGCL was part of the independence movement, and under constitution it is »the representative of the total workforce in Vietnam«.

Through its proximity to the ruling CPV it has significant political influence. It has direct access to the prime minister on important economic issues, and is regularly consulted by the parliament on all draft laws that impact the workforce.

Between 2010 and 2012, VGCL used this institutional power to pave the way for structural and organisational transformation. The VGCL spearheaded the 2012 amendment to the Labour Code, and the enactment of a new Trade Union Law in the same year.

BIG WINS

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The Labour Code established a new institution: The National Wage Council (NWC). Since 2013, the tripartite body consisting of the party, government and employer organizations and workers has come together every year to renegotiate the minimum wage.

This is in part thanks to the VGCL. Its previous research on the minimum living standards of the workers revealed that the minimum wage met just 70 per cent of minimum living standards.

That put both the party and the parliament under pressure. They decided to tie the minimum wage to actual minimum living standards, making Vietnam the only country in Southeast Asia with an official policy in this regard. This marked a big success for VGCL.

On top of this, the new Labour Code introduced the obligation for written labour contracts and limited overtime working hours.

It guaranteed a certain wage level during the probation period, increased maternity leave for women workers from four to six months and eliminated forced labour. But the most important changes were the provisions on collective bargaining. In the past, collective bargaining was legally possible in Vietnam but limited in practice.

In theory, binding standardised working conditions and social responsibilities were to be stipulated at sector or industrial level. But because there were no employers' associations on the industrial level to bargain with, it hardly ever happened.

This is now expected to change. Some federations of labour on the district and provincial level are already testing multi-employer bargaining in selected industries. VGCL also reports some gradual changes in the formal character of collective bargaining and a steady increase in the number of companies participating in industry-wide agreements.

The new Trade Union Law on the other hand improved the standing of trade unionists – above all on the grassroots level – and enhanced the protection of trade union officers, making a grassroots approach for VGCL feasible.

BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

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The process of change, which started with law making efforts, had an impact on VGCL's structures and organization.

While being involved with the law making process, VGCL for the first time presented the draft of two laws for discussion to lower level union members. This not only helped them contribute their own input, but won VGCL broad support among the workforce.

Encouraged by this, the VGCL leadership decided to keep on using a bottom-up, or worker centered approach to representing the rights and interests of workers. It has been rewarded by growing membership.

LESSONS LEARNED

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VGCL today knows that the process of change is still unfolding. But the lessons learned will give some guidance for the future.

Most importantly, VGCL understood that developing the capacities of learning is essential, as is constant exchange with members and the broad mass of workers.

VGCL recognized that by focusing on representing the interests of working people in Vietnam, it can become more independent from the party and the state.

It will also strengthen its fundamental powers in a way that makes it easier for it to accomplish its other duty, namely to help build and defend the »socialist Vietnamese Homeland«.

→ FULL CASE STUDY

// TRADE UNIONS IN TRANSFORMATION



Enhancing and mobilizing structural and organisational power  
to better protect the rights and interests of workers in Vietnam

Authors: Dong Xuan Hieu & Pham Tuan Phuc & Erwin Schweisshelm

Read more: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/13642.pdf>





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## 4.5 // SOUTH AFRICA'S LARGEST UNION TACKLES THREAT OF GLOBALIZATION TO WORKERS' RIGHTS

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// BY CHRIS DICKSON

South Africa's workers are seeing their rights threatened by globalization. As supply chains spread and capital flows more easily across borders, employers have more opportunities to outmanoeuvre traditional industrial action, undermining the bargaining power of unions.

The country's largest trade union is rising to meet the challenge. After years of political turmoil, metalworkers' trade union NUMSA has made the strategic decision to expand along value chains and into new sectors. The move has caused tensions with the establishment and other unions, but is essential to arm the workers' struggle with the right resources to preserve their rights in the 21st century.

Expanding the union's membership along and across value chains »will give us both bargaining power and political power,« said Hlokoza Motau, Head of Organising, Campaigns and Collective Bargaining (OCCB). »When we strike it means we can almost bring the country to a standstill.«

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### VALUE CHAINS: A LOOPHOLE TO BE CLOSED

The effectiveness of industrial action – or the threat of it – depends on its ability to block the flow of capital and create unacceptable cost to the employer. If the employer can reroute production, through for example non-union staff, outsourced

services, or overseas facilities, then the bargaining power of organized labour is correspondingly weakened.

Historically, unions organized by sector and geography. Workers' solidarity across, for example, all the car manufacturing plants in a given country was enough to bring corporations to the negotiating table. But globalization has increased opportunities to circumnavigate those bargaining pressures, if the employer »hives off activities, for instance by outsourcing or privatisation,« in the words of a 2014 presentation by NUMSA officials.

How can a union possibly negotiate wages for a given factory's workers, if the employer can respond by taking its work away and giving it instead to a supplier whose workers are not represented in those negotiations?

To close this loophole and preserve its bargaining power, NUMSA has changed its membership structure and is expanding across sectors and up and down value chains.

#### EXPERIENCE OF CONSOLIDATION

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NUMSA has experience of successfully expanding to adapt to changing needs. It was formed in 1987 out of the merger of four unions, two in the metalworking sector and two in automotive production. In 1989, it secured negotiating rights at the National Bargaining Forum, covering seven of the eight major employers in the motor assembly sector. By 2014, it was able to mobilize 220,000 metals workers in strikes that made global headlines. As of January 2015, it was the largest union in the history of the continent, with more than 360,000 members.

#### LEVERAGING ASSOCIATIONAL POWER INTO REAL BARGAINING POWER

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But the union has long been aware that the weight of numbers – a key element of its associational power – is not enough to keep pace with the evolving threats to its members' rights. At a special congress in 2013 it considered its options, and decided to break with the sectoral boundaries of unions and to expand across value chains. Anyone objecting to this new order »can go to hell,« said Irvin Jim, NUMSA general secretary at the time, aware of the potential upset to other unions. »We will recruit workers that come to us and want to belong to the organisation.«

In the case of an automotive production plant, for example, this would mean welcom-

ing new members from other roles within the facility, such as canteen or security workers, as well as those involved in suppliers' production, for example tyre manufacturers, and even those employed downstream, in auto dealerships or car wash stations. This expansion drive, approved by the 2013 resolution, has led to the recruitment of 27,760 new members from related sectors, including air and rail transport as well as road freight, as well as cross-sectoral industries such as catering, cleaning and construction, the union said in 2016.

»It is important that, in order to build our power, we exist in these sectors,« Motau said. »Part of NUMSA's strategy is to have the same bargaining periods,« allowing the union to threaten what would effectively amount to a general strike, he said. The boost in recruit numbers is evidence of the success of the new strategy. And when it translates into improvements in NUMSA's bargaining power, that should in turn further increase the union's appeal to potential new members.

#### BREAKING THE MOULD

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NUMSA's new direction put it on a collision course with the country's labour and political institutions. In particular, the expansion violated the »one industry, one union« policy of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which expelled NUMSA from its ranks in November 2015.

However, the union had obtained approval of its new constitution from the Department of Labour in January of that year, freeing it of many recruitment restrictions. Some of those had been imposed by employers, such as the distinction between core and non-core workers in a facility. But other restrictions were laid down by the unions to avoid conflicts that could undermine the effectiveness of collective action. NUMSA's new recruitment drive violated these, and drew flak from its former allies. General Secretary Jim defended the new membership rules against such criticism. »If people want to take that as poaching, well, workers are not rhinos but human beings,« he said in 2013. Even before the new recruitment rules, workers from all sectors had been approaching NUMSA of their own volition and requesting membership, he said, adding that this was a recognition of NUMSA's activism and collective bargaining gains in its traditional sectors.

He also said that a level of cross-sectoral activity was unavoidable and already widespread. »Public sector unions are recruiting among themselves,« and NUMSA's own member base had started to include drivers and other service providers even

before 2013, he said. Furthermore, COSATU itself recognised as early as 2003, at its 8th national congress, that any demarcation of membership should respect the need for solidarity with other parts of the supply chain. NUMSA argues that its expansion is in the spirit of this requirement.

Politically, the expulsion from COSATU also ousted NUMSA from South Africa's tripartite alliance, which unites COSATU, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ruling African National Congress party (ANC). In fact, political disagreements may have contributed more to the rift than did the new recruitment practices. The union had formally called on COSATU to break its alliance with the ANC, and had withheld payment of affiliation fees to the group as well as its contributions to the SACP levy in protest. These actions were cited in the COSATU resolution to terminate NUMSA membership.

Securing workers' rights for the globalized century NUMSA's new constitution and its emancipation from COSATU put the union in a strong position to go it alone and best defend its members' interests against the shifting context of globalized capital and production.

The recent boost to its membership, in spite of the split with other unions, is a validation of the path that NUMSA has struck out on. But these new members are not just to make up the numbers – they must secure fair wage increases and feel the benefits of membership, as officials noted at the 2016 National Bargaining Conference. Only if the improved associational power translates into workplace bargaining power – a key element of structural power – will the movement be able to remain appealing to new recruits and retain its ability to strike the best deal for them.

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Towards a powerful value chains trade union:  
South African NUMSA's expanded scope

Author: Chere Monaisa

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## 4.6 // EMBARKING ON A LONG, BUMPY ROAD TO SUCCESS (MALAYSIA)

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// BY ULRIKE PUTZ

By any measure, Foreign Domestic Workers (FDW) in Malaysia have it pretty bad. Most of the women work backbreaking hours, seven days a week. Many are beaten regularly and locked up like pets when their employers leave the house.

If their bosses decide not to pay them, there is little they can do. Many are literally trapped. Because their employers can confiscate their passports and phones, there are few ways to tell anyone how bad things are, ask for advice, or flee.

Despite this, an estimated 250,000 women from Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Nepal work in Malaysia as domestic help. Work being scarce at in their home countries, they come to Malaysia hoping for a decent salary. Instead, they often live and work in dire circumstances, with few protections offered by Malaysian authorities.

The inhumane treatment of migrant workers in Malaysia led the United States to downgrade Malaysia to the bottom third of countries ranked in the 2014 US Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). The report refers to bonded or slave-like working conditions in Malaysia.

Due to incidences of deaths, torture and rape, Indonesia and Cambodia banned sending domestic workers to Malaysia in 2009 and 2011 respectively.

## WHY ORGANISE NON-WORKERS?

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In 2005, the Malaysia Trade Union Congress (MTUC) took notice of the precarious conditions of foreign women working in the country. With 250 affiliated unions and around 500,000 members, the MTUC is the only officially recognised labour centre in Malaysia which has a seat on the national industrial tribunal

At the time, Malaysian unions were in crisis, barely allowed to exist in a hostile political environment.

Trade union membership was restricted to certain workplaces, strikes against unfair labour practices were practically illegal, and unions were banned from spending money on political campaigns. Unions had lost their industrial muscle and were bleeding members, exacerbating their financial problems.

To revive the organisation, the MTUC decided to look for new members by confronting issues beyond their comfort zone, such as increased outsourcing and an influx of migrant workers.

But before MTUC could represent migrant and domestic workers, its leadership and members needed to change their mindset, with the Malaysian public traditionally seeing migrant labourers as taking away jobs.

Representing domestic helpers would mean a major shift from MTUCs traditional base of mostly male Malay workers.

There were practical problems. Thought of as servants, domestic workers are still not formally recognised in Malaysia, and are effectively excluded from the recently adopted minimum wage. MTUC would have to tread lightly in order to represent »non-workers« and stay on the right side of existing laws.

The MTUC was also structurally geared toward collective bargaining on behalf of factory workers with formal employment relationships and did not quite know how to organise on behalf of foreigners who were typically in Malaysia for a limited time and were the only employee at their workplace.

## SETBACKS AND SUCCESSES

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In an effort to reach out to this mostly female workforce, MTUC formed a Domestic Workers Desk staffed with female coordinators to organise various activities and awareness programs. The aim was to organise FDWs and push for reform of labour laws that restricted and excluded domestic workers.

To give domestic workers legal status, the MTUC twice tried to register a separate organisation, the Domestic Workers' Association. Both attempts – in 2007 and 2014 – were rejected with no explanations or reasons given. Today, it is not a separate desk but the MTUC Women's Committee that has responsibility for the union movement's domestic workers' program.



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Hoping to replicate the Hong Kong experience, where domestic workers were organising during their day-offs, in 2008 the MTUC decided to team up with migrant, women and human rights NGOs and embark on a »one-day-off-a-week« campaign.

The campaign reached a milestone in 2009 when the Malaysian government developed a new policy that would allow domestic workers one day off a week, as well as making employers deposit their wages in their own bank accounts. Today, the MTUC is continuing to push until the government to enact the policy into law. The MTUC has also pushed the government to address the rampant practice of employers who confiscate the passports of migrant workers. In 2014, the government issued a strong public statement that withholding of passports was illegal in Malaysia and any employers found violating this would face stiff legal penalties. The release of policies orders mandating a weekly day-off for domestic workers; depositing their wages into their own bank accounts; and a government warning against the withholding of passports can be considered small victories for the MTUC and domestic workers in Malaysia. However, the road ahead toward formal recognition remains bumpy.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

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For the MTUC, repeatedly invoking the 2014 US Trafficking In Persons Report was a useful tactic in a country where maintaining Malaysia's international standing as pluralist, multi-ethnic society is important to the government and its institutions. Taking advantage of this, the MTUC pressured the government to improve

conditions for migrant workers as well as overriding restrictive labour laws and regulations.


Another key to the campaign was international collaboration. MTUC worked closely with several NGOs from the countries of origin, such as the National Labour Center of Nepal and a labour center from the Philippines called SENTRO.

MTUC even agreed to assist SENTRO in its organizing and education work for domestic workers in Malaysia. In turn, SENTRO has agreed to deploy a Filipino organiser in Malaysia under the MTUC umbrella and to assist in organising not only Filipino domestic workers but other nationalities as well.

MTUC's outreach to sending countries is a good example of transnational cooperation. In a time of globalised work and trade, approaches like this seem to be a good way for innovative trade unions to expand their influence and power base.

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Ways out of precarity

Author: Verna Dinah Q. Viajar  
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## 4.7 // TEACHERS' UNION FIGHTS TO PRESERVE ITS RIGHTS THROUGH LABOUR REFORM (HONDURAS)

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// BY CHRIS DICKSON

Honduras has seen a sharp deterioration in its political and social situation in the aftermath of the 2009 coup d'état. Several basic rights such as the freedom of association, the freedom of unionization or collective bargaining have come under attack as the government appears to seek out ways to undermine representative democracy.

COLPEDAGOGOSH, one of the five trade unions representing teachers in the country, has been fighting to preserve minimum standards in its sector and support other social movements defending the rule of law and democracy. To do this, it has been widening its power resources and reforming its internal structure. In spite of constant attempts by political powers to undermine unions, COLPEDAGOGOSH remains one of the most solid trade unions in the country.

### HIGH POLITICS AND LOW BLOWS

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The low education budget in Honduras is a major cause of the country's poverty rates, one of the highest in Latin America, with around 40 per cent of its almost nine million inhabitants living in extreme poverty.

The Colegio de Pedagogos de Honduras (Pedagogues Association of Honduras, or COLPEDAGOGOSH in the Spanish acronym) was founded in 1982, when a fledg-

ling democracy was restored in the country. There were five teachers' unions in total, also known as »associations« or »colleges«, and grouped under the umbrella organization Federación de Organizaciones Magisteriales de Honduras (Federation of Teachers' Organizations of Honduras, or FOMH). Until the 2009 coup, the teachers' unions enjoyed substantial institutional power, were autonomous and belligerent, and had generous resources to defend state education and teachers' labour rights.

This institutional power was undermined by the two right-wing governments that followed the coup, which weakened public institutions by privatizing services, particularly health and education. The state secretary under the current presidency has further embarked on a campaign against teachers' unions, suspending all cooperation with them and excluding them from negotiations and decisions on education issues.

The government has even brought lawsuits against these unions, accusing them of corruption, although judges have dismissed all the cases so far. The government's animosity may have a political motivation, as a response to the open support by COLPEDAGOGOSH of the opposition movement the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (National Front of People's Resistance), an organization with strong popular support which emerged as a reaction against the 2009 coup.

Perhaps the most effective low blow against the unions has been government's – illegal – move to suspend the union fees deducted from workers' pay. Mid 2012, a legislative decree reallocated the workers' union fees collected at source to the Instituto Nacional de Previsión del Magisterio (National Institute for Teachers' Welfare, or INPREMA) and created the Cuentas de Ahorro Provisional (Accounts of Provisional Savings, or CAP). This led to a substantial decrease in the union's budget and to a new obstacle for the acquisition of resources, as well as impacting membership levels.

#### A NECESSARY AND TIMELY REFORM

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The 2009 coup d'état took place as the union was undergoing an internal appraisal to identify its main organizational weaknesses. In 2010 it was decided to reform its charter. A year later, the relevant legislation was introduced to the National Congress, which passed it in 2012. The most pressing need was to strengthen the union's internal structures, to allow it to better participate in the social struggle

and revive the democratic order.

The reform brought more transparency, internal democracy and participation to the union. Term limits for the governing board were reduced to two consecutive periods of two years each. In the same vein, residential voting was introduced for all governing boards at all levels, meaning such elections no longer excluded members who were unable to attend the union's congresses, and increasing voter participation. This inclusive democratic process strengthened the union's structural and associative power.

The reform also created the position of Women's Secretary, with the aim of guaranteeing women's leadership and gender equality. Moreover, the *Secretaría de Asuntos Pedagógicos* (Secretary of Pedagogical Issues) was also created to disseminate basic information about unionism, especially the union reform. Eligibility for the teachers' union was expanded to include those enrolled in a pedagogy baccalaureate, and every university student in the last 10 per cent of their studies. Lastly, the reforms provided legal counsel for workers victimized by government repression, as well as an on-going radio news bulletin.

The intention behind this internal strengthening was also to align the union's efforts with those of other social movements in Honduras. An important element in this regard was the maintenance of fluid communications, both among the five teachers' unions and with other organizations. This allowed the unions to incorporate wider social demands, such as the struggle of indigenous peoples and the peasants for access to the land, the fight for control over food access, issues faced by students at high school and university, and the rights of people with diverse sexual orientations.

In spite of the government's strategies to destabilize teachers' unions, COLPEDAGOGOSH has managed to keep its position as one of the strongest in any sector, economically and in terms of membership. Against the persistent financial and juridical repression by the government, it has carried out substantial reforms and increased its power resources.

Even in such adversity, the union has retained around 60 per cent of the membership it had before the government co-opted the union fees and suspended automatic membership. And it is taking measures to attract more members. As a consequence of its reform and cooperation with other unions and social organizations, COLPEDAGOGOSH is still a legitimate and active role model as well as a force to be reckoned with when it comes to union strategies, education policies and labour rights.

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→ FULL CASE STUDY

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