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Globalization, Restructuring and Unions: Transnational Co-ordination and Varieties of Labour Engagement
Mondialisation, restructuration et syndicats : coordination transnationale et variétés de militantisme syndical
Globalización, restructuración y Sindicalismo: Coordinación transnacional y variedades de implicación laboral

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Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article, nous étudions comment les syndicats répondent au phénomène de la restructuration transnationale en termes de planification à long terme et de divers moyens d'action. Ce faisant, nous évitons d'adopter une vision qui ne s'en tiendrait qu'à la mobilisation en milieu de travail ou encore à la mobilisation et au lobbying à l'échelle nationale ou étatique, pour examiner plutôt comment différents niveaux d'action syndicale peuvent faire émerger une gamme d'approches durables en matière de planification à long terme. Plus concrètement, nous examinons de quelle manière les syndicats mettent en action leur capacité d'apprentissage pour développer et utiliser la coordination et le réseautage afin de répondre à la restructuration transnationale. Nous abordons la restructuration non seulement du point de vue des relations organisationnelles externes des syndicats (employeurs, membres, communautés, etc.), mais aussi de celui de leurs exigences et relations organisationnelles internes qui permettent de mettre en place une réponse syndicale plus proactive.

Pour recadrer le contexte dans lequel la capacité de coordination syndicale se construit, nous avons d'abord étudié la restructuration transnationale. Nous débutons par une distinction conceptuelle entre les stratégies syndicales visant à « influencer » (externes) et celles visant à « communiquer » (internes). Plus spécifiquement, nous présentons quatre stratégies différentes se déployant à différents niveaux de l'action syndicale. Elles reflètent les différentes dimensions de la coordination comme caractéristique de l'apprentissage syndical à long terme et de la préparation nécessaire face à la restructuration transnationale : (1) faire du lobbying et mener des campagnes pour influencer la régulation de l'environnement au niveau macro; (2) organiser et coordonner l'action syndicale afin d'influencer le changement au niveau micro; (3) mettre en place des stratégies d'information et d'apprentissage en lien avec le développement de la formation et de compétences préparant les travailleurs et les travailleuses à négocier le changement au niveau micro; et (4) améliorer la communication et l'échange d'information afin d'accroitre la sensibilisation et mettre l'accent sur la restructuration au niveau macro.

En conclusion, nous soutenons que la structure et le contenu de la coordination syndicale dans le cadre de la restructuration transfrontalière demeure une question complexe qui ne peut se réduire aux simples couplages historiques bureaucrates contre activistes ou employeurs contre travailleurs. Nos résultats révèlent que la coordination passe par différents ensembles de dimensions (influence et communication), de relations (internes et externes) et de niveaux (micro et macro).

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Globalization, Restructuring and Unions: Transnational Co-ordination and Varieties of Labour Engagement

Valeria Pulignano, Miguel Martínez Lucio and Steve Walker

The structure, content and space of union transnational co-ordination are much richer and complex than simply revolving around tensions and relations between bureaucrats and local activists. This is illustrated through the ETUC TRACE project, a study of a managed and steered form of international union coordination. Drawing on this study, this paper discerns a form of co-ordination that worked across various dimensions of action (i.e. "influencing" politics and "communicating" policy), various political relations (internal and external relations) and different organizational levels (micro and macro). By adding original material to the existing literature, the paper stresses the relevance of the project and the various dimensions for appreciating the problems unions face in establishing and sustaining effective cross-national coordination and a supportive environment of "union learning". The TRACE project acknowledged the need to build coordination through a variety of means and serves as an invaluable insight and lesson into more managed and conscious forms of coordination.

KEYWORDS: restructuring, international unionism, trade unions, globalization, union coordination.

Introduction

Transnational and cross-national company restructuring is one of the core challenges unions are facing in the context of globalization. The reorganization of production and services across (and within) countries, as well as the increasing mobility of capital and the associated ability of management to benchmark across different production units by securing concessions on pay and working

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conditions while safeguarding employment, is increasingly weakening the capacity of local and national unions (Bieler and Lindberg, 2010; Bernaciak, 2010). Extensive empirical research over the past decades has indicated how strategic managerial choices (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986), as well as institutional settings, sectoral and company contexts (Edwards, 2004; Meardi *et al.*, 2009; Pulignano, 2011), affect union responses to workplace change and how the impact of globalization reduces the impact of this dimension.

However, there is evidence of the use of different local power resources, such as internal solidarity, mobilizing narratives and infrastructural resources, and their effects on enhancing the extent to which local unions are capable of effectively bargaining for their members' interests in situations of change (Lévesque and Murray, 2005). Attention is increasingly focusing on the importance of network ties for articulating and coordinating across the different levels of union action (Wills, 2002), the establishment of links with social movements and local communities (Tattersall, 2010), and engaging with organizational learning (Lévesque and Murray, 2010; Frege and Kelly, 2004). Pulignano (2009) has noted that the cross-border dimension of worker activity has been nourished by a new area of debate, engagement, and creativity that has emerged through the development of networking and coordination activities. The associated networks are, in many cases, enabled by the use of the information technology and mediated by factors such as organizational context, communication cultures and organizational contingences. What is central to this paper is examining how networks and coordination can be constructed and managed to aid more strategic and longer term responses to change. This requires awareness of not just the external organizational relations of unions (employers, members, community, etc.) but also the internal organizational requirements and relations that build a more proactive response in the long term (Stuart, Martinez Lucio and Charlwood, 2009; Martinez Lucio and Stuart, 2009). In so doing, the paper contributes to our understanding of transnational unionism in the way it attempts to explore not only the creation, but particularly the sustainability of union networking and cross-border union coordination initiatives. In short, the goal of the paper is to examine whether and how transnational union alliances in times of global restructuring are made sustainable in the long term.

The paper therefore examines how trade unions build cross-national coordination and alliances to deal with restructuring and its effects in Europe. This is of crucial importance because of the difficulties unions face when coordinating across borders (Bernaciak, 2011; Bieler and Lindberg, 2010). The increasing danger of workers competing with each other over jobs on a global scale by offering lower wages and concessions in the area of work-related costs is

a well-known contemporary phenomenon. Some research argues that to examine strategic responses to transnational restructuring it is crucial to look at union structure and management within a multi-level perspective; and that the most effective union strategies operate on a multiple set of scales simultaneously (Tattersall, 2010). Adding to this, we emphasize that this multi-level approach should be understood as part of a continuous and long-term process of union learning, which entails building capacity within the labour movement at all levels. As Lévesque and Murray (2010) observe, one of the strategic capabilities central to union capacity building "concerns the ability within the union to learn and to diffuse that learning within the union" (Lévesque and Murray, 2010: 34). Drawing on the literature on union renewal we might suggest that if union learning is an essential element of innovation (Hyman, 2007), then it needs to be explored in depth. In this paper we respond to this by devoting specific attention to researching the typology of networking and coordination strategies which has been developed by the ETUC (the European Trade Union Confederation) in Europe in response to the challenges of restructuring, and EU integration more generally. The ETUC is the main European workers' representative organization. It is comprised of 84 national trade union confederations in 36 European countries, and 12 industry-based federations. We operationalize the typology of union networking and coordination strategies developed by the ETUC by referring to "internal" networking, which is the relationship unions establish internally via intra-union and intra-representative communication through the exchange of information, and "external" networking, which refers to the relationship unions establish with other actors or existing external institutional structures. The paper claims that trade unions appear to be adopting different strategies to establish coordination and transnational alliances, setting up internationalism as "constellations of practice". Accordingly, internationalism comprises distinct national, sectoral or functional "communities of practice" (Martinez Lucio, Walker and Trevorrow, 2009) with their own specific objectives. Establishing shared practices among trade unionists from different national, linguistic, political, industrial relations and other contexts cannot simply be taken for granted, but is a complex accomplishment (Walker and Creanor, 2005).

The paper draws on a case study of Trade Unions Anticipating Change in Europe (TRACE), as an intervention by the ETUC to develop a strategy for cross-national and multi-level union coordination in Europe. The goal of TRACE (2005-2007) was to develop union capacity to anticipate and respond to industrial change primarily through transnational research and education. TRACE built on the experiences of earlier interventions led by the ETUC which explored the relationship between information technology and transnational education (Walker and Creanor, 2005). In particular, TRACE was developed

through a series of networks previously established in the earlier Dialog On initiative launched by the ETUC in 2000, and which TRACE served to reinforce (Walker *et al.*, 2007).[1] As a core part of TRACE, the ETUC developed a model of organizational learning through combinations of workshops and facilitated ("animated") online networks. Hence, TRACE is important both for the substantive analysis of transnational restructuring that was produced by its participants, and methodologically, in the way in which learning and training were used in combination with networking to develop coordinated responses and sustainable union strategies to cross-border restructuring. Ten national trade union confederations and seven European Industry Federations (EIFs) participated in TRACE. Each national confederation and European sectoral federation developed a sub-project (a total of 17 different activities) as part of the ETUC main intervention. Each sub-project generated tools primarily for use in learning and training activities (e.g., course module, guidebook, handbooks, guidelines, training and educational programs) within and across institutional boundaries to develop cross-national coordination and networking. In this respect, TRACE illustrates different long-term approaches used by ETUC affiliates at the European (sectoral) and national levels to respond to the process of global company restructuring. Specifically, four strategies are identified which reflect dimensions of both "communicating" and "influencing" as a feature of long term union learning and preparation for building coordination across borders to respond to change. The distinction between "communication" (internal) and "influencing" (external) strategies is used to understand different features of coordinating union action in order to respond strategically to restructuring. Communication (internal) strategies refer to the relationships unions establish internally (via intra-union and intra-representative communication and exchange of information). Conversely, influencing (external) strategies refer to the external relationship unions establish with other actors or existing external institutional structures. Accordingly, "influencing" strategies include relationships with external actors, such as employers and the state, and aim to create proactive dialogues at the macro-level, as well as developing skills and training for better negotiating and influencing management decision-making processes at the local (micro) level on restructuring. Conversely, "communicating" strategies necessitate the reinforcement of internal relationships within the labour movement. These strategies aim at stimulating trust-making relationships among different unions across borders. Specifically, this involves an attempt to overcome national cultural differences among different unions by creating shared common principles through the exchange of information by employee representatives at cross-company level in order to anticipate restructuring. Both communicating and influencing strategies represent different dimensions of multi-level union learning activity in relation to change.

Firstly, the paper provides an overview of the debate on trade union international alliances and company restructuring. It then develops and operationalizes the typology of networking and coordination strategies that the ETUC has developed in Europe in response to restructuring, and EU integration more generally. Secondly, it distinguishes between "communication" (internal) and "influencing" (external) strategies within a multi-level perspective. It concludes by considering the politics and management of international co-ordination and some of the issues of ensuring inclusion and sustainability.

The Analytical Context: The Dimensions and Development of Cross-national Union Coordination

Most accounts of transnational restructuring and the power of trade unions merely presume labour's weaknesses when confronted by economic and industrial transformation. In particular, two substantive clusters of argument have attempted to theorize relations between changing economic structure and labour's situation (Crouch, 1998). One of the two arguments claims that economic and industrial change undermines labour because weaker nation states can no longer protect "their" workers, with national institutions governing industrial relations and the labour market, with the state's powers of macroeconomic manipulation, becoming less effective. Conventional social democratic politics are rendered obsolete in such accounts. These expositions have been extensively addressed by the "sceptical" critiques of globalization (Ruigrok and Van Tulder, 1995; Doremus, Keller and Reich, 1998). Nevertheless, for less sceptical authors, globalization does not necessitate weaker labour and resistance from the working class, but implies that if labour is to succeed, it needs to act at the same scale and organization as global capital (Tilly, 1995; Mazur, 2000).

An independent role for labour within a globalized economy, a "transnational collective response", as Radice (1999: 22) describes it, may be seen as the only alternative. In this respect, some authors have started to debate the attempts to extend and deepen trade unions' internationalism and cross-border collaboration, for example, through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs), as well as the ETUC and their European Industry Federations (EIFs) (Martin and Ross, 2000). Existing union structures are regarded as an important resource for new transnational strategies (Cornfield, 1997) although others, such as Waterman (1998), advocate, as a prerequisite, the cultural and political transformation of unions in the form of a reformed international labour movement for (and against) a globalized, networked capitalism or social movement unionism.

Along these lines of argument, trade unions are seen as potentially able to counter constant change and restructuring by establishing alliances across na-

tional boundaries and through different levels of action. Most of the international empirical work has emphasized the emergence of labour transnationalism as the result of the strategic responses of workers and trade unions embedded in specific and contingent national and local industrial relations arrangements (Anner *et al.*, 2006; Lillie and Martinez Lucio, 2004; Martinez Lucio, 2010). However, structural tensions have been outlined by those who believe that the emergence of transnational unionism is undermined by the prevalence of national and local interests and ongoing political tensions (Pulignano, 2007; Hancké, 2000; Martinez Lucio and Weston, 1995). Conversely, it can also be argued that, despite the structural constraints, labour internationalism and cross-border solidarity between trade unionists and workers in different countries continue to develop. This is what Fetzer (2008) calls "a community of risk" whose existence is conditional on the protectionist behaviour of trade unions to stimulate investment and save and/or enhance jobs locally.

This research draws on the analytical concept of "framing" as one of the main capabilities that unions combine with narrative resources (such as shared understandings, stories and ideologies) to enhance their capacity to act both locally and at the transnational level (Murray *et al.*, 2010; Lévesque and Murray, 2010). Accordingly, the ability to provide overarching narratives as a frame of reference for union action is increasingly seen as a key factor in union renewal (Yates, 2010). By identifying framing as an important discriminating factor between defensive isolation, risk reduction and proactive solidarity in cross-border alliances Lévesque and Murray (2010) point out that it is crucial to engage in a better understanding of discursive capacity building particularly when, at the core of the analysis, there is the need to understand the complexity of trade-offs in situations where workers' interests can collide both within and across borders. As current studies underline, there are a variety of strategies that transnational union coordination can adopt (Voss and Sherman, 2000) and trade union coordination can operate at different levels or scales (Tattersall, 2010). But there is a gap in the existing literature concerning how international coordination can be sustained and how learning takes place as a way to sustain transnational union coordination in the long term. Dealing with these shortcomings means examining union strategies for transnational coordination, particularly how they are structured and how trade unions and their representatives adopt them within different contexts and at different levels (while trying to build up solidarities, alliances and, more specifically, coordination across borders). As such, the paper does not elevate the concept of coordination as a form and precondition for an effective trade union response, but rather, it looks at the content of this coordination in terms of different strategies relating to capacity building, such as learning strategies in the long term. For example, the structure and content of coordination cannot solely be reduced to the binaries of bureaucracy-activist or employer-facing (partnership)

relations versus membership-facing (organizing) strategies (Moody, 1997). The argument is based on three dimensions. Firstly, the distinction between "communication" (internal) and "influencing" (external) strategies is used to understand different features of coordinating activity. Secondly, attention is paid to the relationships unions establish internally (via intra-union and intra-representative communication and exchange of information) and externally (via other actors or existing external institutional structures) in order to respond strategically to restructuring. To this extent, a third dimension is added in terms of the micro and the macro level by focusing on the firm- and state-related dimensions of international co-ordination. Accordingly, as mentioned above, "influencing" strategies include building relationships with employers and the state for purposes of social dialogue, improved negotiating skills at the macro- and micro-levels, and influencing management decision making processes on restructuring. Conversely, "communicating" strategies necessitate the stimulation and reinforcement of trust-making internal relationships within the labor movement by creating shared common principles through the exchange of information at both the national and the cross-national European level in order to anticipate restructuring.

In particular, four sub-typologies of "communication" and "influencing" strategies are discussed in this paper in relation to the TRACE project: (1) lobbying and campaigning to influence the macro-level regulatory environment; (2) organizing and coordinating action to influence micro-level change; (3) developing communication (informational) and learning strategies with regard to skills and training development to prepare individuals to negotiate change at the micro-level; and (4) creating communication and information exchange with each other to create greater awareness of and focus on restructuring at the macro-level. This brings in an in-depth analysis of how trade union strategies are created and re-created in response to the different facets of restructuring.

Research Context and Method

This section focuses on the main case for this paper which is the TRACE project led by the ETUC to stimulate the creation of strategies by its national and European (sectoral) union affiliates to manage and anticipate restructuring in Europe. TRACE proved to be the most far-reaching of a series of initiatives taken by the ETUC to strengthen trade unions' abilities to deal with the European dimension of economic integration and restructuring. As Table 1 illustrates, most of the objectives indicated for each of the seventeen sub-projects developed by each national union confederation and European union industry federation identify information exchange, co-ordination and co-operation amongst trade union members and their representatives at both the national and European-level as ways to develop an effective response to restructuring.

TABLE 1

Summary of TRACE Sub-project (Key Action) Activities

Lead Organization	Issue	Activities	Outputs
Transnational sectoral actions			
EMCEF – European Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions	Restructuring of chemical industry and implications for European Works Councils	2 workshops	Network; Guidebook
EMF – European Metalworkers' Federation	Industrial restructuring, relocation of work, plant closures, new technology	2 workshops	Report
EPSU – European Federation of Public Service Unions	Decentralization of public and local services	3 workshops	Handbook
SEKO – Facket för Service och Kommunikation (Union of Communication and Service Employees, Sweden)	Emergence of global logistics industry across traditional industrial divisions	2 workshops	Report; Network
ETUCE HERSC – European Trade Union Committee for Education, Higher Education and Research Standing Committee	Implications for academic staff of 'Bologna' process to create an integrated European Higher Education Area	Network animation[a] training; 2 workshops	Report; Network
ETUCE – European Trade Union Committee for Education	Private sector working methods in education, in particular pay bargaining and performance related pay	Network animation; 2 workshops	Report; Network
UNI Europa Graphical (Union Network International Europe Graphical sector)	Restructuring of the European heliogravure (a specialized printing process) industry	Network animation; 2 workshops	Report; Network
UNI Europa Services (Union Network International Europe Services sector)	Growing significance of European-level legislation relating to service industries	–	Report; Network
National confederation actions			
CC.OO – Comisiones Obreras (Workers Commissions, Spain)	Spanish/Portuguese cross-border co-ordination of European Works Councils	2 seminars	Report; Network; Training materials
CFDT – Confédération française démocratique du travail	Cross-border (N. France, SE UK) links between unions	Training workshop;	Training materials

TABLE 1 (suite)

Lead Organization **National confederation actions**	Issue	Activities	Outputs
(French Democratic Confederation of Labour)	in selected transport and communication companies	pilot course	
CGIL – Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labour)	Improve union capacity to anticipate change in textile industries	4 seminars; distance tutoring	Training materials
CGTP-IN – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses (General Confederation of Portuguese Workers)	Improve union understandings of new technologies, de-localization and global competition	3 seminars; distance tutoring	Company analysis tool; Training materials
CISL – Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Trade Unions)	Restructuring and corporate training/education	3 seminars; distance tutoring	Training materials
LO-D – Landsorganisationen i Danmark (Danish Confederation of Trade Unions)	Outsourcing and growth in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	Study visits	Training materials
LO-S – Landsorganisationen i Sverige (Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions)	Restructuring in the Swedish and German auto industries	Desk research	Training materials
OeGB – Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund Austrian Trade Union Federation)	Union recruitment and organizing in SMEs	4 seminars	Training materials; Report
SAK – Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö (Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions	Common Finnish/Estonian work and employment issues across the Gulf of Finland	2 seminars	Training materials
TUC – Trades Union Confederation (Britain)	Union anticipation of outsourcing	2 development workshops; 3 train trainers workshops; 3 pilot courses	Training materials

[a] "Network animation" refers to the human resources and skills necessary to manage the work of an online network.

Each sub-activity was developed under the supervision of the ETUC in the form of a dedicated project team. The main aim was to develop and share narratives among the different participants at the different levels (company, sector and region) related to restructuring, and therefore to suggest an alternative organizational logic to help unions to respond to change, which is based on framing via learning and information sharing. The impact can therefore be identified in developing new conceptions of networking and coordination that ETUC union affiliates can use to frame new ideas and courses of action. Sixteen of the seventeen sub-projects were followed in some detail as part of the TRACE case evaluation activities, providing the dataset that forms the basis of this paper. The evaluation design was informed by a critical realist perspective on evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) for two reasons. Firstly, this approach emphasizes the significance of context in the realization of project outcomes. Given the radically different sectoral and national industrial relations contexts in which each sub-project was implemented, attempting to identify a simple set of generalized indicators against which to evaluate project activities would have been meaningless. Instead, the focus was on the kinds of educational mechanisms that were invoked and their effectiveness in diverse settings. Secondly, there is a growing interest in the use of critical realist perspectives on the relationship between the technological and the social in the information systems literature (Mingers, 2004); the use of information systems and artifacts in TRACE, and their relationship to the differing national, organizational and industrial contexts was an area of particular interest.

A total of 48 semi-structured interviews (2-3 per sub-project) lasting between one and a half to two hours each were conducted by the authors with key informants, typically union officers or educators responsible for each sub-project early in the life of TRACE, and as the sub-projects neared completion. They emerged from two sets of activities in terms of research: the development of the projects and their evaluation. Space does not permit a more detailed breakdown of sub-projects but, in summary, the key elements contained in the interview template comprised: checking the existence of synergy around exchanging information on change and restructuring; identifying the nature of instruments (e.g., on-line e-mail-based or regional or sectoral network or community of practices) used to develop new frames of learning around proactive and positive cases of union response to change; checking the existence of sustainable communities or networks around trade unionism; understanding the internal mechanisms of each project and the background of the individuals involved; outlining the understandings of restructuring that existed. The authors also took part, primarily as direct observers, in two start-up and two review workshops (one pair for national confederation-led sub-projects, the other for European sector sub-

projects) at which sub-project plans and the results of each were presented. This involved 8 hours per 2 days of workshop, for a total of 16 hours per workshop (72 hours). In two cases we examined online forums created by participants. We examined material outputs including research reports, manuals, training materials, course syllabi and other organizing tools as part of the process of evaluation led by two of the authors and as part of a participant-based approach led by the other author.

Constructing Spaces and Levels of Union Co-ordination in Europe: Realities and Challenges

TRACE highlighted the emerging types of networking and coordinating strategies taking place as the result of national, local and European-level union engagement in preparatory activities to respond to restructuring. In particular, both the European sectoral union federations and the national union confederations involved in TRACE made a strong use of previous learning experiences to prepare to deal with future challenges. As mentioned in the introduction, from the TRACE case, we can classify two strategies in terms of union sustainable responses to restructuring: external "influencing" and internal "communicating" or informing strategies. Learning was central to both strategies in the sense that the ETUC adopted an educational perspective and therefore a learning-led approach as the base methodology for the project. By following a classification based on "influencing" (external) and "communicating" (internal) union strategic approaches, we have located and studied four different ways unions map their strategies within the above classification and set their responses onto these types of developments, depending on the level of activity (i.e. macro or micro). TRACE provides examples of political influence, training for capacity building regarding union action and influence, engaging with and exchanging models and practices of organizing, and of developing communication systems and processes. However, engaging with the actual nature and challenges of these strategies is crucial if we want to understand the extent of their sustainability. This means exploring in more depth the potentiality as well as the problems which may occur within specific sub-projects in TRACE. Hence, the sub-projects are divided across four dimensions: two of them are influencing strategies. They focus on the macro lobbying process and the micro level development of negotiation and influencing skills. The other two focus on different sets of communication strategies at different levels that contribute to exchange practices while shaping specific frameworks of action. The findings illustrate how co-ordination works at different levels and covers a variety of strategic and capacity-related themes. They also highlight some of the ways in which co-ordination is constructed and the issues and challenges that emerge from that – the dynamic element of our analysis.

Dimensions of Trade Union "Influencing" (External) Strategies

Political Influence and Lobbying: The Macro-level Dimension

As part of the sub-activity developed by the European-level trade union body for the finance sector, UNI Europa, trade unions at the European as well as the national level in the finance sector established links with the employers' organizations in their respective contexts in order to influence decisions. This specifically meant developing networks of influence beyond the formal structures of different national and local union contexts. The delivery of strategic campaigns can be an effective union tool to exert pressure on an organization. With regards to the UNI Europa Services sub-project, the service sector unions affiliated to UNI played a major role in the political influencing and lobbying activities at the European macro-level that led to substantial amendments being made by the European Parliament to a directive on service industries, the EU Services Directive[2] (known as the "Bolkestein directive"). These activities were coordinated through a network established by UNI Europa for the policy officers of its main affiliates. The network was specifically organized for policy union officers, who were highly knowledgeable about the political processes and associated opportunities for their unions nationally, who could use their experience to develop similar knowledge in relation to EU policy making via lobbying, including meetings, the creation of websites, and an e-mail list. Hence, UNI Europa constructed its coordination activities and network with a particular policy objective that was to influence the development of the draft directive at the macro level by lobbying vis-à-vis European political institutions. The strategy and underpinning networks at the macro-level were characterized by a strong learning and informative dimension. UNI Europa used a campaign against the directive as a comprehensive organizing strategy to influence the entrance into force of the legislation. An outcome of the campaign was a network of union affiliates (network of action) which produced a trade union guide to EU decision making procedures. This procedure is considered as being particularly important for trade unionists in the network because it is used for decisions on all internal market and employment legislation in the EU. According to the former general secretary of UNI Europa, campaigns need to be combined with legislation so as to exert pressure (interview with the former general secretary of UNI Europa, 9 March 2005). More specifically, he identifies some critical key stages in the process of providing scope to influence and anticipate change via legislation. These stages are accompanied by the development of a "co-decision procedure" to gain influence in case of restructuring. The European Directives, before being transposed into national legislation, opened some scope for national trade unions to shape the transposition. In particular, UNI Europa was consulted on the draft version of social legislation such as the Bolkenstein Directive. This gave national unions the opportunity to pressure their own national

governments, as well as giving to the ETUC and UNI Europa the opportunity to prepare their own positions in advance. Likewise, forms of employee participation, as well as information and consultation at the plant level, represent a channel for employees and their representatives to have access to and to try to influence senior business managers in the different organizations. Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees (SSDC)[3] can also provide sectoral opportunities for trade unions to work with employers to comment on Commission Communications or policies while exercising some influence on the latter and also to be more proactive in developing strategies for their own sectors.

Similarly, the European Transport Industry Federation (ETF) and the Swedish Transport trade union federation (SEKO) established a network of industry federations and senior union officers at the European level, operating across related sectors. The aim was to cooperate in areas where they shared members so they could learn from each other's experiences and influence the outcomes of European level social dialogue. Learning and sharing knowledge was used by the ETF and SEKO as a device for leveraging political influence at the European macro-level through cross-border sectoral coordination. The existing Sector Social Dialogue Committees, where employers and unions were consulted on a range of issues at the European level, were considered by ETF to be a useful instrument for political influence at the macro-level. The need for cross-border sectoral coordination was seen as a way of leveraging political influence at the European macro-level. Despite acknowledging the crucial role played by the European Works Councils (EWCs) in establishing coordination, ETF recognized that coordination through EWCs, unlike other sectors, would be difficult in the transport industry because of its cross-national character. Hence, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees at the European level were considered by the ETF to be a more useful instrument to build across-sector union coordination for political influence at the macro level. This type of sub-project viewed co-ordination as requiring a more transnational political strategy aimed at lobbying and influencing across a range of diverse networks.

In line with these two examples, the European Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (EMCEF) developed an e-mail based network to circulate information on EWC strategies and practices vis-à-vis employers. Agreements which are concluded at the European company-level (i.e. European Framework Agreements) between the European trade union federation in the sector and the company management pose a particular coordination problem for several European trade union sectoral federations (i.e. European Industry Federations or EIFs) in Europe. Particularly, EIF secretariats do not have the personnel to work with national trade unionists in large numbers to ensure, for example, minimum standards of EWC agreements across the sector. EMCEF

therefore attempted to consolidate a long-term network of EWC coordinators in order to establish a continuous exchange of information among the senior union officers and local representatives across borders. They could then learn from each other's experience and draw lessons that could be applied in the present and projected into the future.

The problem with these sets of projects is to decide who to involve and how to access union representatives in the appropriate local arenas. For example, having a stable set of individual representatives at the national level who could help enact these strategies and be contactable and engaged over the longer term was a challenge. Working across sectors requires a stable set of individuals grounded in various sub-networks – and not just in head offices – and who have local activists with whom they consistently work. In terms of the UNI Europa sub-project, highlighting the proposed directive through websites and communications was innovative but rested on workers whose authority and links were not as strong as they could have been. In many ways the question of influencing requires an engaged leadership and TRACE projects were often – even when successful at one level – competing for attention and follow-through from the complex stakeholders that constitute trade unions.

Developing Skills and Training for Negotiation: The Micro-level Dimension

Influencing decisions through legislation means both working closely with national governments and employers and using campaigns to develop a network of action amongst the different trade union affiliates vis-à-vis management. Although most EWCs still have to realize their full potential as influential bodies (Waddington, 2010), they have a unique opportunity, supported by European legislation, to draw together fellow trade unionists across national boundaries and to meet with the central management of a multinational enterprise. Therefore EWCs are a potentially significant way of seeking to influence strategic decisions at the company-level in Europe.

The sub-projects led by some of the EIFs in the private sector (such as the European Union Federation of Metalworkers – the EMF – and the EMCEF as seen above) illustrate, for example, that establishing guidelines for EWC work in cases of restructuring means enhancing the capacity of cross-border employee representative coordination, and therefore negotiating union capability over restructuring. This was particularly illustrated by the former Political Secretary of the EMCEF who clearly argued in an interview: "The earlier we act on creating capacity for cross-border union coordination at the EU level, the more room there is for negotiated solutions in situations of restructuring" (interview, 18 January 2005). During the TRACE project, the EMCEF was negotiating a European Framework Agreement (EFA) on preventive measures before restructuring becomes neces-

sary, by bringing together other companies in the same area that could provide alternative employment. In the metal sector, using the same "one-size-fits-all" approach adopted in the chemical sector seemed too difficult: but as the Political EMF advisor in an interview underlines "EWCs play a crucial role because they should be the first to know when transnational restructuring is on the horizon" (interview, 20 September 2005). However, EWCs do not have the power to commit the trade unions represented on them to action. Therefore, according to the EMF, it is important to create structures and platforms to integrate the work of trade unions with the EWCs at the EU level.

Furthermore, in the specific case of the EWC oriented sub-project of the Portuguese CGTP-In and Spanish CC.OO trade unions, these guidelines covered the transposition of the EU directive, and the use of EWCs as a tool by which trade unions can develop skills to negotiate locally and transnationally on restructuring. This case was based on creating guidelines for negotiation in order to support the local and European representatives in their daily bargaining activity with MNC employers and management. In so doing, they were used as a learning tool by the employee representatives as a way of enhancing their influence on the company-level management-driven decision making process. In short, the approach was to enhance skills and training via "learning by doing", being able to identify and analyze problems and construct a practical plan of union action. This learning program was built around three important principles: being relevant to the concrete situations people find themselves in; making solidarity, coordination and cooperation a priority; and offering options for influencing change. In this context, therefore, coordination is not about establishing corporate level responses as such, but it is about framing the subject of the firm as a space for intervention through enhancing training, skills and learning capacity for people involved in day-to-day union work. Creating guidelines for EWC members aimed at enhancing their influence over the company-level management-driven decision making process implied enhancing the role of the EWCs by dealing with the challenges the sub-project identified in areas such as: harmonizing the different typology of EWC agreements (Art. 13 and Art. 6 of the European Directive on EWCs); developing common visions to avoid plant competition; increasing the number of meetings and resisting the replacement of "face-to-face" meetings with online meetings; avoiding the use of confidentiality rules as a means of not providing information to the European Works Councillors.

However, all these sub-projects faced challenges based on the fact that the networks of representatives were loosely organized at the start. National level unions had not collated the details of individuals engaged with EWCs in an effective manner and the co-ordination of such individuals at the transnational level within their firms and the industrial federations was limited such that creating a

framework for action was challenging. It was as if the subtlety of the sub-projects and the influencing frameworks they proposed were limited by basic bureaucratic inertia and limitations on other fronts where engagement with the body of representatives was weak or even non-existent. What is more, the frameworks and joint training required a longer time frame and ongoing initiatives in order to embed themselves.

Dimensions of Trade Union "Communicating" (Internal) Strategies

Communicating and Informing Each Other: Creating Macro-level Joint Working Relations

One of the main streams of work has been the development of joint working and integrated approaches to learning between different national union confederations. This has been focused on helping participants to gain a greater understanding of the different traditions and debates within industrial relations processes and practices. This was vital, for example, to the Finnish (SAK) and Estonian (EAKL) sub-project. These national trade union confederations aimed at enhancing their respective abilities in order to engage more fully with other more developed national trade union organizations in other countries. In particular, the sub-project, called "Hands across the water" (across the Gulf of Finland) involving Estonian and Finnish unions, aimed to create working relations around union organization and the way membership is structured and developed. The sub-project evolved not only enabling national and local trade unions to respond jointly to restructuring, but also supporting and strengthening the trade union movement's learning in these new member states via communication and exchanging information with their neighbour. The overall goal was to draw up detailed action plans for coordination to support Estonian trade unions in strengthening the role of shop stewards in a context where trade unions have the knowledge, but lack the resources at the level of the shop-floor to do so. This case also aimed to enhance the union's ability to engage more fully with more developed trade union organizations in established democratic systems, which are highly regulated and structured. As a Finnish trade union leader from SAK pointed out: "Estonia is a country of low salaries, yet was still losing jobs to those with even lower salaries, like China. Therefore it is important that the work is done at the workplace, and it is only trade union representatives who can do it by proposing new strategies and tools. Our shop stewards need to be better equipped to win the battle of rights at the workplaces. The exchange and the communication with the Finish trade unions is therefore crucial for them" (interview, 19 February 2006).

Similarly, the Austrian ÖGB national trade unions and the British Trade Union Confederation (TUC) enhanced communication strategies around recruitment within small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The network was constructed

with the TUC to draw on their experiences with their recruitment strategy. Specifically, educators from the ÖGB collaborated with shop stewards and national officers in Austria and the UK, with external experts and with British educators, to develop a method for improving recruitment in SMEs. The network was constructed with the TUC as partners to draw on their experiences with their recruitment strategy, which, according to a trade union officer from the Austrian ÖGB, looked very successful in recent years: "Trade unions in Britain seem to be very successful in organizing in the last few years. In Austria membership is declining fast, whereas in the UK the decline has halted, and there is an improvement in some sectors. Trade unions still represent some 39% of the workforce in Austria, compared with around 29% in the UK, but action is needed to reverse the downward trend in membership" (interview, 14 February 2006). According to Austrian unions, many Austrian SMEs have no trade union presence at all. Another union officer from ÖGB who was interviewed stresses "We lost a lot of members because of atypical working, although the level of organization in big industrial companies is still rather high" (interview, 20 February 2006).

Another example of a sub-project aimed at building cross-national union communication was the French (CFDT) and British (TUC) case, which aimed at communicating directly and learning from each other about the different traditions and approaches unions use in France and Britain to deal with restructuring issues. Different traditions mean that British unions tend to take an adversarial approach through bilateral negotiations and direct action, while the French rely more on legislation and regulation. This partially reflects a lower level of union membership in France. When French companies restructure, trade unions have the legal right to call in an expert to analyze the firm's situation. Conversely, British trade unions experience less institutional rights; that is why they are convinced, above all, of the importance of consultation rules, deriving from European legislation. However, British unions still need the confidence to get involved in European issues. A TUC national officer stated: "At the moment the UK has one foot in Brussels and one in New York. The European Social Model provides more protection for workers. Therefore, we have to learn from our brothers and sisters in other countries … [about] this model and train our shop stewards and national officers…" (interview, 25 March 2006). The question of anticipating and managing change in all these sub-projects is much wider than just creating templates for localized trade union action: it is about how unions do not just represent the interests of those affected by restructuring, but of how they enter into the new spheres of employment and fragmented spaces that emerge as a consequence of restructuring. Dealing with small and medium sized employers, for example, and different forms of employer behaviour, which are less partnership oriented (see, for example, the adversarial British model of employment relations), is an increasing concern of many unions; and the sub-projects in question aimed to introduce, share, learn and develop

organizing techniques and campaign processes. Co-ordination was premised upon the idea of the need to share organizational approaches which would enhance the understanding of engaging with employers and management on the subject of restructuring.

In these cases, the problems were similar to those stated above but there were basic tensions between whether the objective was to mutually understand each other's contexts or change them. In many respects the basic gaps in comprehending and understanding industrial relations processes were such that much time was absorbed in exchanges of basic information. With the ongoing problem of uneven access to international union activity, and the absence of extensive international activities in terms of learning about industrial relations systems internationally within national unions, many sub-projects ended being stuck at the stage of first encounters and cultural exchanges. One of the major challenges was the need to create ongoing longer-term dialogue with members who attended the sessions and meetings in an age of multiple relations and internet overload; and without ongoing real-time exchanges, sustainable new relations and networks are unlikely to emerge because of substantive sub-projects.

Communicating and Informing Each Other: Creating Templates of Action at the Micro-level

Micro-level communication oriented sub-projects were aimed at developing particular sets of information that would inform union activists at the level of the shop-floor of the diversity of responses to restructuring and the complex pattern and stages that need to be addressed. The Italian Christian trade union confederation (Confederazione Italiana Sindacato Lavoratori or CISL) and the Danish Confederation of trade unions (Landsorganisationen i Danmark or LO) sub-project in the textile sector aimed at sharing cases and insights into the nature, risks and possibilities of dialogue as a vehicle for engaging with employers and managers in situations of restructuring. The sub-project started from the assumption that there are no solely national solutions to the restructuring problems confronting workers in the textile sector. What are needed are instruments to help local trade unionists understand concepts such as globalization, social dialogue, competitiveness, innovation, internationalization, collective bargaining, employability, training and equal opportunities in their everyday activity in order to better negotiate their platform for action and local bargaining. This sub-project illustrated that networking can also cover a "best practices" dimension aimed at sharing and communicating based not only around information, but also on good examples. In order to achieve that, learning assumes a critical importance. The aim of developing cases, distance learning modules and sets of information about innovations was a key feature of this sub-project. It had a se-

ries of educational dimensions – as did many of sub-projects. Co-ordination was framed in such a case as the need to share an educational and cultural template across different unions across borders. In practice this resulted in building up on-line networking and the production of a CD-Rom containing a range of useful explanations about specific terminology used in different national contexts with similar meanings, and which could be used by the unions to communicate and learn from each other how to better negotiate locally while coordinating their responses cross-nationally. The platform is used as a template of action for the national trade unions to respond to the challenges management poses under restructuring, and therefore it fits well into the frame of union strategies to change. In particular, this sub-case represents the common basis for negotiation on restructuring in the EU textile sector. It presents an analysis of the working conditions in the industry worldwide and an identification of common terms, as well as problems unions face in the textile sector in Denmark and Italy with regard to negotiation. The platform is used as an instrument to identify and exchange information and proposals with regard to the skills union activists have acquired through their day-to-day experiences and those they still need.

Likewise, the Portuguese trade union confederation (Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses or CGTP) and Spanish union confederation (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras or CC.OO) sub-project developed a "restructuring analysis matrix" with simple indicators to facilitate information gathering and understanding of company trends, local economic conditions, different enterprises activities, and the consequences of restructuring. In this light, the matrix represented a series of programs that allowed trade unionists to evaluate the stages and signs related to restructuring and track responses in terms of accessing financial information and actual union action, and communicate these. These were templates of action that broke down and explained the stages of employer action and the way restructuring comprises different phases. The matrix was designed to help identify the signals of an emerging crisis in the firm and help facilitate an understanding of what is happening in the enterprise. The matrix could be used, it was argued, as a basis for negotiations, and could be adapted to sectors other than textile. Anticipation requires understanding the future developments and the signals of intent among employers.

The problems with these sub-projects were related to how to use the information circulated among the different unionists. The distance learning and case-based approach were of high quality but were framed within a view of partnership based trade unionism which would not always be easily extendable to other unions: hence the politics of responses still mattered. In particular, the cases and materials required a more stable and ongoing learning frame for these to be used and built upon: they necessitate a culture of learning and an open

dissemination of materials and activities. In many ways, it does not follow that the production of materials will lead to their utilization and this was especially the case with the matrix sub-project which, while highly sophisticated, required a deeper framework of understanding, ICT training and follow through (in effect, it needed more empowered local representatives). In addition, in these cases the trade union actions were driven by educationalists that had the expertise but did not always have the access and authority locally that was needed to implant such innovations in the workplace.

Conclusion

The previous section presented diverse examples of trade union responses to restructuring from the TRACE initiative developed by the ETUC in order to foster, reflect on and learn from past and current change experiences. These union strategic responses are classified in accordance to "influencing" (external) and "communicating" (internal). They demonstrate that engagement with restructuring by trade unions in Europe is nuanced. It works through different macro and micro levels of activity, different organizational imperatives and different levels of union action in relation to internal sharing (and communication) and external influencing. As mentioned, these union responses lead to different types of networks and outcomes which are premised on a coherent learning environment. Within each of the strategies outlined above, national patterns of worker representation and European employee representation structures (such as the EWCs), despite their contested nature, are a potential instrument for organizing and bargaining in situations of restructuring while attempting to build up alliances and establish social dialogue. Accordingly, trade unions in national and European settings have produced guidelines and related materials for union representatives with the aim of enhancing capacity at the cross-national European coordination level by reinforcing union presence within the existing structures of representation. These guidelines focus on basic trade union organizational issues, such as "why be a union member", "what do trade unions do" and "what is the role of the shop steward" or more generally the role and functions of collective structures for employee representation mainly at the national (local) level. This may be seen as being a long way from the strategic intervention at the cross-sectoral and European-level, but restructuring often means the movement of employment to areas where unionization is low, sometimes as a deliberate strategy, so building collaboration and focusing on workplace organization has to be seen as an equally important part of trade unions' response to restructuring in Europe. In this respect, mapping the membership at different organizational levels, developing strategic campaigns to improve organization, identifying active supporters as agents of trade unionism, developing continuous training of organizers and allocating enough human and material resources are crucial practices. They have been identified by trade unions

in Europe to build and re-build workplace organization as an essential feature for the enhancement of cross-border solidarity and coordination. Trade unions have also coordinated responses across borders while improving the understanding of each other's national employment relations systems and laws and learned to overcome cultural barriers, and therefore to reorganize their traditional work along the new line provided by restructuring (for example, learning to work across sectors). This is vitally important for a successful coordinated response to restructuring. More specifically, what is important is that trade unions understand the strengths and limitations of other countries' employment legislation and regulatory frameworks, such as collective bargaining arrangements and collective systems of employee participation and representation at the shop-floor.

What emerges as a key point in our attempt to classify along the "influencing" and "communication" double dimension is that the use of one dimension and/or strategy by the unions does not automatically exclude the use of others. Empirical findings demonstrate that influencing and communication strategies can be used simultaneously depending on the extent to which trade unions and their representatives attempt to establish short-term strategy in situations of change or try long-term strategic interventions. If anything, the sustainability of trade union initiatives is premised on working across these dimensions and at the macro and micro levels. The latter requires learning and preparatory capacity by the unions, which entails "thinking about the past in order to draw out lessons that can be applied to the present and projected into the future" (Lévesque and Murray, 2010: 344). This helps in building up sustainable alliances and creating a spirit of shared values of justice and fairness as well as shared methods of collective organizing. Alternatively, it can also be argued that long-term strategic intervention helps to build cooperation while focusing on workplace organization as an equally important part of trade union responses. Strategies for employee representatives and trade union cross-border coordination in Europe should therefore be understood in terms of a complex process of continuous learning and evolution. This dynamic of change generates capacity related questions within the trade union movement around border crossing and the need to underpin "union solidarity and coordination" through the development of "communities" and "constellations of practice" (Walker and Creanor, 2005).

There is much being written on the question of coordination in terms of transnational trade union activity. New "communicative" spaces (Green, Hogan and Grieco, 2003) are contributing to the manner in which cross-border union co-ordination evolves (Martinez Lucio and Walker, 2005; Pulignano, 2009). However the debate in the main relates to questions of the tensions between formal/bureaucratic approaches and informal and localized/activist based approaches. The TRACE case sheds light on what can be defined as the "missing aspects"

of the debate, in terms of innovation practices and the strategy of planning longer term and sustainable union responses to change and restructuring. These responses underline different union strategic approaches, such as "influencing" and "communicating". Moreover, irrespective of such union strategies, the paper illustrates that various dilemmas and issues still remain which risk undermining the capacity of trade unions to succeed by constructing coordination and cross-border action. This is because coordination works across various sets of actions (i.e. "influencing" and "communicating"), political relations (internal and external) and organizational levels (i.e. micro and macro) which makes it so unstable and difficult to develop. The paper relates these dilemmas to four main dimensions within the different approaches of influencing and communicating. Yet challenges remain in terms of building more than just information and loose network-based trade unionism.

Firstly, there is the focus on the dimension of strategy. Politically, restructuring in sectors of high levels of public ownership requires political engagement with the question of deregulation. In this regard, the sub-projects underline how trade unions regularly seek to "influence" decisions to implement supportive policies. However, it is not a straightforward task given that it is not always easy to identify the "decision maker", individuals or organizations that affect restructuring. In other cases, trade unions may not have direct or clear access to the appropriate "decision-makers". Hence effective international coordination requires identifying the decision maker and the negotiation process and hence it may be crucial to use a third party where the trade unions cannot "open political doors" themselves.

Secondly, there is the question of who are the networkers. A major challenge in terms of skills and training based approaches (communication) for trade unions' enhancing influence at the micro-level is that these are led by sets of professionals within unions who share a common practice across borders but who lack legitimacy within trade unions and within the constituencies they are trying to affect (Martinez Lucio, Walker and Trevorrow, 2009). This has the added advantage of providing a ready-made set of individuals and professionals who understand the barriers and challenges of communication across borders and communities, and in our research their presence is not to be understated. However, it also means that these sub-projects may not be grounded in the work of day to day activists and may be framed by forms of communication which are specific to a community of practice such as educationalists. There may also be project workers who do not carry legitimacy beyond the networks they construct or co-ordinate for a union.

Thirdly, there is the role of the national in framing strategies and meanings. In terms of communication (sharing) practices related to creating macro-level joint

working relationships on organizing, for example, there is the dilemma that they may be very specific to national (or sectoral) frameworks of action and particular identities within the labor movement. More specifically, for example, the language of organizing may form part of a particular culture of union recognition and activism that does not always link clearly to more regulated approaches. The links can be exclusive of certain types of more direct union mobilization. There may also be national cultural obstacles due to distinct regulatory and political cultures. The need to envelop innovations by ongoing dialogue and networks that own and drive these initiatives is important as otherwise they can become lost in the confused space of "project multiplication" which confuses travel with internationalism.

Finally, there is the role of established networks. Projects in terms of communication may find that they are forged through relationships that are pre-established in terms of common political frameworks and meanings of union action. Co-ordination works in this respect but only through specific channels which are politically closed and focused on specific views of trade unionism. The framing of a multidimensional approach is still premised on specific relations, historical networks and political views. More importantly, the different levels of co-ordination may not cohere and develop clear links and frameworks: something which was a serious problem for TRACE given the fragmentation of the sub-projects. Access is also a problem for worker representatives as their details and presence may not be organized and structured in informational and organizational terms.

The case of TRACE assumes a coordinated and formal transnational structure that is capable of synergizing across projects and creating a learning environment for trade unionists to enhance their strategic capabilities in the face of change. Hence, on top of the challenges outlined above, there is a deeper problem of generalizability as much of the non-EU context does not have these forms of political relations and structures in terms of governance and regional politics (although even in the EU, these do not always generate clear sustainable outcomes). In this respect the issue of whether our case is generalizable or not, which we acknowledge weakens the relevance of research on the EU, is actually something that enhances the significance of this paper in that, even where some semblance of regulatory congruity exists in political terms, networking and transnational trade union co-ordination remain a challenge. However the case of TRACE shows that co-ordination does need to work across various dimensions if it is to move away from an episodic focus.

Notes

1 Dialog On aimed to provide guidance on how communities or networks (Brown and Duguid, 2000) of practice can be established and sustained online.

2 The EU services in the internal market Directive (commonly referred to as the Bolkestein Directive) is an EU law aiming at establishing a single market for services within the European Union. The Bolkestein Directive was harshly criticised because it was seen to lead to competition between workers in different parts of Europe resulting in social dumping: after various amendments it was approved on 12 December 2006 by the European Parliament and Council.

3 At sectoral level, the social dialogue underwent an important development in 1998, when the Commission decided on the establishment of sectoral dialogue committees promoting the dialogue between the social partners in the sectors at European level (Commission decision of 20 May 1998 – 98/500/EC). As of 2010 there 40 sectors with a sectoral committee.

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SUMMARY

Globalization, Restructuring and Unions: Transnational Coordination and Varieties of Labour Engagement

This paper considers the various ways in which unions respond to transnational restructuring in their longer-term planning and at different levels of action. To this extent, it avoids simply falling into a workplace-based view of mobilizing, or a national and state level view of union lobbying and mobilizing, but instead looks at how different (multi) levels of union action develop (or otherwise) a portfolio of sustainable longer term planning approaches. More concretely, it examines the way that unions activate their learning capacity at various levels in order to develop and use coordination and networking to respond to transnational restructuring. We approach restructuring not only from the point of view of unions' external organizational relations (employers, members, community, etc.), but also their internal organizational requirements and relations that build a more proactive union response.

To reframe the context in which union coordination capability is built up, transnational restructuring should be examined. We start from a conceptual distinction between "influencing" (external) and "communication" (internal) union strategies. Specifically, four different strategies, which take place at different levels of union action, are identified and presented in the paper. They reflect different dimensions of coordination as a feature of long term union learning and preparation in relation to restructuring: (1) lobbying and campaigning to influence the macro-level regulatory environment; (2) organizing and coordinating action in relation to influencing micro-level change; (3) developing informational and learning strategies about skills and training development to prepare individuals for negotiating change at the micro-level; and (4) developing communication and exchange of information with each other to create greater levels of awareness and focus in relation to restructuring at the macro-level.

Conclusions identify that the structure and content of union coordination in the context of cross-border restructuring is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to simple historical binaries of bureaucracy-activist or employer facing versus membership facing. Our findings demonstrate that coordination works across various sets of dimensions (i.e. "influencing" and "communicating"), relations (internal and external) and levels (i.e. micro and macro). Therefore, it requires complex sets of organization and agendas.

KEYWORDS: restructuring, international unionism, trade unions, globalization, union coordination

RÉSUMÉ

Mondialisation, restructuration et syndicats : coordination transnationale et variétés de militantisme syndical

Dans cet article, nous étudions comment les syndicats répondent au phénomène de la restructuration transnationale en termes de planification à long terme et de divers moyens d'action. Ce faisant, nous évitons d'adopter une vision qui ne s'en tiendrait qu'à la mobilisation en milieu de travail ou encore à la mobilisation et au lobbying à l'échelle nationale ou étatique, pour examiner plutôt comment différents niveaux d'action syndicale peuvent faire émerger une gamme d'approches durables en matière de planification à long terme. Plus concrètement, nous examinons de quelle manière les syndicats mettent en action leur capacité d'apprentissage pour développer et utiliser la coordination et le réseautage afin de répondre à la restructuration transnationale. Nous abordons la restructuration non seulement du point de vue des relations organisationnelles externes des syndicats (employeurs, membres, communautés, etc.), mais aussi de celui de leurs exigences et relations organisationnelles internes qui permettent de mettre en place une réponse syndicale plus proactive.

Pour recadrer le contexte dans lequel la capacité de coordination syndicale se construit, nous avons d'abord étudié la restructuration transnationale. Nous débutons par une distinction conceptuelle entre les stratégies syndicales visant à « influencer » (externes) et celles visant à « communiquer » (internes). Plus spécifiquement, nous présentons quatre stratégies différentes se déployant à différents niveaux de l'action syndicale. Elles reflètent les différentes dimensions de la coordination comme caractéristique de l'apprentissage syndical à long terme et de la préparation nécessaire face à la restructuration transnationale : (1) faire du lobbying et mener des campagnes pour influencer la régulation de l'environnement au niveau macro; (2) organiser et coordonner l'action syndicale afin d'influencer le changement au niveau micro; (3) mettre en place des stratégies d'information et d'apprentissage en lien avec le développement de la formation et de compétences préparant les travailleurs et les travailleuses à négocier le changement au niveau micro; et (4) améliorer la communication et l'échange d'information afin d'accroitre la sensibilisation et mettre l'accent sur la restructuration au niveau macro.

En conclusion, nous soutenons que la structure et le contenu de la coordination syndicale dans le cadre de la restructuration transfrontalière demeure une question complexe qui ne peut se réduire aux simples couplages historiques bureaucrates contre activistes ou employeurs contre travailleurs. Nos résultats révèlent que la coordination passe par différents ensembles de dimensions (influence et communication), de relations (internes et externes) et de niveaux (micro et macro).

MOTS-CLÉS : restructuration, syndicalisme international, syndicats, mondialisation, coordination

RESUMEN

Globalización, restructuración y Sindicalismo: Coordinación transnacional y variedades de implicación laboral

Este artículo considera las distintas maneras en que los sindicatos responden a la restructuración transnacional en su planificación de largo tiempo y en los diferentes niveles de acción. En este sentido, se evita de caer en una visión de la movilización simplemente basada en el lugar de trabajo, o una visión nacional y estatal de la presión política y de la movilización sindical, y, más bien, se observa cómo los diferentes (multi) niveles de acción sindical desarrollan (o no) una portafolio de enfoques sustentables de planificación a largo plazo. Más concretamente, se examina la manera en que los sindicatos activan su capacidad de aprendizaje a diferentes niveles con miras a desarrollar y utilizar la coordinación y el establecimiento de redes de contactos para responder a la restructuración transnacional. Enfocamos la restructuración desde el punto de vista de las relaciones organizacionales externas del sindicato (empleadores, miembros de la comunidad, etc.), pero consideramos también sus requisitos organizacionales internos y las relaciones que construyen una respuesta sindical más proactiva.

Para redefinir el contexto dentro del cual se construye la capacidad de coordinación sindical, se debe examinar la restructuración transnacional. Partimos de una distinción conceptual entre las estrategias sindicales de "influencia" (externa) y de "comunicación" (interna). Específicamente, cuatro estrategias diferentes, que se presentan a diferentes niveles de la acción sindical, son identificadas y presentadas en este documento. Estas son el reflejo de las diferentes dimensiones de la coordinación como una característica del aprendizaje y de la preparación sindicales de largo plazo con respecto a la restructuración: (1) la presión política y las campañas para influenciar el entorno de regulación de nivel macro; (2) la acción de organización y de coordinación para influenciar el cambio a nivel micro; (3) el desarrollo de estrategias de información y de aprendizaje sobre las habilidades y el desarrollo de la formación para preparar los individuos a la negociación del cambio a nivel micro; y (4) el desarrollo de la comunicación y del intercambio de información entre ellos para crear mayores niveles de conciencia y focalizarse mejor en la restructuración a nivel macro.

Las conclusiones identifican que la estructura y el contenido de la coordinación sindical en el contexto de la restructuración transfronteriza es un asunto complejo que no puede reducirse a los simples binarios históricos de burocracia y activista o propatronal versus pro-miembros. Nuestros resultados demuestran que la coordinación funciona a través de diversos conjuntos de dimensiones (es decir, "influencia" y "comunicación"), de relaciones (internas y externas) y niveles (micro y macro). Por lo tanto, se requiere de sistemas complejos de organización y de agendas.

PALABRAS CLAVES: restructuración, sindicalismo internacional, sindicatos, globalización, coordinación sindical