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Comparative Analysis on Union Revitalisation in the Global South

- Case Studies of the Central Ú nicados Trabalhadores (CUT), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU)

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Abstract

This study is aimed at examining and comparing revitalisation activities conducted by the three Southern unions labelled as social movement unionism (SMU) such as the Central Ú nicados Trabalhadores (CUT) from Brazil, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU).

This study raises some theoretical issues such as the weakness of ‘multi-dimensional approach’, relationship between revitalisation and trade union power resources, and the relationship between union ideological identity and movement/organisational identity.

In the main chapters, dominant forms of strategies conducted by the three Southern unions along four revitalisation dimensions such as membership, economic, political and institutional vitality are presented with comparative analysis using four factors: socio/economic change, political and industrial relations institutions, employers and state’s strategy and union identity.

This study reaffirms that union’s strategic choice is influenced not only by external environments but by internal dynamics including union identity and leadership. In particular, this study cases demonstrates that strong tradition of SMU which has still remained has had considerable impact on union’s strategic choice, even though they are operating in different external environments.

Lastly, this study suggests that the outcome of revitalisation activities should be measured in more careful manner. As much as the meaning of revitalisation varies cross the countries, the measurement of outcomes also varies. In particular, this study emphasises that union revitalisation process should be interpreted and guided by power resources perspective on the longer term.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Ara Kang and son, Ghang Lee.

They were always by my side throughout this process and they were a great encouragement to me; without them, this thesis would not have been possible.

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Statutory Declaration

Chapter 1. Introduction and research questions

What happened to the well-known ‘social movement unionism’ (SMU) in the global South? Has the spirit of SMU still remained? If so, where is it? If not, where are they going? Are they on the right direction? These were the initial ideas for this paper.

The SMU, though still ambiguous definition, has been discussed and largely considered as a goal of union revitalisation. Among others, linking workplace struggles with broader social and political issues, strong tendency for coalition-building, emphasising internal democracy based on members’ direct participation, and high levels of mobilisation-orientation have been emphasised as the core spirits of SMU. These elements seem to fit to the future unionism.

Then, for me, questions described above were raised. In particular, I was curious about the current status and activities of the three Southern unions, which were introduced as a nearly-ideal type of SMU, such as the Central Ú nicados Trabalhadores (CUT) from Brazil, the Congress of South African Unions (COSATU) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Have they succeeded to sustain the SMU until now? Or has it become already ‘history’?

Another motivation for this research is related to the weakness of current union revitalisation studies. Even though literatures on revitalisation have been found lots of volumes, most of them are based on trade unions’ experiences in the industrialised countries or the global North. In particular, ‘organising model’ initiated by US labour movement has been the core issue in terms of union revitalisation strategy.

In contrast, there are relatively a few literatures on the revitalisation activities in Southern unions. Among others, the most visible works seem to have done actively by South African and Australian scholars such as Webster, Buhlungu, Von Holdt and Lambert. In addition, there are some literatures on cross-country comparison among the global South such as, if excluding works by above-mentioned scholars, Seidman (1994) between Brazil and South Africa, Eder (1997) between Brazil and South Korea, Kuruvilla et al. (2002) between Asian

unions, and Phelan et al. (2007) among 34 countries. But I could not find literatures to compare directly among three countries. This is another motivation for this adventure.

The three Southern unions under discussion such as COSATU, CUT and KCTU are known as militant unionism or SMU. They shared many similarities such as historical experience of authoritarian regime (military dictatorship or apartheid regime), strong degree of political actions, a leading role in democratisation process, and active participation in alliance with social movements.

In this regard, Phelan (2007) summarised well as follows:

“Powerful expressions of the potential for social movement unionism have taken place in South Africa, where trade unions were an essential part of the coalition that overthrew apartheid (von Holdt 2003), Brazil, where unions played a key role in the movement that democratised politics and brought Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to power in 2002 (Riethof 2004), and South Korea, where unions made alliances with students and religious groups during the upheaval that undermined the authoritarian state and brought democracy in 1987 (Song 2002)” (cited in Phelan 2007: 22).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, democratic transformation along with neoliberal globalisation took place in these countries. It has had huge impact on these militant labour movements from Brazil to South Africa to South Korea. While direct repression being reduced or weakened, new problems have emerged such as economic restructuring, labour flexibilisation and privatisation. In addition, political openness due to democratisation process has also had an impact on unions’ activities and strategies. Along with these trends, militant unionism or SMU has been greatly challenged, whether eroded or transformed.

At least more than one decade has passed after democratisation process had begun in three countries. The three Southern unions have initiated a variety of activities to adapt themselves to changing external environments, whether or not they contributed to revitalisation. This study focuses on these activities from the perspective of union revitalisation.

Thus main research questions are simple as follows:

First, what strategies have the three Southern unions taken for revitalising themselves?

Second, what are the differences and similarities among three countries and how can they be explained?

Third, what are the outcomes, lessons and implications of these activities in terms of the degree of contribution for revitalising themselves?

In order to answer these questions, I first review literatures on union revitalisation and power resources theory with the aim of building theoretical and analytical frameworks for my case studies. Then predominant forms of union revitalisation strategies, similarities and differences, and outcomes and/or lessons in three countries are to be presented along four revitalisation dimensions such as membership, political, economic and institutional vitality. After that, I present main findings based on cross-country comparative perspective, followed by concluding remarks.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I raise two theoretical issues. One is related to the weakness of ‘multi-dimensional’ approach. The other is associated with the weaknesses of ‘eternal triangle’ model suggested by Hyman (2001) and ‘different matrix of four dimensions’ developed by Webster and Fairbrother (2008).

I argue on the first issue that multi-dimensional (membership, economic, political, institutional vitality) approach on union revitalisation has the weakness to explain deep root of union power. Thus this weakness should be complemented by power resources theory.

On the second issue, my argument is that while Hyman’s triangle model lacks one important element of unionism, that is, tension between institutionalisation and mobilisation, Webster and Fairbrother’s matrix omits or under-estimates the element of class. Thus in order to understand unionism more comprehensively, it is needed to build combined framework between three ideological identities (class, market and society) and two organisational identities (mobilisation and institutionalisation).

Understanding unionism

Hyman (2001) suggested ‘triangle model’ with three poles (class, market and society) to understand unionism. According to this model, he identified three ideal types of unionism: radical class unionism, social democratic or social movement unionism, business unionism.

Even though Hyman focused his analysis on European unionism, he gives us great insight to explore the nature of trade unions across the world. However, it would be noteworthy that his model does not take due consideration of another important aspect to understand unionism. That is a permanent tension between mobilisation and institutionalisation.

For instance, according to Hyman’s framework, radical class unionism is expected to be more mobilisation-oriented, while social democratic unionism as a dominant variant of society-

focused unionism be more institutionalisation-oriented. However, it should be noted that class unionism can become institutionalisation-oriented under certain circumstances, while society-focused unionism be more mobilisation-oriented under the form of SMU.

In this regard, the argument of Webster and Fairbrother (2008) would be noteworthy that trade unions move within a different matrix of four dimensions: market, society, institutionalisation and mobilisation. According to them, trade unions have permanent tensions between market and society and between institutionalisation and mobilisation. For instance, social democratic unionism can be identified by the combination of market and mobilisation, while social movement unionism by the matrix combined by society and mobilisation.

While this perspective brought the dimension of relationship between institutionalisation and mobilisation into the framework of analysing trade unionism as an independent dimension, one important aspect of unionism is omitting or under-estimated in this framework. That is a union function of working-class-making-and-educating. Trade unions can and should be movements and organisations to contribute to making working class and enhancing class consciousness. This dimension should be considered in a fair way in explaining unionism.

Both perspectives commonly emphasise that the nature and role of trade unions are not simply given or determined by external circumstances but the outcomes of strategic choices of their own. Trade unions move either within the 'eternal triangle' or 'different matrix of four dimensions'. And the balance between different dimensions and different roles can change over time. However, it would be noted that as I mentioned above, each framework has its own weakness.

Thus, unionism can be explained in more comprehensive way if we adopt the combined framework between three ideological identities (class, market and society) and two organisational identities (mobilisation and institutionalisation) Each ideological identity may divide into two variants depending on whether mobilisation-oriented or institutionalisation-oriented.

In conclusion, trade unions have different nature and roles according to particular political and economical context, and times. At the same time, there is a space for trade unions themselves to decide their own objectives, whether ‘a sword of justice or a defender of vested interest’ (Flanders 1970: 15, cited by Webster 2011, p.3), or ‘sectionalism or solidarity within labour movements’ (Hyman 2001, p.170). These perspectives have been developed by and connected with the union revitalisation studies which adopt actor-based approach.

Defining union revitalisation

Union revitalisation studies have contributed to overcoming the fatalistic perspective, which view trade unions as something determined by external environments. Revitalisation theory placed trade unions and their strategies on the centre of analysis. It views trade unions as independent collective actors, who are not merely determined by the external environments but those who can choose strategies of their own so as to “build, destroy, reform, or transform institutions” (Turner 2005: 392).

Hamann and Hurd (2004) tried to conceptualise union revitalisation. They defined it as “(re)gaining power along the various dimensions” (2004: 20) such as membership, economic, political and institutional vitality. This approach allowed us to research union decline and revitalisation in more comprehensive way. Membership decline is not any more exactly the same to union decline.

While Hamann and Hurd defined union revitalisation in narrow way, Turner (2005) did it in broader way. He argued that revitalisation is not only a concept or definition “but also a vision of expanded democratic representation and social solidarity” (Turner, 2005: 387). Thus union revitalisation matters not only for unions’ power but for social justice as a whole.

Analysing width: Multi-dimensional approach

Multi-dimensional approach opened more options for trade unions to revitalise themselves. For instance, we had a case in US to use organising strategy for revitalisation, and at the same time there is another case in Italy to use political action.

In other words, different unions may have different priority on revitalisation dimensions and strategies. The priority is shaped by specific context, which contains not only political, economic, and legal provisions, but also their own choices (Hamann and Hurd, 2004).

Weakness of multi-dimensional approach

While multi-dimensional approach contributed to broadening our views on union strategies, it did not take due consideration on the fundamental question. Where do trade union powers come from? What are the resources of trade union power?

Multi-dimensional approach could not give an answer, because it defined trade union power along the spheres where union activities are mainly occurring, and problems were raised. Its main focus is not to analyse the depth but width of trade union power. In other words, it is needed to analyse the deep root of the reality that trade unions face in any systems face “homologous challenge of gaining access to new power resources” (Dörre et al., 2009: 35).

Analysing depth: power resources theory

Power resources theory gives us insights on where trade union power comes from. The analysis of power resources is important, because union’s choice of strategies largely rely on which power resources are available. For instance, women workers in cleaning sector who have weak market and workplace power and also weak associational power may choose an innovative strategy to be able to draw on new power resource. It means that workers may bring their workplace issue such as low wage into the society with the framing of social justice or human rights, then they may get more bargaining power.

Silver (2003), based on Wright’s, distinguishes between structural power and associational power, as foundational power resources of trade unions. While associational power results from the formation of collective organisations including trade union itself, structural power is embedded in economic system. Structural power is divided into two sub-categories, which are market place power and workplace power. For instance, while the tighter labour market

the more market place power, the more strategically important sector, the more workplace power.

As traditional power resources have eroded, the need for searching new power sources and/or creative ways for maximising power resources available through realignment and articulation. In this regard, Lambert and Webster (2009) suggest a logistical power as a sub-type of structural power and symbolic power (cited in Webster et.al. 2008: 11-13).

As logistical power is also embedded in economic system, it shares the nature of structural power. However, it may occur in a specific economic system, which is featured by highly integrated on global/regional level and just-in-time production system. “This form of power is potentially available to marginalized workers at the bottom of the supply chain in manufacturing sectors such as clothing through their leverage in these new global production chains” (Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008:12, cited in Webster and Bischoff 2011: 46).

Lambert (2011: 9) argues that “unlike market bargaining power and workplace bargaining power, which rests on the ability of workers to withdraw from production, logistical power takes matters into the workplace *and* onto the landscape where workplaces are located”.

For instance, the local rural workers’ union, the Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais (STR), in export grape sector in Brazil exercised their structural power effectively, resulted from global retail system. In other words, as long as global retail chain requires export farming capital to meet a strict and precise production calendar, export farm workers can enjoy exercising a logistical power, a derivative of structural power (Selwyn, 2012). This is a good case to suggest that trade unions even under weak workplace and associational powers can also draw on new or derived power resource resulting from global retail or production chain.

Symbolic power is more related to associational power. The point is how to frame the workplace issue into socially-justified discourse or principle or moral so as to gain public support. The most prominent case would be temporary agency workers in cleaning sector in South Korea. Their market place and workplace bargaining power was extremely weak and

even their associational power cannot be exercised because of legal constraints. Thus workers chose the strategy to bring their workplace issue into society with the framing of ‘social justice’ and ‘human rights’. This process was to rebuild associational power in the public domain beyond workplace (Webster and Bischoff, 2010: 46).

Chun (2009) defines symbolic power as “attempts to rebuild the basis of associational power for workers with weak levels of structural power and blocked access to exercising basic associational rights by winning recognition and legitimacy for their struggles” (Chun, 2009: 17, cited in Webster and Bischoff, 2010: 46).

To understand the resources of power helps to develop alternative and creative ways to increase their influences and powers.

Table 1. Sources of Workers' Power

	Structural Power	Associational Power
‘Traditional’ forms of workers’ power	Marketplace bargaining power Workplace bargaining power <i>E.g. the ability to disrupt production through strikes</i>	Organisational power <i>E.g. the ability to form unions and influence government policy through political processes</i>
‘New’ forms of workers’ power	Logistical power <i>E.g. the ability to disrupt the flow of goods at ports, or actions such as the Occupy Wall Street Movement or the occupation of the inner city of Johannesburg by the ANC Youth League</i>	Moral/symbolic power <i>E.g. public demonstrations of immigrant workers or coalitions with community activists and intellectuals in the Democratic Left Front</i>

Source: Adapted from Webster, Lambert & Bezuidenhout (2008), cited in Webster (2011: 19)

Incorporating between width and depth

As I pointed out in above, multi-dimensional approach has weakness in terms of figuring out power sources in spite of providing wide picture of union revitalisation activities. It is needed to be complemented by power resources perspective.

Thus, in my research, to get broader picture on union revitalisation activities in the three Southern unions, I adopt the multi-dimensional approach. Along membership, economic, political and institutional dimensions, I will provide union strategies in each dimension, and analytical explanation on similarities and differences among three unions. Wherever possible and necessary, I will add analysis from the power resources perspective.

As for the variables for cross-country comparison, I adopt the theoretical framework developed by Hamann and Kelly (2004), whose factors are economic and political institutions, the strategies of employers and the state, union identity (Hamann and Kelly 2004, p.94).

Lastly, I also focus on any possibilities to elaborate appropriate theoretical/analytical frameworks for comparing revitalisation activities taken by Southern unions. For instance, I explain and compare organising activities in the global South using the concept of 'organising wide' suggested by Dörre et al.(2009).

Chapter 3. Methodological Issues

The aim of my thesis is to explain the cross-country differences and similarities among three Southern union's revitalisation strategies and provide theoretical explanation. Therefore, cross-country comparative method would fit to my research.

In this study, I compare activities mainly conducted by confederal level (national centre) in order to get general pictures and trends which are occurring in three countries. Thus many meaningful activities by affiliated unions to have insightful elements would be largely omitted. This point is comprised of one of the limitations in my research.

In terms of sources, I analysed extensively not only theory documents but also trade unions' official and unofficial documents including congress reports, resolution, and policy documents.

As I mentioned before, my research focuses on comparative analysis of union revitalisation mainly conducted on the confederal level. Thus it lacks the depth of analysis while it provides general trends and situations in three countries. This weakness should be supplemented by more detailed analysis focused on selected case studies, which have the potentials to provide insightful implications.

Finally, I have to note that I have consciously decided not to include Korean language sources in my manuscript especially when it relates to the Korean case of KCTU. Because this thesis is targeted mainly at English-language readers, therefore I have left out Korean sources in order to keep to word limit except for some important official documents. And I am an insider in KCTU and hence, most of the facts I have related in my thesis comes from first-hand experience.

Chapter 4. The Membership dimension

Membership decline has been equalised as union decline for a long time but to what extent? Membership dimension is foundational for trade union movements. Thus, there are a variety of perspectives on organising, ranging “from methodical innovations in membership recruitment to strategic organisational shifts of entire trade unions” (Dörre et al., 2009: 34).

Frege and Kelly (2004) regard organizing as one dimension or strategy for revitalization which trade unions choose among others, such as political action, coalition-building and social partnership. In contrast, Dörre et al. (2009) argues that organizing should be viewed from the power resources perspective. In other words, organizing has emerged and evolved because of the fact that “trade unions in the Anglo-Saxon voluntarist systems, as well as in corporative systems, face the homologous challenge of gaining access to new power resources” (Dörre et al., 2009: 35).

Based on this, they distinguish ‘organising wide’ from ‘organising narrow’ (2009: 46). ‘Organising wide’ prioritises justice issues over economic efficiency, regards organizing as a means for broader social change, and focuses on poorly organized groups with campaign-orientation and membership participation, while ‘organizing narrow’ has the tendency to concentrate on the trade unions’ core groups, may see organizing as an end in itself. The latter is also characterized by selective admission of direct participation and instrumental perspective on campaigning (ibid.: 46). Movement orientation, membership participation and campaigning capacity are suggested as primary criteria (ibid.: 47).

I adopt this conceptualization suggested by Dörre et al. (2009) as my primary framework to explain organizing activities of the Southern unions. Because their organising approaches are closer to ‘organising wide’ and adopting the three criteria mentioned-above (movement orientation, membership participation and campaigning capacity) would be more appropriate, given their tradition of social movement unionism.

Predominant initiatives for organising

All the three Southern unions have made great efforts to tackle the challenges and problems in membership dimension. A variety of organising activities from the confederal to the local level are taking place. It would be impossible to examine all organising activities in three countries. Thus, I will examine the predominant organising initiatives chosen by the three Southern unions, in particular on the confederal level. Wherever available and necessary, additional observation on their affiliates' activities is also offered.

COSATU: the 2015 Plan and Campaign against Labour Brokering

COSATU's formal commitment on organising can be traced back to the September Commission report in 1997. It explained the challenges in organising dimension and recommended COSATU to "organise flexiworkers and win a floor of acceptable conditions thus preventing flexibility from undermining workers' rights" (September Commission, 1997: 140, cited in Webster and Buhlungu, 2007: 422).

Since then, COSATU began quite proactively to pose questions of Organisational Renewal. "Every Congress and Central Committee since then have received reports, debated and passed resolutions on Organisational Renewal" (NALEDI 2006: 43). These efforts were incorporated into the 2015 Plan which was adopted in the 8th Congress in 2003 aimed at building working class power and strengthening organisation. One of the key components is a goal of "10% membership growth per year, and achieving a Federation membership of 4 million by 2009" (COSATU, 2012: 3).

The official document submitted to the 11th Congress in 2012 well demonstrates COSATU's perception and approach on organizing. "The 2015 Plan recognised that the shifting composition of the working class requires new strategies and organisational targets. It identified the need to target specific groupings of workers for recruitment and organisation, including the young workers, women workers, migrant workers, casualised workers, part-time workers, and unorganised farm and domestic and construction workers" (COSATU, 2012: 4).

Based on the 2015 Plan, COSATU focuses on “informal sector workers, domestic workers, farm workers, casual workers, labour broker workers, and low paid workers, especially workers in construction, cleaning, security, retail, and taxi” (COSATU 2012: 20).

Among others, the campaign against Labour Brokering which was kicked off in early 2010 is one of the most important campaigns in relation to organizing. This campaign included “mobilizing members, workers employed by Labour Brokers and communities to attend Parliamentary Public Hearings on a review of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) held in the Provinces” (COSATU 2012: 71). In addition, numerous “marches, demonstrations/pickets at targeted workplaces and government institutions” and “National Strike on the 7th March 2012” (ibid.: 71) were organized to request the banning of labour brokering.

This campaign demonstrates key features of COSATU organizing activities. In other words, organising is deeply connected with intensified campaign, membership mobilization including strikes, and community organizations.

CUT: Workplace unionization campaign

The predominant initiative of CUT in membership dimension is ‘workplace unionisation campaign’ (CUT 2011: 61). Workplace unionizing initiative is not new. The CUT has traditionally focused on forming workplace sections, inspired by ‘factory committee’ of Sao Paulo auto workers in the period of authoritarian regime, as well as in the 1990s.

In Brazil, state-controlled corporatist workplace regime has remained since the 1940s, which does not allow union representation and the formation of union structure on workplace level. Workplace union structures do not exist in most companies. And even “in many companies, union activists are not allowed to enter the company and their knowledge of and commitment to their members can be limited” (Riethof 2002: 15). And it also imposes ‘single unionism’ per category and municipality. This authoritarian workplace regime has been one of the biggest challenges for Brazilian independent and democratic union movement.

Under these institutional constraints, the CUT in recent years began to intensify its workplace unionising campaigns in even stronger language. According to the recent document of CUT (2011), it strongly calls on all affiliates to create trade unions in company, or trade union committee on workplace level, or at least elect official workplace representatives (CUT, 2011: 59-60).

First, this initiative is aimed at strengthening the trade union's capacity to deal with company restructuring issues including dismissals, one of the most serious and prevailing problems for workers. Second, this is an initiative to connect organising with workers' struggles on labour law reform. Under the condition that there is no consensus on the abolition of authoritarian workplace regime among concerned parties, even within different trade union circles, CUT intends to break the law from below through this campaign. Third, it is also an effective strategy to organize independent unions which are not affiliated to any umbrella organizations.

KCTU: Strategic organizing campaign

The most important initiative of KCTU is the 'Strategic Organising Campaign', which was launched in 2006 after a two-year-discussion that took place between 2003 and 2004. It was formally approved in the National Congress of 2005. The Congress had also approved the rank-and-file fund-raising campaign for 'Strategic Organising Fund' with the initial targeted amount of 5 billion Korean won (local currency) corresponding to 4.5 million US dollars. In addition, the KCTU adopted the guideline for the allocation of financial resources, which strongly recommends its affiliates to allocate financial resources for organising activities by more than 30 per cent of total annual budget.

Based on this initiative, between 2006 and 2009, KCTU recruited 24 organisers and deployed them in 5 strategic sectors. Its organising targets contained in-house subcontracted workers in the metal sector, daily construction workers, disguised self-employed workers, cleaning sector in public services and retail sector workers. It has also allocated financial resources -30 per cent of its total annual budget-, and initiated rank-and-file fund-raising campaign for

organising and recruited organisers. The first term of organising campaign was implemented between 2006 and 2009.

The main points during the assessment process in the first period of organising campaign were as follows: 1) organising targets should be narrowed and make more specific , 2) organising should be enlarged to cover not only precarious workers based on their employment status but also low-paid, vulnerable workers in small-and-medium sized companies, 3) KCTU’s role as a confederation should be strengthened in terms of more allocation of resources and more coordination of organising activities among its affiliates and local branches. Based on these points, KCTU launched the second ‘Strategic Organising Campaign’ in 2011.

Table 2. Key components of KCTU Strategic Organising Campaign

Organising Target	Five strategic sectors (retail, public service, in-house subcontracted workers, day labourer in construction, disguised self-employed)
Allocating Resources	Rank-and-file fund-raising campaign Recruiting, training and deploying organisers
Organisation Restructuring	Building special department for organising Building ad-hoc committee for organising the unorganised Allocating finances by more than 30 per cent Building alliance with social movements related to organising
Improving organisational culture	Revising the union statutes and rules Strengthening education activities
Enlargement of social solidarity	Putting precarious workers’ rights on the social agenda Intensifying solidarity with social and civic organisations

Comparing different incentives for and different forms of organising

As we see from the above, the three Southern unions have implemented organising activities ranging from US style strategic organising campaign, workplace unionising campaign to the

Plan 2012 targeting 10 per cent membership growth per year. What are the factors that prompt these trade unions, examined in this thesis, to organising? Why are their predominant forms of organising activity different from one another? To answer these questions, three factors are to be highlighted: industrial institutions, strategies of the employers and the state, and union identity (Hamman and Hurd, 2004).

Industrial relations institutions

According to Hamman and Hurd (2004), there are three features of industrial relations institutions that can influence the form of organising. These are ‘bargaining structure, union recognition and the framework of worker participation’ (Hamman and Hurd, 2004: 57-58).

First, the primary feature of South African institutions of industrial relations is a voluntarist system. “Sufficient representativeness” is required to enjoy the right to bargain collectively and extend collective agreements to non-parties who are not part of the negotiation. There is no clear definition of “sufficient representativeness” by law. This is one of the main drivers for COSATU and its affiliates to focus on organising.

Second, as we observed above, one of the most important features in Brazilian industrial relations institutions is the illegalisation of unions’ access to and representation of workplace. This constraint has historically undermined trade union’s membership base and it also functioned as structural obstacles for union expansion. CUT’s initiative of workplace unionising campaign is associated with this institutional constraint.

Third, the most important character of institutions in South Korea is enterprise unionism, which led to enterprise-level bargaining as the predominant form. This decentralised system with no authoritative extension mechanism of collective agreements to non-members functions as a strong incentive for organising for the KCTU.

Strategies of the Employers and State

Arguably, the effective ‘union exclusion’ policy (Herry and Adler, 2004: 60) of South Korean government has played a role for trade unions to initiate organising campaign. Under the condition of repressive government policy, what trade unions rely on is their own capacities.

In terms of employers’ strategies, there are more similarities among the three countries. In South Korea, employers’ approach to trade unions is extremely hostile. They tend to exploit every possibility to interfere in trade unions with the aim of breaking trade union organisation. Employers in South Korea even frequently turn to hiring thugs to attack striking workers. In South Africa, the employers massively resist, undermine or even jeopardise the Bargaining Councils, a dominant form of bargaining, particularly in vulnerable sectors “where centralised bargaining is most needed” (COSATU, 2012: 87).

In Brazil, it should be emphasised that employers have legal rights and freedom to hire-and-fire employee without justification. It means that Brazilian employers control workers through “Taylorist methods such as the pressures of labor markets, the threat of unemployment, job insecurity, and technical control” (Eder, 1997: 6). CUT’s workplace unionizing campaign is the response to this market-oriented strategy of employers.

Union identity

Three Southern unions examined here share many similarities, particularly in terms of their union identity. Historically, they were labeled as social movement unionism. If adopting Hyman’s triangle eternity (2002), three unions remain to move between class and society though market-orientation has been enhanced along with dual transition. At the same time, the tradition of mobilization and rank-and-file members’ participation still remains even though they already show signs of different degrees of decline.

This common union identity among the three unions does influence their goal, form and methods of organizing.

First, meaning of organizing is broader and much more comprehensive. In this regard, COSATU organizers' definition is noteworthy. They defined organising as the process of "inspiring, educating and uniting workers...to build workers who can sustain organization" (NALEDI, 2001, cited in COSATU, 2012: 18). This definition seems to exactly represent the perception of organizers of Southern unions which have a strong tradition of social movement unionism.

Second, the goal of organizing is more than an increase of membership or strengthening of trade union power, instead organizing is largely associated with broader social justice issues. Thus, the union's organizing activities tend to aim at building links with the community and social movement groups. Campaigning and mobilizing are considered as the essential components for organising.

Third, class-oriented tradition is associated with strong emphasis on "field enlargement, on extending unionization to those at the 'rough end of the labour market'" (Herry and Adler, 2004: 62). In the process of organizing, 'class solidarity' and/or 'class unity' and/or 'representing entire working class' are frequently emphasized to broaden internal agreement on organizing the unorganized and prevent any internal resistance.

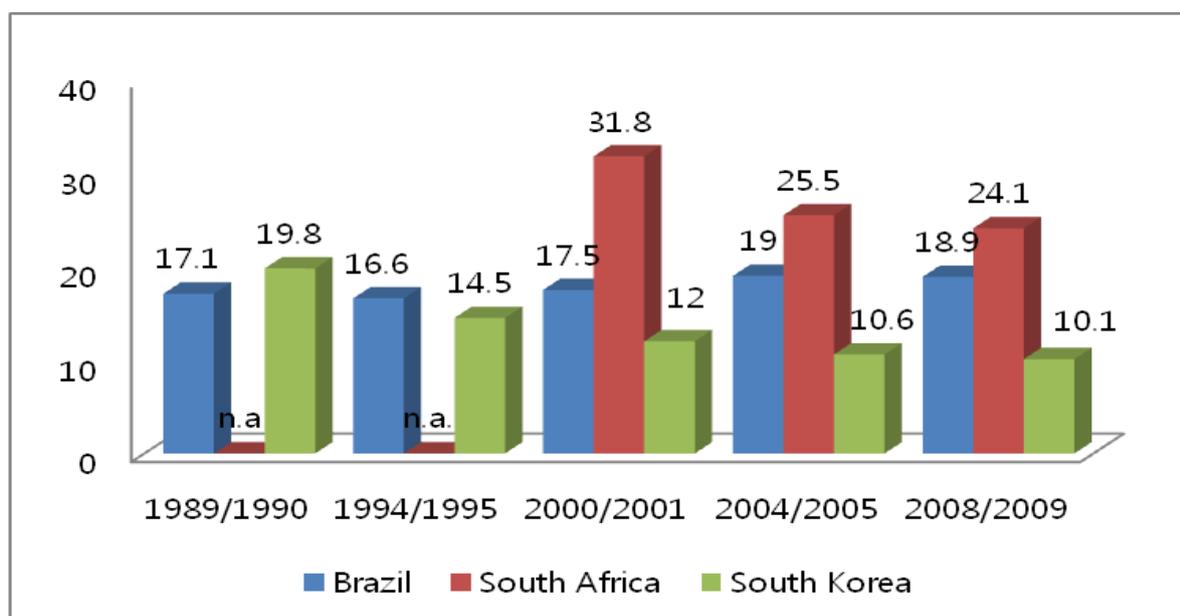
Status of Membership dimension and Comparing outcomes

What are the outcomes of the different forms of strategies conducted by the three Southern unions? Kelly (2003) suggests three indicators to measure union membership power: union density, union membership increase/decrease and membership composition.

Union Density

As shown in the below Figure 1, trade union density rate has steadily declined in recent years in South Africa and South Korea, from 31.8 per cent in 2001 to 24.1 per cent in 2008 and 19.8 per cent in 1989 to 10.1 per cent in 2009 respectively, while Brazil has explained a slight increase since 1992.

Figure 1. Trade union density trend 1989/90-2008/09 (per cent)



Note: Trade union density as a proportion of total union membership to total employment for Brazil and South Africa, and a proportion of total union membership to paid employment for South Korea. The rate of Brazil in 1989/1990 is a statistic for 1992.

Source: Author’s calculation based on ILO Key Indicators of the Labour Market (2011) and Trade Union Membership Statistics (2011)

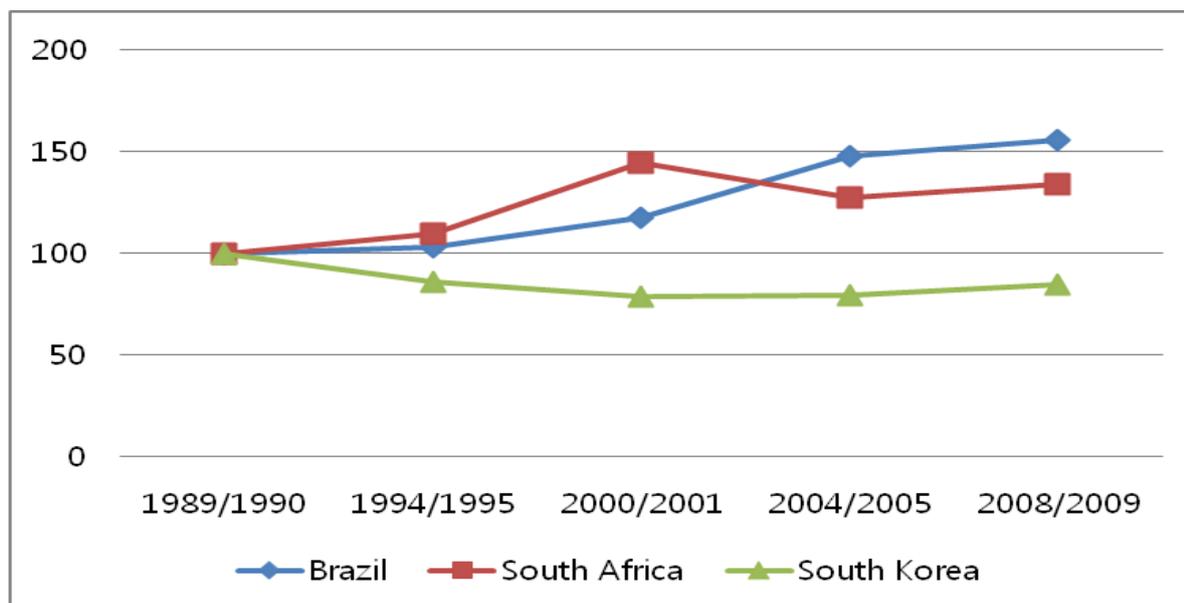
Trade union membership

Table 3. Trade union membership trend 1989/90-2008/09

	1989/1990	1994/1995	2000/2001	2004/2005	2008/2009	20-year-change
Brazil	11,213,767	11,567,734	13,177,840	16,565,385	17,473,044	6,259,277
South Africa	2,459,000	2,690,727	3,552,113	3,134,865	3,298,559	839,559
South Korea	1,932,415	1,659,011	1,527,000	1,537,000	1,640,000	-292,415

Source: ILO Key Indicators of the Labour Market (2011) and Trade Union Membership Statistics (2011). A statistic in 1989/1990 column for Brazil is one from 1992.

Figure 2. Change in trade union membership between 1989/1990 and 2008/2009



Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Key Indicators of the Labour Market (2011) and Trade Union Membership Statistics (2011). A statistic in 1989/1990 column for Brazil is one from 1992.

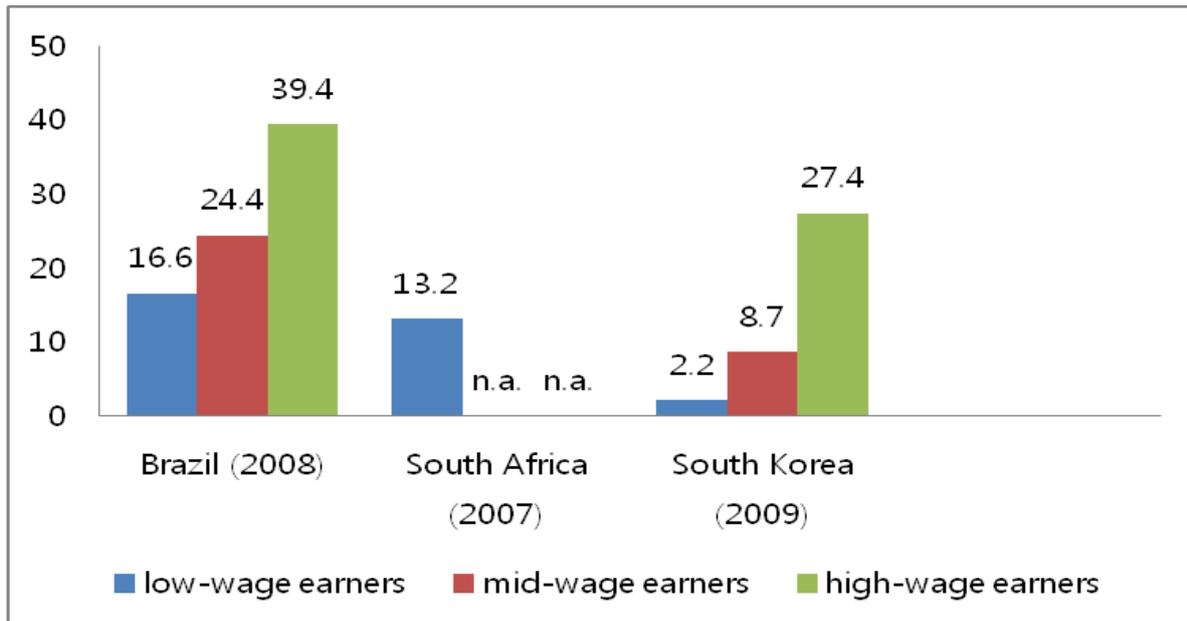
Above Figure 2 shows different trends of trade union membership in three countries. Brazil has experienced steady membership growth since 1992, amounted to 56 per cent point. Even though South Africa also saw an overall increase in membership between 1990 and 2008, amounted to 34 per cent point, it should be noted that the membership has declined between 2001 and 2005. The worst case is South Korea, where the membership has fallen for the last two decades by 15 per cent point.

In terms of unionisation level, South Africa has a relatively high compared to other similar income countries, while South Korea has the lowest one. Brazil seems to have a stable level of unionisation, more or less around 20 per cent.

Membership composition

While the labour market in three countries has changed rapidly into informalisation and precarisation of employment, the membership composition of three national unions is hardly reflective.

Figure 3. Union membership by pay level (as per cent of workers)



Note: Mid-wage earners refer to workers earning between two-thirds and four-thirds of the median wages. All the figures refer to union members as a percentage of total wage earners, except Brazil where only formal wage earners are considered.

Source: ILO estimates from national labour force surveys (“national technical reports” and estimation by Janine Berg for Brazil), cited in ILO (African Briefing: 19).

The Figure 3 clearly shows that union members in three countries are concentrated in high-wage earners, which demonstrates the problem of representation of trade unions even in the category of wage earners. In South Korea, the situation seems to be more serious. Given the fact that low pay rate as the share of wage earners earning below two-thirds of median wages was 28 per cent (4.79 million) as of March 2011, 2.2 per cent of union members relative to total wage earners is the extremely low level (Lee 2012), which demonstrates the current status of trade union in South Korea. At the same time, the unionisation rate of precarious workers is only 1.7 per cent, while that of regular workers is 20.3 per cent (KCTU 2011).

COSATU seems to have similar problems like KCTU. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the 1st quarter of 2012 (cited in COSATU, 2012: 24), 95% of trade union members had permanent positions, while 3% of trade union members said they were employed on fixed term contracts. Buhlungu (2005: 9) emphasised that “not only does this project COSATU members as privileged relative to the growing army of the unemployed and to workers in precarious employment and the informal sector, but it also suggests that the

federation has failed to make headway in organising beyond the diminishing core workforce in full-time permanent jobs”.

And “the overall percentage of women members in COSATU based on the unions that supplied data is 48 per cent (COSATU 2011: 208)”. Overall share of women in employment in South Africa is estimated by 43.5 per cent, as of 2011. In Brazil, overall share of women in employment, as of 2009, is 42.6 per cent. The share of women member in total membership of CUT is approximately 25 per cent. In South Korea, the overall share of women in employment is 41.6 per cent, as of 2010. The ratio of women members to total membership in KCTU examined here is around 27 per cent, as of 2009.

Even though we can analyse general trends in membership dimension through key indicators in above, it is not easy to measure the outcome of the certain organising strategy. For instance, if we adopt the concept of ‘organising wide’, it becomes more difficult to measure its success.

In this regard, COSATU’s observation is suggestive: “It is important to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative organising. We can define qualitative organising as strategic recruitment and organising whilst quantitative organising refers to the recruitment and organisation of large numbers of unorganised workers. In other words, a union might prioritise the organizing of labour broker workers and put significant time and energy into organising one workplace. Whilst this may not be huge in number it is of great strategic significance and would take more time and resources to organize. Therefore we should also ensure that we develop measures to record such examples of qualitative organising gains and innovations” (COSATU, 2011: 207).

As Dörre et al. (2009: 57) pointed out, the effects of organizing and renewal approaches “will only be able to be assessed after some time has passed”. However, it should at least be emphasized that even though all the three unions emphasised ‘field-enlargement’ organising and they have all allocated resources to some extent for that purpose, it is difficult to say categorically that these efforts have resulted in successful outcomes, as can be seen from the low level of unionisation of low-paid, precarious and informal economy workers. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the future success of organising may fully depend on the

confederation's willingness and capacity to generalise lessons from a variety of innovative organising cases, in order to draw on new sources of power or the realignment of traditional power sources.

Chapter 5. Economic Dimension

Collective bargaining is the “focal point for the power and voice that workers can achieve only through unionization” (Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, 2001: 212). Neoliberal restructuring along with economic liberalization, labour flexibilisation and financialisation have changed dramatically the power balance between labour and capital. Traditional sources of power, structural and associational powers, have declined. The effectiveness of strike as also eroded. Key indicators such as collective bargaining agreement coverage to measure economic power of trade unions were found to decline for last decades in most continents.

Thus trade unions have tried to (re)gain the bargaining power. The key question would be how to do. From the power resources perspective, the options would be two: either find new power sources and/or find creative ways to exercise traditional sources of power.

Even though I found several cases to demonstrate innovative ways to draw on new power resources in three countries, in this paper I address only concentrated initiatives conducted by national centres. Firstly, I analyse the status of bargaining power in three countries using key indicators. Secondly, I will present main initiatives by three Southern unions.

Status of bargaining power

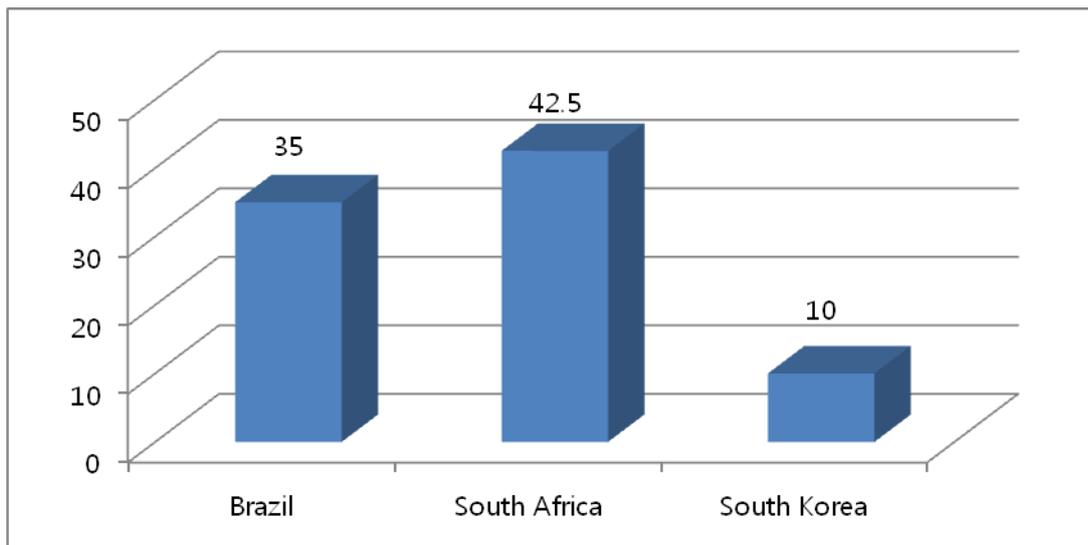
Collective bargaining coverage rate

One of the key indicators to measure the status of trade union economic power is the collective bargaining agreement coverage rate (hereafter coverage rate). According to the ILO (2011), there are two types of coverage rate, narrow and comprehensive. Narrow rate can be defined as a share of the number of workers in paid employment covered by collective agreements relative to the total number of employees (total “paid” employment). Comprehensive rate can be defined as a share of the number of workers covered by collective agreements compared to the “total employment” whether in the formal or informal economy (ILO Social Dialogue Indicators, 2011: 7).

Given that South Africa and Brazil have large informal sectors, it would be more appropriate to take a comprehensive coverage rate. However, due to difficulties to find accurate figures, I use both types of coverage rates.

Three countries at a glance

Figure 4. Collective bargaining coverage rate, 2008 (in per cent)



Note: Adjusted coverage rate as a share of employees covered by wage bargaining agreements as a proportion of all wage all wage and salary earners in employment with the right to bargaining

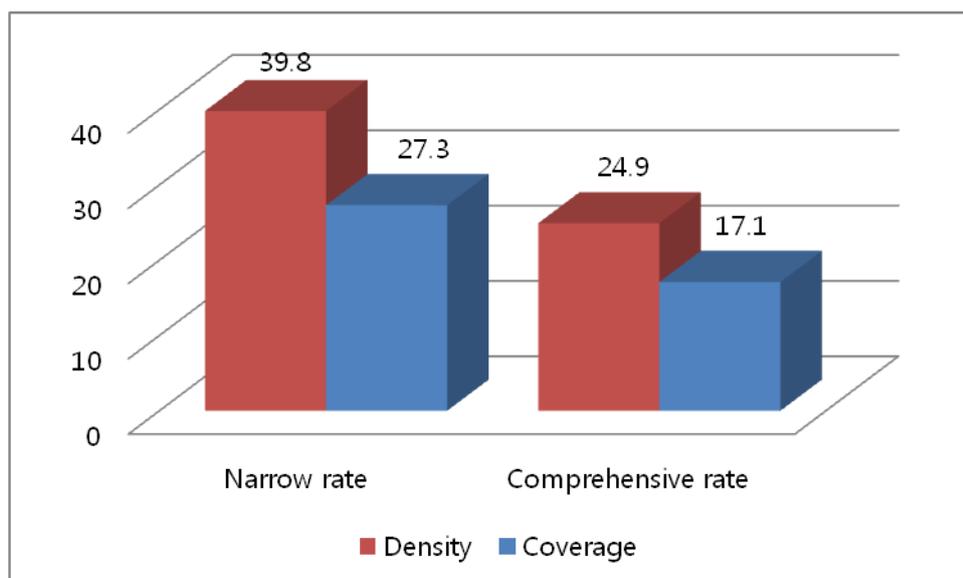
Source: ICTWSS database (2011)

As shown in above Figure 4, if adopting the narrowest type of coverage rate (a share of covered employees to paid employment with the right to bargaining), South Africa demonstrates relatively high level (42.5 per cent), and followed by Brazil (32 per cent). South Korea records the lowest level. However this coverage rate does not take into account of informal economy and some sectors ineligible to bargain. Thus, it is hardly to say this rate reflect the real status.

South Africa

The below Figure 5 tells us considerably different story compared to previous figures. First, in South Africa, the coverage rates for the same year of 2008 significantly differ according to different definitions. The narrow and comprehensive rates defined by ILO (2011) are 27.3 per cent and 17.1 per cent, respectively, while the narrowest expressed in previous Figure is 42.5 per cent.

Figure 5. Density and coverage rate in South Africa, 2008 (in per cent)



Note: Narrow rate expresses as a share of union members in paid employment or paid employees covered by collective agreements relative to “paid” employment. Comprehensive rate expresses as a share of union members or workers covered by collective agreements relative to “total” employment.

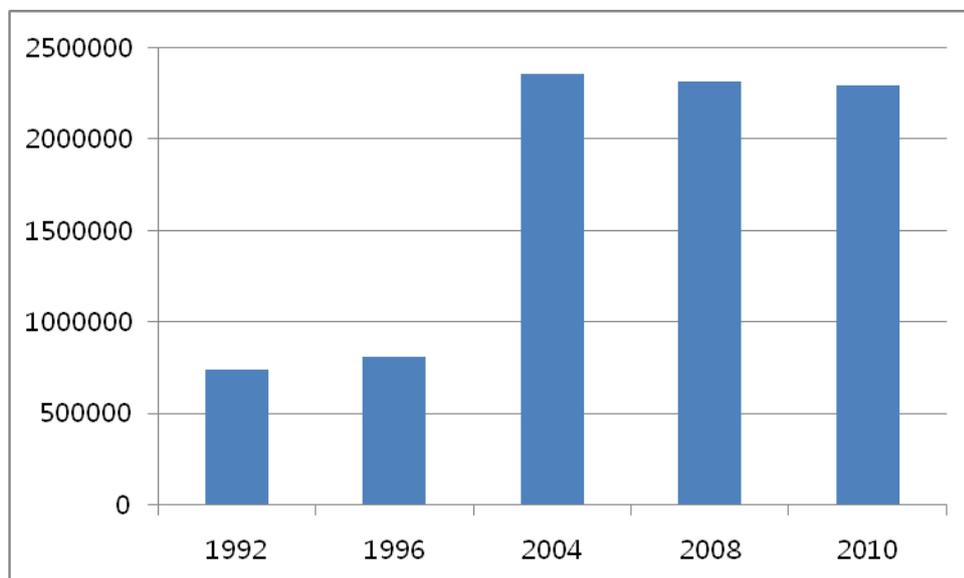
Source: ILO Social Dialogue Indicators 2011

The differences are ranged from 10.2 to 25.4 per cent point. This implies that South African trade unions’ power is exerted within limited sector, mainly formal sector workers with right to bargain. Another important point is the difference between coverage rate and union density. Surprisingly the latter is higher than the former. This implies that significant proportion of union members does not fully enjoy the right to bargaining and are not covered by collective agreements.

According to COSATU, the number of workers covered by the Bargaining Councils, the most important bargaining institution, has increased until 2004, but since then it has been

declining. Those covered by bargaining councils also declined by about 70000 between 2004 and 2010 (COSATU, 2012: 69).

Figure 6. Bargaining councils coverage, number of employee



Source: Godfrey (2012), cited by COSATU (2012: 69)

In South Africa, Bargaining Council is the most important bargaining system and reported to cover about 20 per cent of all employees and 33 per cent of all workers that would normally fall within a collective bargaining unit (COSATU 2012: 67).

Thus largely it may be said that bargaining strength of South Africa's trade unions has been declining and its institution also has not been working properly according to its original objectives. More worryingly this trend would result in more negative consequences if it is combined with the union membership decline.

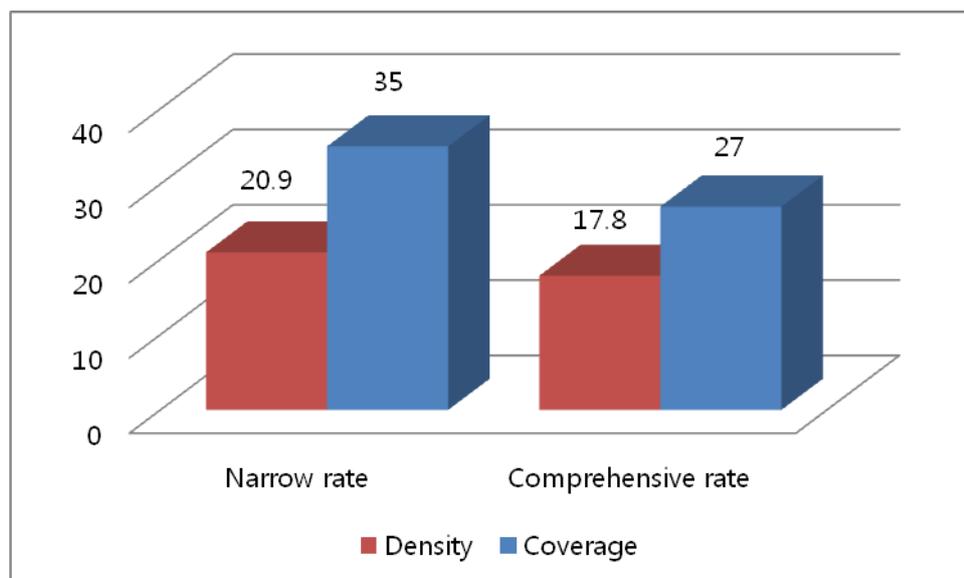
These are the serious problems and conditions which South African trade unions including COSATU are facing, and should deal with.

Brazil

In Brazil, as shown in below Figure 7, the gap between narrow and comprehensive rates is relatively smaller than South Africa, which is amounted to 8 per cent point. But it would be

important to note that unlike the South Africa, the comprehensive rate only considers the number of own-account workers such as self-employed workers. Thus it does not fully consider the whole informal economy workers. Thus the gap may be increased, if considering the whole informal workers.

Figure 7. Density and coverage rate in Brazil, 2007/2008 (in per cent)



Note: Coverage rate in Narrow rate column expresses a share of paid employees covered by collective agreements compared to all paid employees minus some sectors or occupations ineligible of right to bargaining, defined by Visser (2011), while that in the column of comprehensive rate takes into consideration of own-account workers. In case of union density, narrow one means a share of union members in paid employment relative to all paid employees, while comprehensive one does a share of union members compared to total employment.

Source: ICTWSS database (2011); ILO Social Dialogue Indicators (2011)

In Brazil, the coverage rates are higher than union density by around 10 to 15 per cent point. This is mainly because of the system of “single unionism” per category per (or more) municipality. In other words, the collective agreement concluded by a certain “single union” in a given category and municipality, it is applied to all workers in a given category and municipality whether members or not.

Brazil experienced rather stable coverage rate for the last several years. According to Visser (2011), there is no change in term of coverage rate between 2003 and 2008. It implies that coverage rate and union density in Brazil has been stagnated. It is largely because of industrial relations system, which does not allow for workers to build plural unions, and also conclude nation-wide industrial agreements. This is the primary sphere which CUT wants to change for revitalisation.

South Korea

South Korea is well-known for its low density and weak collective bargaining coverage regardless of different definitions. In South Korea, the coverage rate is estimated by similar to or slightly over the level of unionisation because there is no actual effective extension mechanism.

In South Korea, administrative extensions over a particular locality are legally possible, where a majority of the workforce falls under the same agreement. However, due to enterprise bargaining, this is extremely rare. By contrast, the law provides for employers to extend agreements over a whole firm or workplace where half of the workforce is covered by an agreement due to their membership in a signatory trade union (OECD Employment Outlook, 2004: 148).

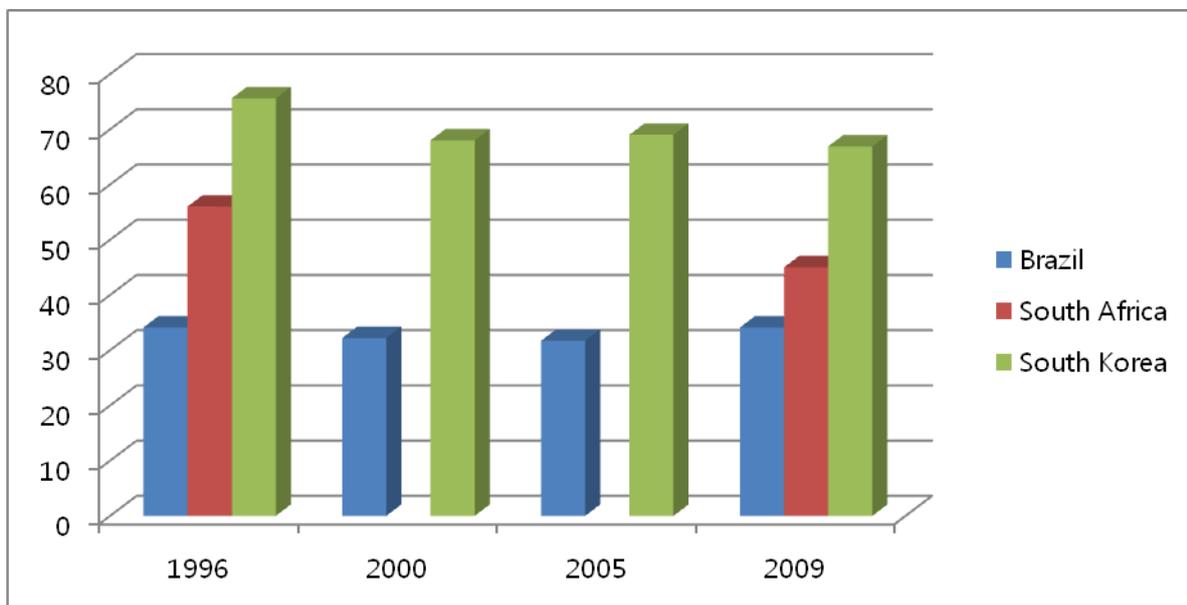
As we already observed in the above Chapter, the union density in South Korea has continued to decline since 1989, reaching more or less 10 per cent. Thus the bargaining coverage may be estimated by 10 to 11 per cent. This figure ranks the lowest in the OECD member countries and among the three countries examined here.

This low level of coverage rate is deeply related to wage setting mechanism, which is characterised by enterprise-level bargaining system as a dominant form. To overcome this institutional constraint seems important starting point for Korean trade unions' collective bargaining initiatives including KCTU.

Wage share in national income

Another indicator to measure economic power would be the wage share in national income. National income is considered to be composed of profit share by capital and wage share by employees. Thus wage share in national income may be the indicator to measure trade union's economic power as a whole.

Figure 8. Wage share in national income (in per cent)



Source: ILO database, Brazil

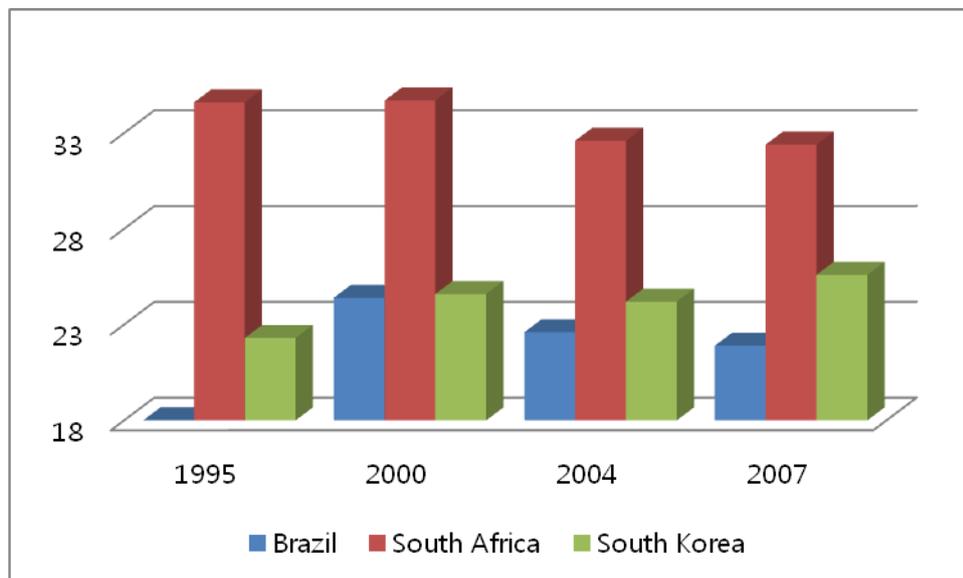
The Figure 8 in above shows that South Africa and South Korea experienced more or less slight decline though in different degree, while Brazil seeing a different trend. The wage share in Brazil has declined slightly until 2004, but since then it has turned into upward.

Conversely, South Korea saw fluctuation between 2000 and 2005, but since 2006 the share has declined slightly. South Africa has also tended to decline gradually since 1996. Among three, Brazil ranks the lowest level. The share of wages in the national income dropped from 50% in 1994 to just over 45% in 2009, while the share of profits climbed from 40% to 45%.

Low pay rate

Whilst trade unions make a significant difference to the degree of economic inequality within a society, they do not in recent years appear to have had any effect on the rate of real wage growth (earnings increases adjusted for price inflation) nor on the share of wages in national income (Kelly 2003).

Figure 9. Low pay rate in Brazil, South Africa and South Korea (per cent)



Source: ILO Global Wage Report 2010/11

As shown in above Figure 9, Brazil has experienced the steady decline of low pay rate, while the South Korea increased. It may be said that South Africa tended to decline at large. But it should be emphasised that the absolute level of low pay rate in South Africa is relatively high compared to the other two.

Comparing Strategies

In economic dimension, I found some similar patterns to deal with this issue among three Southern unions. The predominant forms of initiatives one the confederal level are summarised as 1) the centralisation of bargaining structure, 2) linking with policy campaign

related to minimum or living wages and 3) searching for leverage to cope with multinational companies.

Centralisation of bargaining structure

All the three Southern unions are commonly demanding to reform legal bargaining structure to ensure or strengthen nation-wide sectoral agreements, which means to build more centralised structure. These efforts have emerged by two ways: reform of wage setting institutions and set-up and/or strengthening industrial unionism.

First, in all the three countries, demands for the reform of wage setting institutions are to be placed on the priority.

Even though South Africa is characterised by relatively higher centralised bargaining structure than the other two countries, the COSATU is recently discussion to initiative campaign to transform the voluntarist bargaining system into ‘mandatory sectoral bargaining’ system. This is a response to the employers’ hostile strategies. In actually, for the last decades, the South African employers have strongly resisted to set up the Bargaining Council, a dominant form of bargaining structure, and extension of collective agreements to non-parties. They have frequently used the provision of the legal requirement of “sufficiently representativeness” to eligible to bargaining in order to avoid the collective bargaining.

As observed in previous Chapter on membership dimension, industrial relations institutions in Brazil and South Korea are more non-favourable to workers. Brazilian labour law does not ensure trade unions to conclude nation-wide sectoral agreement, but a given-category-level which normally covers one or more municipalities. Thus, CUT has strongly requested to reform the relevant laws to ensure centralised bargaining. For this purpose, the CUT has taken a strong campaign for the ratification of ILO Conventions No. 87, related to freedom of association. The situation of South Korea is the worst in terms of wage setting institutions. The dominant level of bargaining is the company-level. According to KCTU (2011), firm-level bargaining is composed of 78.3 per cent, while the share of supra-firm level bargaining

is 21.7 per cent. Thus KCTU has fought for labour law reform to guarantee mandatory nation-wide sectoral bargaining structure. In addition, it has also demanded to strengthen authoritative extension mechanism as a part of responses to the extremely low level of bargaining coverage.

Second, all three Southern unions have implemented to strengthen industrial unionism as one of preconditions for centralisation of bargaining pattern.

KCTU has strongly implemented to transform its affiliated unions into industrial unions. As we already observed in previous Chapter, it is a part of response to over the enterprise unionism. In South Korea, the share of firm-level union is approximately 46 per cent, while one of supra firm-level union is 54 per cent (KCTU 2011). In case of KCTU, the share of industrial unions among the whole affiliates is the around 80 per cent. Based on their own capacity, several affiliates of KCTU such as Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) and Korean Hospital and Medical Workers' Union (KHMW) have succeeded to set up central bargaining structure and conclude the central agreements despite of the legal constraint.

CUT has a similar strategy to KCTU in this regard. In spite of legal constraint related to centralisation of bargaining, CUT has strongly implemented initiative to build industrial unions. This process brought about to positive outcome in certain sectors, particularly in financial sector. One of the core principles of COSATU is the 'one union per one industry'. Based on this principle, the merger process among affiliates under the guidance of confederation is occurring to strengthen the union capacity.

Tackling inequality

Definitely tackling with inequality among workers and people has become the tope agenda for the three Southern unions. This trend even more has been strengthening in recent years, as the crisis has hit working people and the poor in those countries.

KCTU and CUT have active implemented minimum wage campaign and COSATU has re-emphasised the importance of Living Wage Campaign. These activities are the response the

growing inequality among workers in three countries. In particular, as we observed above, given that relatively high proportions of low-paid workers among wage-earners, the issue of wage inequality will become important. In addition, it would be important to note that these policy campaigns have been functioning as linkages between trade unions and social movements. Lastly, it should be also noteworthy that these campaigns have significant potentials for organising. In other words, the campaigns can provide opportunities for trade unions to reach out to low-paid workers.

Tackling with multinationals

In the era of neoliberal globalisation, bargaining is not limited to national borders but frequently cross the borders due to globalised production and capital liberalisation. In particular, it has become very urgent for trade unions to find a way to cope with multinational companies effectively who are major actors in globalisation era.

With regard to this issue, CUT has taken very concentrated initiative to build trade union networks in multinational companies. CUT, as a confederation, has taken a leading role on this matter. For instance, CUT has implemented a joint project with FNC, Dutch trade union confederation, named by “Action on Multinationals”, CUTMulti (CUT 2011). In case of South Korea, the KMWU affiliated to KCTU has been active to build solidarity and union networks in multinationals. Specifically, KMWU has tried to build union networks in Hyundai Motor Corporation with the support of the former International Metal Workers Federation (IMF).

In economic dimension, on the confederal level, all the three unions are facing the loss of power due to the hostile strategy of employers (see previous Chapter on membership dimension), neo-liberal restructuring and lack of institution. In order to cope with this challenge, these unions pursuing more centralised bargaining structure through labour law reform, active policy campaigns on minimum or living wage, and strengthening international links.

Chapter 6: Political Dimension

According to Hamann and Kelly (2004), political action has been one of the most prominent forms of activity undertaken by unions in their case studies that include the UK, US, Germany, Italy and Spain. They argue that this is mainly because of the central role of the state in devising economic, social, and industrial relations policies in response to global economic pressures (Hamann and Kelly, 2004: 93). In other words, “[states] become “valuable targets for unions in their quest to acquire and deploy political power” (Hamann and Kelly, 2004: 93).

Treating trade unions as political actors is enormously important for my research because of the following reasons. First, historically the governments of Brazil, South Africa and South Korea have had a strong tradition to intervene in a high-handed, repressive and authoritarian manner; in industrial relations and it remains so until today. Second, one of the most important shared features among the three Southern unions is the ‘centrality of politics’ (Von Holdt, 2002) in their histories, which means they frequently connect factory-based issues with the broader social and political issues. Third, the democratisation process in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a significant impact on trade unions, resulting in the institutionalisation of trade union power. Particularly in the case of political parties, which had struggled against the authoritarian regimes together with the trade unions and eventually took over state power, as in the case of Brazil and South Africa. Hence, analysis on this dimension may have very significant implications for unions as political actors.

Different path, different pattern

Most trade unions in the developed countries, in particular in Europe, had enjoyed institutionalised political power along with Keynesian welfare states during the post-war period. The states ensured trade unions’ access and voice to policy-making process through formal institutions. However, unions in Europe began to lose political power due to neoliberal restructuring. “The period since the late 1980s has witnessed a considerable increase in state intervention in the economy as many governments have sought to reform

labour markets and welfare systems in order to facilitate national competitiveness in a context of increasingly global competition” (Hamann and Kelly, 2004: 93).

Conversely, the three Southern unions have experienced different paths from their counterparts in Europe. In the post-war period when the European trade unions had enjoyed ‘institutionalised’ political power, the Southern unions had been under military dictatorship or authoritarian regime accompanied by bloody repression. Then, in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the European trade unions began to recognise the loss of political allies in the government, the Southern unions have just started to taste to a certain extent; institutionalised political power along with democratisation.

Thus, theoretically they may have a chance for newly institutionalised political power to compensate for the loss of economic power resulted from neoliberal restructuring taking place in the global North and South.

Dual transition

Democratisation has come along with to some extent, political openness to trade union movements through formal and informal institutions. The most important events were the election of ANC in South Africa and PT in Brazil in 1994 and 2002 respectively as the ruling parties of their countries. Both of them have had strong ties with the trade unions. It should be noted that the democratisation process in South Africa and Brazil had already begun even before the ANC and PT were elected as governments. South Korea also saw a steady political democratisation process since the late 1980s after the ‘great people’s and workers’ struggles’ in 1987. The first liberal democrat administration, led by former President Kim Dae-jung came to power in December, 1997, had coincided with the opening of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Seoul office in the South Korean government complex.

Institutionalisation of trade union power

The democratisation process was associated with “the consolidation of the labour movement... organisationally and politically”, and this “shifts the arena for political struggle to the state and to political actors that can gain access to the state” (Keck, 1992: 24, cited in

Riethof, 2002: 9). In other words, this process provided chances for trade unions to institutionalise their associational power though in different degrees.

In all three countries examined, tripartite institutions that invite participation of trade union representatives have emerged: NEDLAC in South Africa, the National Labour Forum (NLF) in Brazil and the Tripartite Commission in South Korea. These institutions are often labelled as bodies for social dialogue or social partnership.

CUT and COSATU are actively participating in these institutions, while KCTU has zigzagged after serious internal debates and conflicts in the late 1990s. In addition, all the three unions have enjoyed the participation in various other industrial relations institutions. CUT has been participating in more than 70 governmental agencies and COSATU too. KCTU has also been invited to various industrial relations institutions such as the Minimum Wage Council, National and Regional Labour Relations Commissions. The Southern unions seem to succeed in institutionalising their powers to some extent within the state systems, after long-standing militant struggles.

Conditioned by globalisation

However, different stories also occurred at the same time. The political democratisation process has come with neoliberal globalisation. Adler and Webster (1995, cited in Anisha, 2010: 5) call this, 'double transition'. Economic liberalisation, privatisation, labour flexibilisation and informalisation of the economy were all taking in tandem with the process of democratisation. The Growth, Employment and Redistributive Programme (GEAR) in South Africa, IMF restructuring programmes in South Korea, and bold form of neoliberal policies in the 1990s in Brazil all symbolise this process.

Political openness provided the trade unions with chances of institutionalising its power. However, it was also heavily conditioned by the globalisation process. This implies that there are limitations to this new-found openness in spite of a significant level of increase in their membership (in terms of quantity), even in South Africa and Brazil where the ruling parties have traditionally strong ties with the trade unions. .

Thus, as soon as the Southern unions began to enjoy increasing institutionalised power, they had to acknowledge the bigger problems that were derived from the global, as well as the local forces. The latter conditioned the former structurally, resulting in narrowing chances for ‘political exchange’ in the global South.

How have the Southern unions responded to these political developments? What are the factors that influenced the union’s choices? These questions shall be addressed in this chapter.

Predominant forms of political action undertaken by the trade unions

Hamman and Kelly (2004) distinguish 5 forms of political action such as, union-party links, collective action including general strikes, social pacts with government, political lobbying, and union’s electoral activity. This analytical framework shall be used in analysing the political actions undertaken by the trade unions in the three countries being examined here. However, considering the historical relations between CUT and PT, and COSATU and ANC, and also specific political environment where lobbying is rare, I incorporate union’s electoral activity and political lobbying into the category of union-party links.

Thus, political actions by these trade unions can be observed through mainly three forms: union-party links, collective action and social pacts. At the same time, I consider there exists a permanent tension between institutionalisation and mobilisation in every political action fundamentally.

COSATU: union-party link and mass mobilisation

Arguably, political action by COSATU has mainly taken two forms: strong tie with the governing party of ANC and occasional use of collective action. As a part of union-party link, COSATU has mobilised voters for the ANC during the elections.

The most dramatic and symbolic event in terms of union-party link would be the events at Polokwane during the ANC’s national executive committee elections of December 2007, when political revolt and an overhaul of its leadership and policy had occurred (COSATU

2011: 10). Analysing this event, Pillay (2008: 16, cited in Anisha 2009: 34) notes that “while many had questioned COSATU’s continued insistence on remaining in the alliance in spite of substantial slide in its influence within same”, “the strategy on the part of labour seemed to have been that of returning the ANC to its supposed working class bias”.

Even though the contestation is still going on in the ANC, as well as in the government, COSATU succeeded to show its strong discontent about the ‘conservative market-based macroeconomic policy’ (ibid. 2009: 34) that is responsible for the increase in poverty and inequality in South Africa, as, well as its willingness to transform. This case clearly shows how COSATU has exercised its power.

The other important form of political action for COSATU is mass mobilisation including political strikes. According to COSATU (2012: 93), “85 per cent of strikes were wage related, while 6 per cent and 5 per cent were related to retrenchment and unfair disciplinary actions or dismissal, respectively”. Thus in most cases, we cannot consider strikes as a part of political action, but a part of activities in the economic dimension.

However, as we have observed in the previous chapter, COSATU organised a general strike to demand the banning of labour brokering in March, 2012. In addition, COSATU called for general strikes against privatisation in the previous years, resulting in partially stopping privatisation. These cases demonstrate that COSATU occasionally used mass mobilisation including political strikes.

NALEDI (2006: 19) noted that “the central lesson is that social mobilisation – across sectors and institutions – are the centre of making even small changes to economic and social policy. This is a lesson that must guide the work of COSATU going forward. The experience thus suggests greater levels of mobilisation for redistribution by the state must be at the centre of COSATU strategy” (NALEDI 2006: 19).

CUT: union-party link and mass mobilisation

Similar to COSATU, CUT has exercised its political power through its strong tie with the governing party and occasional use of strikes.

According to Baiocchi et al. (2012:10), more than seventy national conferences were organised under Lula's administration, which dealt with "40 different themes" and "mobilised 5.6 million participants". However, the authors argued that these institutions had serious limitations as participatory spaces including, the "lack of effective decision-making power" and the "logic of 'dialogue and listening'" has replaced of the previous logic of "empowerment and power-sharing" (Baiocchi et al. 2012: 10).

For Brazilian trade unions, the National Labour Forum, established in 2004 is one of the most important institutions, whose main goal was the "democratization of labour relations by adopting a labour relations model based on liberty and autonomy" (Molin 2011: 194, cited in Baiocchi et al. 2012: 10-11). However, the Forum failed to build consensus on the government's proposal for labour market reform, then resulting in the split of the trade union organisations including CUT (Druck 2006, cited in Baiocchi et al. 2012:11).

Another case is the Council of Economic and Social Development (CDES), which "was aimed at fostering a 'new social contract'" (Genro 2004, cited in Baiocchi et al. 2012:11). Even though tripartite representatives participated in the CDES, it was criticised that it had been transformed into an instrument aimed at gaining support for the structural reform proposed by the government (ibid. 2012: 11).

These unsatisfactory outcomes of the NLF and CDES led to new cycles of strikes. Between 2004 and 2009, there were an average of 360 strikes a year involving 1.5 million strikers (Boito and Marcelino 2011). This is due not only to the unsatisfactory outcomes of the engagement strategy but it is also related to union identity or the 'repertoire of contention'. In other words, "the history of confrontation and strikes became a history of success and is usually mentioned as one of the innovative aspects of new unionism" (Rands Barros, 1999: 47, cited in Riethof, 2002: 9).

KCTU: mass mobilisation and occasional use of social pact

KCTU's primary forms of political action can be characterised as social pact and general strike. In 1998, under the Kim Dae-jung administration, often characterised as liberal democratic government, the KCTU had been invited to join the Tripartite Commission so as to deal with the neoliberal labour relations reform together with the other umbrella organisation named as the FKTU (Federation of Korean Trade Unions).

The KCTU top leadership signed a Social Pact which contained three main elements: legalisation of KCTU and Korean Teachers' Union (KTU), introduction of temporary agency workers in designated occupation, and easing of legal requirements for massive redundancy. It was a typical form of 'political exchange' between union recognition as a base for institutionalised political power and concession in the sphere of labour flexibilisation.

However, the agreement in the Tripartite Commission met vigorous criticism by the rank-and-file members of KCTU and social movement activists. Finally, the agreement was rejected in the KCTU National Congress and the entire leadership had to resign.

This experience has had an enormous impact on KCTU's strategy politically. Since then, even though KCTU had participated in the Tripartite Commission for a short period of time on several occasions, it did not sign any Social Pact further. In addition, even though KCTU has decided to participate the social dialogue body, it tended to request to create ad-hoc body for negotiation rather than using the permanent Tripartite Commission.

In most cases, KCTU has continued to fail to get considerable concessions from the government and employers through its engagement in the tripartite body. Conversely, its participation from time to time has caused huge internal conflicts, which sometimes led to violent confrontation between opposite tendencies within the organisation.

Thus KCTU had to by and large lean more upon mobilisation, either in the form of general strike or mass demonstration together with social movements, as its predominant form of political action. For instance, the general strike organised between December 1996 to January

1997 to protest against the government's bid to impose anti-union labour laws was indeed successful.

Consequently, the government had to concede to the union partially. Furthermore, during the IMF crisis between 1998 and 2002, KCTU had organised many general strikes against the IMF-imposed restructuring programmes initiated by the Korean government. The latest case was a series of strikes against the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between 2006 and 2011.

Despite the frequent strikes, it should be noted that KCTU's effectiveness has been eroding rapidly due to the socio/economic changes that South Korea is experiencing, these are namely, the segmentation of the Korean's labour market and the weakening of class consciousness. Therefore, as a result, KCTU's political power has been declining over the last decades.

Determinants of Strategic Choice

As in the previous chapters, differing political and economic institutions and strategies by the respective governments of the three countries examined in this thesis, do definitely influence the union's strategic choice on the political dimension. It is unsurprising that KCTU has turned to general strikes more frequently than COSATU and CUT, considering the strong bonds that exist between the South African and Brazilian trade unions and their ruling parties, not to mention the greater degrees of political openness in the latter two countries, as compared to South Korea.

Subsequently, the following questions need to be answered: 1) what are the factors that can explain the ability and willingness of COSATU and CUT in maintaining the tradition of mass mobilisation? 2) under what conditions did the KCTU choose making a social pact with the Korean government as its strategy and why has this failed subsequently? These questions should be further researched into with more detailed information and evidence. Given the limitation of time and space, a general explanation should suffice, in the context of this thesis.

Firstly, even though it is debatable whether union identity has an ‘independent effect’ on the choice of forms of political action (Hamann and Kelly, 2004: 108), the tradition of social movement unionism seems to have remained relatively strong in both COSATU and CUT.

Secondly, KCTU’s strategic choice of Social Pact is a question also deserving of further research. According to Harmann and Kelly (2004), Social Pact occurs normally under centralised bargaining institutions with a high level of unionisation. However, South Korea has a highly decentralised bargaining structure at the enterprise-level unionism and a very low union density of only around 10 percent. One causal narrative would be that KCTU has affiliated unions which possess strong structural power, and also associational power supported by the Korean civil society. Thus, the government could not ignore KCTU or exclude it from the system entirely.

Chapter 7: Institutional Vitality – Union democracy

Institutional vitality is an essential element for the success of revitalisation activities in the other three spheres (Behrens et al., 2004: 117). According to Kelly (2003: 11), it means “the capacity of a union movement to reform its own structures and respond to changes in its environment”.

Union restructuring may take three main forms: external restructuring, union governance and union administration (Behrens et al., 2004:117-8).

External restructuring may be defined as the relationship of trade unions to outside actors, either organisations or individual persons. The most prevailing type of external restructuring is mergers among different individual unions. The other type would be associated with the redefinition of trade unions’ roles and borders so as to “enter a new industry, occupation, or geographic jurisdiction in order to extend ‘job territory’” (Undy et al. 1981: 60, cited in Behrens et al. 2004: 117).

Union governance and union administration may be incorporated into the category of internal restructuring. While union governance contains union democracy, representation, and participation (Undy et al. 1981: 37; Weil 1997: 204, cited in Behrens et al. 2004:117), union administration focuses on union management and the allocation of resources.

Centrality of union democracy

Even though this framework provides some detailed criteria to enable us to examine the status of, and the revitalisation activities in this dimension, there are two weaknesses. First, as pointed out, “the distinctions between the two internal aspects of structure are not clear-cut” (Behrens et al. 2004: 118). Second, this tool has a weakness in terms of highlighting or clarifying a central aspect in this dimension.

Based on this brief review, I consider the concept of union democracy most central in this dimension. This is because I believe that “[internal] democracy represents the foundation of

union strength”, and it “makes for organisational vibrancy, and provides a sound foundation for outreach” (Moody, 1997, cited in Wood and Dibben, 2006: 47). In other words, the degree of union revitalisation relies on the degree of vitality of internal participatory democracy (Flynn et al., 2004, cited in Wood and Dibben, 2006: 48).

Hence, my analysis in this chapter focuses on union democracy in the three examined countries. Union governance and administration will be incorporated into this conceptualisation.

Union democracy embedded in union social structure

Defining and measuring union democracy is not easy not only because it has a variety of forms ranging from direct participatory to representative democracy, but also because the concept of union democracy may have different meanings and principles in different contexts.

In this regard, ‘union social structure’ (Von Holdt, 2002) needs to be discussed to develop our understanding of union democracy. Von Holdt (2002: 287) argued that this particular concept is historically and collectively constructed and it continues to influence the shaping of current union activities (Von Holdt, 2002: 287). It contains not only formal structures but also informal relationships and meanings that cohere around trade unions (ibid., 2002: 287)

Adopting this viewpoint, union democracy is embedded in the union social structure, which has been developed under the specific context of each country.

Based on this perspective, key features of union democracy in the three Southern unions shall be discussed in this chapter, bearing in mind that this concept and practice has developed historically in each country, under specific circumstances and in specific contexts. This is then followed by an explanation on how they are respond to the current status of union democracy.

Union democracy in Southern unionism

Historically, union democracy in the three Southern unions may be characterised by high levels of members' direct participation in union activities, associated with "a highly mobilised form of unionism which emerges in opposition to authoritarian regimes and repressive workplaces" (Von Holdt 2002: 6). Shop-floor democracy associated with local union democracy is the key to realising democracy; that is participatory democracy, rather than representative democracy.

Workplace-specified shop-floor democracy

In South Africa, "occupational structures were racially defined" and "all facilities were explicitly racially segregated", this is known as an 'apartheid workplace regime' (Von Holdt, 2002: 287). Therefore, the workplace is also the first battle field against the apartheid regime for black African workers, which is then easily associated with the 'national liberation struggle' (ibid.: 287). In this context, shop steward committee was considered core in union constitutions.

In Brazil, the state-controlled corporatist workplace regime has remained for many decades since the 1940s. The formation of workplace-level union structure was not allowed then and 'single unionism' per work category and municipality was also imposed. These institutional constraints brought about 'New Unionism' that focuses on workplace organising as a base to expand autonomous trade unions so as to compete with the state-controlled 'yellow unions' on occupational and municipal scales. The formation of 'factory committee' initiated by Sao Paulo auto workers is a good example.

In South Korea, the military dictatorship had imposed enterprise unionism and single unionism per enterprise (prevention of plural unionism in one workplace) on its labour force. Thus, independent and democratic forces focused on union-building in workplaces to defeat the state-and-company-controlled 'yellow unions'. Like Brazil, auto sector workers took the lead to build democratic company unions.

In summary, even though concrete forms of union response varied across the three countries; ranging from shop steward committee, factory committee to company union, the three Southern unions had considered workplace as a strategic point to fight against the authoritarian regime, as well as to build a base for independent and democratic union movements.

Significance of local in union democracy

Local union structure may function as “networks through which people may learn and form attitudes about politics” (Lipset et al., 1962: 89, cited in Hirschsohn, 2011: 3). In other words, it helps workers to become exposed to social and political issues (Hirschsohn, 2011: 3).

In these three countries, workplace union structure has developed in association with local union structure. The relationship between the workplace and local union structures is a set of ‘complex and dynamic networks of political, community and workplace struggles’ (Von Holdt, 2002: 9-10). Through these networks, Southern unions could build strong links between “factory-based production politics with community and state power issues” (Lambert, 1988, cited in Hirschsohn, 2011: 4). “Both shop stewards and ordinary members were active in community and youth organisations, creating a web of formal and informal linkages” (Von Holdt 2002: 10).

Therefore, shop-floor democracy and local union democracy are the two pillars for promoting and ensuring active membership participation in all the three countries. In other words, shop-floor-and-local-centred union structure in all three countries were forged and promoted under authoritarian regimes, as an effective network for union democracy and mass mobilisation. It provided union members with more opportunities to exercise direct participation in union’s activities, decision-making process and broader social struggles.

Current Challenges

As observed in the previous chapters, these particular three Southern unions have engaged in national politics along with the democratisation process since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Strategic engagement had a big impact not only on union strategies and practices, but also on union democracy. This impact can be summarised as follows.

First, rank and file members' participation in daily union activities has declined, which contributed to the eroding of participatory union democracy. For instance, in COSATU, "while one-third of ordinary members were attending meetings every week in 1998, this ratio has fallen to about one in six ordinary members a decade later" (Hirschsohn 2011: 16).

COSATU (2009) itself acknowledged this problem that "internal democracy is weakened by poor attendance at constitutional meetings, though affiliates still maintain effective mandating and report-back systems for collective bargaining" (cited in Hirschsohn 2011: 9).

Second, local union structure which was devoted to communicate, organise and educate workers within and beyond workplace has declined as building industrial unions has become the priority. Furthermore, common interests within the same sector were emphasised, while the linkage between workplace issues and the broader social and political issues, previously ensured by local structures, has also eroded.

Third, labour flexibilisation and informalisation had an enormous impact on union structure. Even though "workplace-specific shop-floor democracy has proved highly functional as a foundation" under the specific contexts of authoritarian industrialisation in all the three countries, the Southern unions are facing an increasing need to adapt themselves to changing labour market and economic environment.

Predominant initiatives to revive union democracy

The three Southern unions are making efforts to sustain and revive the tradition of union democracy. As the main forms of union democracy in the Southern unions are workplace-specific shop-floor democracy in association with local structures, the responses which trade unions have already taken or have considered to take are deeply related to this issue.

Not all activities and/or initiatives in this dimension will be examined in this thesis. I shall focus on the predominant forms or tendencies of initiatives with regard to two important features of union democracy in these Southern unions: these are namely, workplace-specific shop-floor democracy and networks with local structures.

First, local union structures are highlighted in all three countries.

According to the COSATU Secretariat Organisational Report to the 11th Congress (2012: 42), the Local Shop Stewards Councils (Locals) and Provincial Executive Committees (PECs) are highlighted as the backbone and engine of the organisation (COSATU, 2012: 53). In particular, the Locals are emphasised as “vehicles for combating the divisions amongst workers of South Africa and to unionise them into strong and confident working class formation”. They are facing the problem of poor attendance of shop stewards and organisers in these structures. Thus COSATU plans to provide training for all Local Office Bearers and strongly requests all organisers and shop stewards to participate in the local union structures.

KCTU also emphasises local union structures mainly from two perspectives: organising and engagement in local government. More and more traditional form of industrial unions has proven to be inappropriate in organising various types of precarious workers. Thus it should be complemented by new or renewed organisational forms. In this regard, the local structure as a potential vehicle to organise the marginal workers, even though whose industrial unions are difficult to include, has been emphasised again in recent years. The other perspective is associated with KCTU’s engagement strategy in local governments. In recent years, as locals governed by progressive parties or liberal democrats have emerged, local unions have been invited to various institutions at the local level. As the local unions increasingly play the role of a counterpart to the government at the local level, the need to strengthen the local structures of KCTU has also increased correspondingly.

Historically, CUT in Brazil has focused on building and strengthening the vertical structure from “factory committee” to industrial unions. As we observed, it was deeply related to its efforts to overcome the state-controlled corporatist workplace regime and labour relations system. However, in recent years, CUT (2011: 66) emphasised the creation and strengthening

of its regional body as a way to strengthen the trade union as a whole. The regional body is aimed at broadening workers' representation, negotiating public policy and strengthening organisational capacity so as to effectively tackle problems arising from the labour market at the local level (CUT 2011: 66).

Secondly, initiatives related to the other traditional feature of workplace-specific shop-floor democracy seem more complex.

The common strategy which all the three Southern unions have pursued is to build strong industrial unions that can bargain with employers and the state nation-and-sectoral wide. This strategy is related not only to collective bargaining structure but also to organising. However, it should be noted that the centralisation of bargaining system together with the building of industrial unions has also resulted in some unforeseen effects such as, the decline of the local union structure and shop-floor activism.

In this regard, NALEDI's (2006: 56) report provides us with several important points:

“Unions have correctly called for centralised bargaining as a means to widen the benefit of bargaining. However what are the organisational effects of centralised bargaining. Although this requires further study we can highlight at least two effects. First, resource allocation tends to be skewed to the head office relative to the regions and locals. Second, members role is insufficiently articulated which then result again in too much reliance on ‘deal-makers’. In this respect members are reduced to spectators waiting to be called upon in case there is a deadlock. This model weakens shop floor activism and changes the relationship between union and members to that of client and service provider”.

Even though we believe that nation-wide sectoral bargaining would provide more possibilities for trade unions to tackle the increasing inequality within the working class, the way to prevent the erosion of workplace-specific shop-floor democracy, which has historically contributed to the strengthening of Southern unionism, should also be emphasised at the same time.

With regards to the issue of industrial unionism, internal debates among the KCTU affiliates during the process of building industrial unions should be discussed further. The Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU), which has played a crucial role in the formation and development of a democratic trade union movement in South Korea, has undergone fierce debates and internal conflict over the issue of union structure. The crux of the issue was the role of the local branches and their relationships vis-à-vis the company-based ones. Even though, after all, local branches have been given relatively greater authority to organise strikes and conclude collective agreements, the tension between the local and company branches still remains. This debate implies that we need to find some creative way to realign between industrial unionism and the tradition of local union democracy.

Chapter 8: Main findings and Comparative Analysis

Summarising

COSATU, CUT and KCTU have implemented a variety of initiatives aimed at revitalising their trade union movements.

Membership dimension

With regards to the membership dimension, all the three unions have made great efforts to tackle the challenges and problems related to this dimension although their strategies and foci may vary according to the specific context of each country. .

COSATU adopted the 2015 Plan at the 8th Congress in 2003, which included a set of organisational programmes. One of the key components is to achieve ‘10% membership growth per year, and achieving a Federation membership of 4 million by 2009’ (COSATU 2012: 3). In fact, according to COSATU’s report (2012), union members have increased by 11 per cent since 2003, when the 2012 Plan was adopted.

CUT has traditionally focused on workplace unionizing campaign modeled on the ‘factory committee’ organizing of the auto workers in Sao Paulo. In recent years, it began to re-emphasise the creation of workplace structure within the union. This is mainly related to the specific institutional context of Brazil. This initiative is aimed at overcoming, through practical actions, the legal constraints that are preventing workplace-level structure from being formed. Secondly, it is also aimed at consolidating unions through addressing workplace issues, such as restructuring, lay-offs, which in turn can lead to an expansion of the union’s membership base. Third, it is also an effective strategy to organize independent unions which are not affiliated to any umbrella organizations. The union density in Brazil has indeed grown even though only slightly.

The KCTU on the other hand, has implemented an US-style ‘Strategic Organising Campaign’ targeting at five sectors including in-house subcontracted workers, construction sector daily

labourers, 'disguised' self-employed workers, cleaning sector in public services and retail sector workers. It has also allocated 30 per cent of its total annual budget, initiated rank-and-file fund-raising campaigns so as to hire more organisers at the grassroots level. The first term of organising campaign was implemented between 2006 and 2009. However, the union density has continued to decline for the past two decades in South Korea.

COSATU and CUT seem to have implemented relatively diffused strategies, which emphasise affiliates' organising initiatives. For these unions, the confederation's role is to encourage, promote, coordinate and communicate organising activities among its affiliates. In terms of their organising target, all the three unions commonly emphasise 'field-enlargement' organising, by expanding its membership base among the various types of precarious and informal sector workers, as well as migrant workers.

It is important to note that, even though all the three unions emphasise 'field-enlargement' organising and they have also to some extent, allocated their resources accordingly, it is difficult to categorically say, if all these effort has resulted in successful outcomes, since the level of unionisation among the low-paid, precarious and informal sector workers continues to be low. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in a variety of organising cases, new sources of power have been formed, developed and drawn upon. Moreover, a realignment of power sources has also taken place. All of the above have valuable implications.

Economic dimension

All three national trade unions have different types of and differing degrees of problems, as seen in the economic dimension.

Even though COSATU has to some extent, succeeded in defending their own members in terms of wage levels and working conditions, other indicators in the economic dimension suggest that the South African trade unions as a whole, has largely lost its economic power. The collective bargaining coverage rate has declined slightly between 2002 and 2008, and the wage share in national income has also continuously fallen for the last two decades.

More seriously, the Bargaining Council based on the voluntarist system seems to be under serious challenges. ‘Our wage bargaining system needs an overhaul, in particular the current voluntarist system of centralised bargaining’ (COSATU 2012: 91). Thus COSATU recommends to transform the voluntarist system into one of ‘wall to wall mandatory sectoral bargaining’ (COSATU 2012: 91).

Another important initiative in this dimension is to adopt a National Minimum Wage system based on the critical evaluation that ‘the multiplicity of minimum wages that exist in Sectoral Determinations and in Bargaining Council Agreements are a) far too low and b) lead to a fragmentation of our national campaign to lift workers out of poverty’ (COSATU 2012: 91).

In Brazil, two main indicators related to the bargaining power of trade unions seem to indicate relative stability with mild improvement in recent years. Although the absolute level of collective bargaining coverage rate is not high by international standard, it must be noted that coverage has slightly increased by the definition of comprehensive rate, from 24.5 per cent to 27 per cent, between 2003 and 2008. The wage share in national income shows a slight growth from 2005 onwards, even though as compared to the other industrialized countries, its absolute level is low.

Other key indicators of income inequality such as the low-paid rate have also improved in Brazil. At large, the Brazilian trade unions including CUT have slightly improved or at least managed to sustain their economic power. The most important initiative in this dimension is to conclude nation-wide sectoral bargaining agreement. For that purpose, CUT initiates workplace unionizing, building industrial unions and labour law reform in favour of these initiatives. Lastly, the initiative for building trade union networks in multinational companies should also be noted.

Many key indicators in this dimension suggest that the economic power of the Korean trade unions including KCTU has declined considerably. All indicators have become negative: the collective bargaining coverage rate is the lowest among OECD member states and there is not even a sign of improvement. Workers’ share of wages has not improved, on the contrary, income inequality has been worsened.

While KCTU has implemented important initiatives, such as building a central bargaining table based on industrial unions and minimum wage increase campaign, the situation has not improved. In addition, KCTU has strongly recommended its affiliates to place the agenda of precarious workers on the bargaining table, which has resulted in some positive cases. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say if KCTU's initiatives have led to positive outcomes overall.

It is important to note that, however, there exist several cases, which can provide significant implications for future collective bargaining strategy. These include outsourced low-paid workers in the cleaning sector, in-house subcontracted workers and daily workers in the construction sector.

Political dimension

The political dimension has changed in the most dramatical way in comparison to the other dimensions. Democratization process had an enormous impact on the trade unions' strategies and practices in all three countries. The main trend in this sphere may be characterized by growing institutionalization. However, it should be emphasized that it has been seriously conditioned by another transition, known as economic liberalization or the neoliberal globalization process. Therefore, political openness under such a democratization process remained unstable, which has in turn, led to another cycle of mobilization and strikes. This is true even in countries like Brazil and South Africa where there are historically strong ties between the trade unions and the ruling parties.

The dominant forms of political action by COSATU and CUT are active or strategic engagement in governmental institutions and in union-party link. COSATU and CUT often participate in a variety of tripartite or bipartite forums and institutions. At the same time, both unions influence the ruling party particularly in pushing for government policies that are pro-labour. In terms of the union-party link, both unions have actively implemented voter-mobilisation campaign in support of the ruling parties.

While both countries; South Africa and Brazil have experienced a significant decline in

collective actions during the first term of Mandela and Lula administrations, it is important to note that in recent years, a new cycle of strikes has taken place. However, the effectiveness and the roles of these strikes still need to be seen.

KCTU on the other hand, has exercised political power mainly in the forms of social pact and mass demonstration including strikes. For the first time, KCTU was invited to take part in the Tripartite Commission during the period of the IMF bailout and financial crisis, and to be a part of the Social Pact in 1998. However, the Pact was rejected by the KCTU National Congress and as a result, the leadership had to resign. Since then, the decision whether to participate in tripartite institutions has become one of the most contested issues both inside and outside of the KCTU.

While KCTU has occasionally been invited to social dialogue bodies and participated in ad-hoc tripartite representatives' conferences, in most cases, KCTU was excluded at the last stage of negotiations, just before the government could conclude the Social Pact with the other trade union confederations like FKTU. KCTU had to recognize that there was little space to get concession from the government and employers. In other words, 'trade-off' or 'political exchange' is nearly impossible under the harsh conditions imposed by the liberal democratic government's neoliberal reforms. Thus, mass struggles including general strikes have become the predominant form of exercising political power by KCTU. However, reality has shown that these general strike actions have begun losing effectiveness.

Institutional vitality

Historically, high levels of rank-and-file members' participation in trade unions' daily activities and worker control or democratic control over elected shop stewards were the most important aspects of union democracy in all the three Southern unions. These aspects were achieved through shop-floor-and/or-local-union-centred union structure. However, changing socio/economic and industrial relations such as, the segmentation of labour market, frequent or occasional engagement in national politics and the decline in mass mobilisation have all led to the erosion of these aspects.

In this regard, all three Southern unions commonly (re)emphasise the significance of local union structures. In addition, they have also pushed to build industrial unions with the aim of concluding nation-wide agreement to reduce the gap among the workers. However, it should be noted that tensions between the process of building industrial unions and the process of strengthening local unions have also occurred. In most cases, the latter has declined, which has in turn led to the decline of historically constructed local networks and members' participation in union, as well as community activities. This would be the biggest challenge for all the three Southern unions: can they find a way to harmonise between the centralisation of bargaining process and the localisation of mobilisation process? In this regard, the internal debates over the role of the regional branch in industrial unions deserve further examination.

Explaining similarities and differences

To explain the similarities and differences of revitalisation strategies among KCTU, COSATU and CUT, four factors are to be highlighted: socio/economic changes, political and industrial relations institutions, strategic choices, and lastly, union identity.

As for union identity, all the three Southern unions seem to be similar. Adopting the classification of Hyman (2001), all three unions exist between society and class. And their mobilisation-orientation still remains despite slight and periodic decline in differing degrees. Their similar union identity has influenced their adoption of similar strategies such as, the emphasis of organising based on the traditional principle of class solidarity, emphasis of local structure, coalition-building and frequent or occasional use of strikes even in countries where there are historically strong union-party links.

Another important factor is the political institutions. Political openness allowing trade unions access to political authority and policy decision-making is important in explaining differences in union strategies. Strong ties with the governing parties, ensuring unions' participation in institutions have all allowed, to some extent, COSATU and CUT to enjoy 'institutionalised' political power.

Hence, mobilisation strategy has taken a supplementary role to engagement strategy.

However, as pointed out above, the tension between these two strategies has a cyclical character reflecting specific timing context. For instance, in the second period of ANC and PT governments, incidences of strikes have increased compared to the previous periods. Conversely, under very limited political space, KCTU has relied on mass mobilisation, including strikes. Social pact has not played a significant role in revitalising KCTU. On the contrary, it has resulted in the increase of internal conflicts; thereby accelerating the decline of its power.

Industrial relations institutions have also been considered as an important variable to explain trade union strategies. For instance, different drivers were found to be originated from industrial relations systems for organising activities, which imply different directions.

In Brazil, ‘single unionism’ per category and per municipality(ies), union tax and legally obstacles to building workplace union structure are the main characteristics of trade union confederations like CUT. These institutional constraints lead CUT to initiate ‘workplace unionising campaign’ as a core element of their organising campaign. This campaign is aimed at not only in expanding union base but it also challenges the legal system from below so as to render it impotent in practice.

In South Africa, the core aspect of industrial relations system is its voluntarist character, which means that sectoral collective bargaining is allowed and encouraged by law but it is not mandatory for employers to bargain at sectoral level. In addition, the trade unions should meet the criteria of “sufficiently representative” to enjoy the right to bargain fully.

These institutional constraints lead COSATU into two directions: on one hand, labour law reform to transform voluntarist into a mandatory system and on the other hand, it focuses on ‘in-field’ organising in order to meet the criterion of “sufficiently representativeness”.

KCTU’s motivation for organising is similar to the US, where trade unions are excluded from the political system, employers are very hostile towards the trade union, and unions in both countries have experienced a significant decline of union density. Consequently, KCTU has to implement very concentrated campaign under the strong guidance of confederation and its

focus is mainly on organising precarious workers.

Socio/economic changes should be treated as an important variable too. This factor is deeply related to the process of neoliberal globalisation worldwide, such as flexibilisation and informalisation of labour, financialisation of national economies, the decline of the industrial sector and the growth of the service sector, not to mention, the deterioration of income equality.

This element of socio/economic change has a profound impact on union strategies. For instance, reducing the wage gap among workers has become the key aim of wage bargaining activities of the unions, including minimum wage campaign and encouraging 'field-enlargement' so as to organise more informal and precarious workers.

All these neoliberal changes have contributed to the erosion of traditional resources and power of the trade union. The auto workers who played crucial roles to build independent and democratic unionism in all the three countries have lost both structural and associational powers as a result of global neoliberal programmes. Strikes conducted in a traditional form and by industrial, regular, and relatively well-paid workers no longer carry the same weight of influence as have the same powerful influences as compared to the past.

Thus, the three Southern unions should try to look for new and potential power, as well as resources and/or find a way for the realignment/renewal of traditional power resources reflecting contemporary socio/economic changes. This may be the fundamental standard for measuring the revitalisation strategies of these unions in the longer term.

Analysing from power resources perspective

How can we measure the revitalisation efforts and/or outcomes in a more fundamental way? To answer this question, let us return to the theoretical framework explained in chapter 2: The Power Resources theory.

Faced with the erosion of traditional power resources, trade unions should find potential new

sources and/or creative ways to realign traditional sources, thereby reflecting the current changing contexts. Logistical power (Lambert), symbolic power, framing power would be considered as the new potential sources to help unions regain their power.

From this perspective, it would be too early at this point, to determine whether all the three Southern unions is moving in the right direction as an organisation on the whole. On the confederal level, no grand sign of revitalisation can be found as yet, in comparison to their past movements labelled as SMU. If we define SMU as time-specific trade union movements, the other revitalised trade union movements will emerge through a combination of a variety of factors. Revitalisation by the broader definition may occur only under artful realignment of various factors.

However, we also cannot under-estimate some significant cases that may point to potential new power sources. The main lessons and implications are summarised as follows:

First, structural power can be reinterpreted in the global production network or global supply chain context, so as to create an opportunity for workers to exercise their power even under the condition of weak associational power. “We would argue for the recognition of an equally powerful new source of power, logistical power. This form of power is potentially available to marginalized workers at the bottom of the supply chain in manufacturing sectors such as clothing through their leverage in these new global production chains” (Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008:12, cited in Webster and Bischoff 2011: 46).

Second, workers with weak associational power, as well as weak structural power may also find a way to exercise their powers through extending their domain beyond the workplace and legal system into public. In other words, these workers ‘will need to build associational power in the community through taking struggles into the public domain’ (Webster and Bischoff 2010: 46). Chun (2009) defines this as symbolic power. “Symbolic leverage attempts to rebuild the basis of associational power for workers with weak levels of structural power and blocked access to exercising basic associational rights by winning recognition and legitimacy for their struggles” (Chun 2009: 17, cited in Webster and Bischoff 2010: 46).

Chapter 9. Conclusion

This study examined and compared revitalisation activities conducted by three Southern unions such as CUT, COSATU and KCTU, which have strong tradition of SMU.

On the theoretical issues, I argued that even though multi-dimensional approach contributed to providing more conceptual options for revitalisation through widening of “dimensions” of trade union power (membership, economic, political and institutional), it has a weakness in terms of figuring out the “(re)sources” of trade union power. In other words, multi-dimensional approach analyses the “width” of power, not the “depth” of power. Thus it should be supplemented by power resources perspective, which provides us the root of trade union power.

The other theoretical issue was relationship between union ideological identity and organisational identity. In this regard, I reviewed two arguments: ‘eternal triangle’ by Hyman (2001) and ‘different matrix of four dimensions’ by Webster and Fairbrother (2008). My review on this matter was that while Hyman’s triangle lacks one important element of unionism, that is, tension between institutionalisation and mobilisation, Webster and Fairbrother omit or under-estimate the element of class. Thus in order to understand unionism more comprehensively, it is needed to build combined framework between three ideological identities (class, market and society) and two organisational identities (mobilisation and institutionalisation).

In the main chapters, I examined dominant forms of strategies conducted by three Southern unions along four revitalisation dimensions such as membership, economic, political and institutional vitality. I already summarised this in the previous chapter.

My examination reaffirms that union’s strategic choice is influenced not only by external environments but by internal dynamics including union identity. In particular, my study cases demonstrate that strong tradition of SMU which has still remained has had considerable impact on union’s strategic choice, even though they are operating in different external environments. For instance, organising has been emphasised not only as a response to certain

institutional constraints, but as a foundational principle of trade unions towards ‘class unity’ or ‘working class solidarity’.

Lastly, this study suggests that the outcome of revitalisation activities should be measured in a careful manner. We have to acknowledge that as much as the meaning of revitalisation varies cross the countries, the measurement of outcomes also varies. In particular, this study emphasises that union revitalisation process should be interpreted, guided and evaluated by power resources perspective on the longer term.

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