An Analysis of Trade Union Co-ordination to Restructuring in Europe – The dimension of collaboration, form and organization

Valeria Pulignano (Catholic University of Leuven – Belgium)
Miguel Martinez Lucio (University of Manchester – UK)
Steve Walker (Open University – UK)

Paper prepared for the Canadian Industrial relations (CIRA) Conference – Quebec, 16-18 June 2010
Trade unions, employees representatives and restructuring: a new agenda

- How do trade unions act and represent members in situation of restructuring

To consider different dimensions across which restructuring and union responses occur at different levels

To look at how different levels of union action develop a portfolio of approaches and complement each other within the broader politics of restructuring

To look at the external and internal organizational relations and requirements that build a more proactive response

Moving away from simples based on an either-or-logic of union choices
Trade unions, transnational business and restructuring:

“How to theorize relations between changing economic structure and labour’s situation?”

- “Skeptical critiques of globalization”: Economic and industrial change undermines labour (Ruigrok and Van Tulder, 1995; Doremus et al., 1998);
  → changes in the organization of capitalism as the principal factor undermining labour in situation of transnational restructuring (Herod, 1997; Wood, 2002; Slaughter, 1999)

- “Less skeptical”: globalization implies that if labour is to succeed it needs to be at the same scale as global capital (Tilly, 1995, Mazur, 2000);
  → independent role for labour within a globalised economy – “transnational collective response” (Radice, 1999)
Trade unions, transnational business and restructuring

- Labour trans-nationalism and workers and trade unions’ strategic responses within national and local industrial relations arrangements (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2009; Anner et al., 2006; ...)

- The role of structures (e.g. the sector, the European integration process, EWCs) and ideology, cultures and traditions (Marginson, 2000; Pulignano, 2007..)
The argument

“Labour internationalism and transnational coordination in situation of company restructuring needs to be investigated within the strategies which TUs and their representatives adopt at different levels and with regard to the different complex nature of restructuring”
What we emphasize

- **What**: Content of collaboration;
- **How**: Way it develops;
- **Why**: Factors enhancing it (i.e. ‘communication’ and ‘influencing’)

- Internationalism within a long-term;
- Sustainability;
- Capacity building.
Methodology

- Trade unions anticipating and managing restructuring (TRACE ETUI project 2005-2007) – Art. 6 ESF (European Commission)
- 18 cases of joint trade unions “key actions’ at both EU and national level (10 at national including 11 national confederations and 8 cases at EU level including 6 EIFs)
- Sectors: graphical, finance, metal, chemical public, primary and secondary education
- 60 qualitative semi-structured interviews with local, national and European trade union officials
- Direct participation in seminars, working groups; project coordination and evaluation
- Final and intermediate conferences
A typology of 4 different TUs strategies

- Organizing and membership mobilization
- Creation of proactive dialogues with employers and the state
- Set up of a trust-making process: communication and the exchange of responses
- Skill building and supporting measures at local level for bargaining purposes

- Levels of TUs action (European/regional, national, industry, workplace)
- The extent to which they stimulate capacity to affect the process of restructuring: influencing capacity (the decision making process) and communication capacity (overcome the national and cultural barriers and achieve common understanding)
## An analytical systematization of trade union strategies to deal with restructuring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>(External)</th>
<th>(Internal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influencing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Macro)</td>
<td>Lobbying and campaign</td>
<td>Skills-building and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lobbying with the state and using campaign in order to influence legislation (UNI-Europa Key action)</td>
<td>Resources and supporting training at the local level (ETUCE key action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees (SEKO and ETF key action)</td>
<td>Train organisers and allocate sufficient human and material resources (finish and Estonia Key action).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organising and coordinating action</td>
<td>Underpin the overall learning strategy to restructuring with co-ordinated views and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Micro)</td>
<td>Establishing guidelines in case of M&amp;A or to coordinate the activity of EWCs (EMF Key action and CC.OO and CGTP-IN key action)</td>
<td>Communication and learning from each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessing information and correctly using it (CGTP and CC.OO key action)</td>
<td>Enabling workers to see differences and similarities in restructuring strategies adopted by employers across sectors (CISL and LO-Skolen Key action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organising workers (TUC/OGB key action and Finish and Estonia Key action)</td>
<td>Establishing guidelines to coordinate the activity of EWCs representatives across-borders (EMF Key action and CC.OO and CGTP-IN key action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Producing on-line and CD-Rom materials on how different bargaining systems work in different countries (ISF-CGIL and FESETE/CGTP-IN Key action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online learning for outsourcing (TUC and TCO Key action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training materials for anticipating change (CFDT and TUC Key action)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example of cases of "influencing capacity"

**UNI-Finance; ETF/Seko; EMF; ETUCE:**

- **Internal:** resources and supporting training at local level; learning and coordination activity;
- **External:** networks of influence; strategic campaigns; consultation at the EU sectoral level; legislation;
Examples of cases of “communication capacity”

Finnish-Estonian-TUC-OGB-CISL-LO-CGTP-CC OO:

- Internal: building skills; exchanging experiences on organizing strategies and dealing with intransigent employers; distance learning;
- External: sharing national experiences and understanding; accessing financial information and organising.
Conclusions

- Understand how coordination works
- Coordination as a complex issue
- The dimensions of coordination: communication and influencing strategies
- Coordination works across the political, structural and strategic process based on the informational and communication dimensions of restructuring
- Coordination within the reality of capitalism restructuring and its different dimensions: how it develops and through which stages