Literature Review

In order to understand the comprehensive field of unionism, it is divided into the following concepts: opportunity structure, organisation, societal role, target, members, resources and common goal. The following sections will define the concepts in differing socio-political settings in order to fully understand trade unions.

Opportunity structure

Opportunity structure entails a detailed study of its complexity and, of the institutional structure that creates spheres of influence for the collective action. Even narrowing it down to the institutional structure entail some form of northern bias, when the target of the african social movement is not necessarily the state institutions. Therefore the opportunity structure is better described simply as the description or mapping of the spheres through which the unions may seek influence. Whether these are predominantly present in a local, national, regional or global level is defining for the conceptual understanding. Even when understanding the bureaucratic system, in which the union functions, there is great complexity in understanding it. For example “circumstances which provide opportunities for a riot differ widely from those which provide opportunities for a march on Washington” (Boudreau, 1996: 177).

The ideas of good governance and efficient and sustainable state building are to a large extent build upon western ideas, much like the theoretical understanding of unionism. In other words: since the state building in Africa has been forced (during colonial times and during SAP) to resemble the western model, the opportunity structure is assumed to resemble it as well. This however, according to Boudreau is not the case, and cases must be studied individually. He propose a method of identification the key features, and comparison between cases. Thereby undertaking as few assumptions of unionism as possible (Boudreau, 1996: 177).

EU has set up institutions that exclusively dependent on external information on certain issues and therefore depend on interest groups and organizations in order to obtain it (Cini & Borragán, 2010: 184-186). The structures are set up to create opportunities for the organizations to influence policies of the EU, even if it goes against state interests. This gives them the
opportunity to influence the EU directly, going around the individual state. This is setup is also defined as governance networks which refer to “the deliberate attempts to join things up in fragmented governance situations” (Lewis & Sevasti, 2005: 169). This notion that the EU sees the opportunity to create a network setup to include various perspectives and parties is creating the possibility for labour organizations and interest groups to be heard. However, the EU influences this opportunity within the structure as well. They support groups and organizations financially and decide which organizations that get invited to participate in the policy debates and the development of reports and proposals. Thus, the EU has the options to choose groups and unions that support their agenda.

In the case of western trade unions, discrepancies can also be found. This is in regard to the formal institutions of industrial relations, the structure of collective bargaining and the system of collective employment law (Heery, 2003: 5). The institutional context, in national cases can on the one hand provide incentives for trade unions to organize their activities, while in other national contexts depressing it. This can be shown in the case of English and American trade unions, which have prioritised organising. The institutions of an opportunity structure and industrial relations contributes in influencing the degree of activity by rendering national trade unions dependent on organising. In western countries the dependence on organising is relatively high and is an essential process, which trade unions are able to secure institutional goals. It allows a means to obtain subscription income create collective organisation in maintain collective bargaining relations with employers and contributes legitimacy to the union itself. Many European and American trade unions are subscription-dependent, which means that they are characterized by decentralized bargaining, which also provides the trade union with the need establishing their legitimacy and relations with employers (Heery, 2003: 6).

Looking at Japan, multiple comparisons to western states can be drawn. Japanese trade unions are structured as a large umbrella labour organization called Rengo. The opportunity structure in Japan is in many aspects similar to the European. However, Japanese trade unions has an institutional mechanism ensuring that the government is obliged to host discussions with the labour organizations on any planned changes in relation to working conditions. This structural inclusion of the labour organizations means that they possess a great deal of power to influence
labour policies. Furthermore, the negotiations between labour and management in Japan is conducted primarily between individual companies and their company-based unions, and talks between industrial unions and employers’ organisations are limited to a few exceptional cases (Jose, 2002: 33-44).

As an example of the African approach to trade unionism this literature review appropriates the case of Zambia unions. we acknowledge that discrepancies exist between african trade unions. Zambia is however somewhat representative of the weak democracies in Africa with a semi-organised component (Alden, 2007: 66-73). The institutional state structure of Zambia poses a limited amount of opportunity spheres, due to the heavy competition of several other influences on the state. However, the state has historically had a rather weak structure, which enables the unions to seek other forms of influence within the existing opportunity structure. Under colonial rule the mine workers of the Northern Rhodesian mining district showed signs of organizing, but the opportunity structure did not however allow for them to do so. They were left with no access to areas where they could effectively change decision making processes. Remnants of the colonial period in Zambia also poses a good example for the defining feature of the zambian opportunity structure, namely the state's ability to organize the unions. The state is very weak, and has no or few spheres, institutions and circumstances where the unions can seek influence. These factors might enable social movement, however they may also enable influence from opposing sides, for example foreign financial influence. During the brief history of Zambian independence these factors are crucially important in defining the aspects of unionism, and they will be explained much further in the analysis (Mulenga, 2011: 7).

The opportunity structure as an aspect of unionism is mutually interlinked to many of the other aspects of unionism. The pattern of interdependency among aspects, is inconsistent, and the way they interact is very case specific. In countries where the structure unsatisfiable allows for collective action, it is difficult to gather support in the form of members and sponsorship. On the other hand, many aspects of the opportunity structure, (or in other words, the surroundings of unionism) depend on the features of unionism, for example their opportunity structure can be expected to increase if they are able to obtain more members and more support, and especially organize themselves better. A well organized union have better possibilities within the same
frame of policies than a poorly organized one, because they are logistically able to seek influence on multiple spheres at once (Camfield, 2007).

Organisation

The organization of trade unions varies from case to case, and especially from country to country. This does however not mean that colorations aren’t present. The European trade unions have historically been characteristic in three variables or dimensions. Initially the labour force or movement differs in level of commitment to organisation, which may also manifest itself in several indicators. In European trade unions, a high level of commitment could be apparent in creating formal organising of policies. Such a commitment can be undertaken by Central union confederations or individual unions, composed of common objectives, plans, budgets, targets and procedures. Apparatuses of this kind can in addition be seen as directing union recourses towards organising. Furthermore, specialization has been an indicator in the development of a engaged organising function of conferences, committees and representative roles. Specialization have been in a pronounced progress in European trade unions, in contrast to African trade unions where labour forces are uniting in centrally structured organisation strategies (Heery, 2003: 1).

The second dimension in European union's differs in the organising of targeting activity. To begin with the distinction of consolidating and expansive approaches, means discrepancies in the organising abilities. Whereas consolidating membership mainly engages in internal organisation, that improves the cohesiveness of a union in places already affected, expansion in contrast attempts to create membership in hitherto unorganised sectors (Heery, 2003: 1). As the European trade unions exist within an already well-organised framework, the focus primarily seems to be on consolidation membership, while African trade unions functions in an unorganised framework and focuses on expansive organising strategies. In addition intersecting dimensions often refers to unions developing a field-enlarging strategy (Wever, 1998: 392).

The third dimension of organizing refers to the methods used. One aspect of methods is the degree to which recruitment is a diffuse or concentrated activity. When recruitment is diffuse, joining unions is ongoing and conducted by routine activities, like a presence at induction for new employees and making the union available to them. When recruitment is concentrated, the
methods used is planned, dedicated campaigns over a longer timespan, which requires considerable resources and specialist organizers. In other words, unions approach the labour force as providers of protective and labour market services, or assume the characteristics of a social movement, and the approach will therefore be as potential activists (Heery, 2003: 2). In addition, the institutional context contributes to the pattern of organizing. An example would be Britain where the union-shop is unlawful, requiring a need for the unions to consolidate membership through diffuse ongoing organizing activity. This approach is directed at individual free-riders and depends on selective incentives to workers to join union membership. In America the union-shop is unlawful in “right-to-work” states, and consolidation is therefore not a great requirement. The focus is as a result union organizing is concentrated on expansion, through campaigns, that seek to develop majority support and collective organization (Heery, 2003: 3).

Developing countries differ especially in the first dimension, specialization, which is clearly observed in the Zambian case. Here a strategy based on the notion of “one union - one industry”, has been undertaken with emphasis on the quantitative approach to members. The focus has rather been on using the scale of membership to enforce common goals, and thereby not specialization in terms of members with a specific profession (Mulenga, 2011: 5-8). The Zambian approach, however, differs from the Chinese, which is even further from the European in terms of the first dimension. The All-China Federation of Unions (ACFTU) is the overarching umbrella organization, which encapsulates all chinese unions. There is an even lesser extent of specialisation in the chinese model, where labour relations commonly are treated directly by the state, since the biggest national companies are publicly owned (Cooke, 2011: 105-106).

Societal Role

The role of unions in society is one of the most defining discrepancies in specific cases. The societal role depends on a wide range of different aspects of unionism and it is mainly defined through these aspects. It is impossible to describe the societal role of unions without context, because of its dependency on state structure, number of members the union is able to obtain, organisation and especially the incorporation of social movements. The concept however is mainly relevant because unions in a non-western context often undertake a societal role that goes beyond the scope of unionism (Camfield, 2007).
In 1992 Zambia went from being a one-party system to a multiparty democracy. This move was to a large extent executed by the labour movement, who also won the first elections. A union, which had broken free of the ZCTU won the first election, and thereby established a role for the labour movement very much different from the European model, where they to a larger extent merely connected to governance through “friendly” political parties, in most cases called the social democrats (Camfield, 2007; Mulenga, 2011: 7-8). This event causes the analysis of the societal role of unions in Zambia to be analysed through concepts such as state-building or nation-building, or at least a conceptual framework, with the ability to incorporate the union's ability to drive and facilitate democracy (Mulenga, 2011: 7).

Antonio Gramsci re-actualized the concept of civil society by emphasizing the differing interests of the civil society, and thereby understood civil society as a playing field for progressive movements. Gramsci, however, adding the understanding of the civil society as the sphere through which the consent part of a hegemony is played out. The Zambian case shows that the state was unable to ensure the necessary human rights of its citizens, which caused the unions - civil society - to progress the country into a multi-party democracy. Therefore the case of Zambia in some instances enables us to obtain a critical view of civil society, as a diverse sphere, with progressive tendencies, and not a heterogenous entity guarding the citizens against the state (Edwards, 2014: 5-10).

**Targets**

Trade unions seek to influence key actors in order to have as much impact as possible on actors affecting their points of interest. In traditional unions the typical target for action has been the employer and the main weapon has been strikes. Even though this depiction is generally applicable it is not representative of trade unions in developing countries. The South African unions are examples of developing country trade unions with a track record of social movement unionism. The targets of action in this context is particularly different than in Western economies. Trade unions in the South African context during the Apartheid, has been broadly influenced by the hostile environment of the regime. Unions recognized the potential power in
alliances and directed their focus on other trade unions and political movements to create organizations that could represent their demands as one (Jordhus-Lier, 2012: 39).

Different forms of organizing unions affects which actors are targeted for action. David Jordhus-Lier describes community-oriented unionism as a form of unionism that entails a renewal or reorientation along four dimensions: the scalar strategy of the trade union, the union’s targets for action, the sites of recruitment and the domain of mobilization in the campaigns and alliances of targets and recruitments. Community-oriented unions have found ways to identify alternative targets for action in the social-economic settings. Examples of this can be found in the United States: the Coalition of Immokalee Workers have redirect their focus from the tomato growers to the customers of fast-food chains, in another example a campaign for janitors saw workers put pressure on the building owners instead of their employers. And in Canada a solidarity campaign to support garment homeworkers was targeting the retailers instead of the producers. Action that are directed at the point of sale can bring the political struggle into spaces of consumption. In buyer-driven commodity networks, power is often situated with retailers, this has driven unions to make alliances with consumer groups to influence alternative targets for action. Hereby the unions have challenged the alienation and separation between consumption spaces and production spaces in commodity chains. Peter Waterman celebrated union-community interaction while Mi Park portrayed it as a simple reflection of contradictions in the political economy. Lier suggests a few areas of importance in the analysis of community-oriented unionism. It is important to recognize the strategic agency of workers’ organizations and that their politics are embedded in and shaped by structures in the labour market and the political economy. Lier furthermore argues that when labour is fragmented, marginalized and gradually more exploited in the capital-labour relationship, the basis of the workers’ social reproduction is pushed further onto social networks. Also their politics are pushed further and shared identities and political alliances are forged with communities, family members, neighborhoods and associational life. The interpretation of this development should not only be seen as a defensive tactic in the time of crisis, but also as having a transformational potential. Targets for action is subject for alteration and is adjusted in the context of structural change both in the labour market and society (Jordhus-Lier, 2012: 41-42).
Members

Some nations experience an influence from international think tanks, economic organizations and transnational corporations who aim to lower wages and raise production. This has partially caused a decrease in memberships of trade organizations. This is due to the “The perceived ineffectiveness of unions” (Kelly, 2015: 3) which makes it difficult for the unions to keep current members as well as recruiting new ones. An important factor to look at however, when examining trade organizations are more the ability for a union to mobilize than the number of memberships in the union. The willingness of the members to mobilize and take action towards exploitation is defining for the capacity of a trade organization (Kelly, 2015: 1-5). The way the members are recruited also speaks to the economic and social capacity of the members themselves. In western countries recruitment through organization website and advertisement is described by Heery (Heery, 2003: 3) and shown to be highly costly and time consuming. Having access to the unions’ recruitment through their websites and advertisements indicate some level of economic and social capacity.

Resources

In Europe, an important aspect of sponsorship is members. This is also explained in the member segment, but seems important to mention because of the central differences in resources between the industrialised and developing countries. In developing countries, however, the members does not have the same ability to tribute to sponsorship. At the same time the unions does not have access to supranational sponsorship like in the EU, and therefore they end up depending on the state (Mulenga, 2011: 6-7).

In Zambia and China the trade unions depend on the state for resources. One of the main objectives of the Zambian government in the 1960s was to avoid foreign influence on the labour movement, and that was mainly avoided by focusing on sponsorship. Unions were permitted to receive sponsorship from abroad, in order to secure national sovereignty on labour policy. Therefore the biggest difference in the understanding of resources in the different contexts are the state-based approaches of developing countries, although this is also the most problematic aspect of resources. Developing countries have enormous debts (these were cancelled ten years ago, but have been built up again by low economic performance), but they also perform worse
economically than industrialised countries, and therefore it can be assumed that they have a bigger difficulty in establishing a sufficient budget. In the case of Zambia, SAPs has forced privatisation, liberalisation and a focus on economic growth. All of this plays into the constant scarcity of resources in trade unions (Mulenga, 2011: 6-7).

**Common Goal**

The common goal functions as the binding mechanism of trade unions. The labour movement works on the basis of a common goal for workers. The common goal is almost always better industrial relations, because the common goal of trade unions is driven by resistens of exploitation. This makes union's institutions for facilitating collective action and empowerment of the employee in his relationship with the employer. The most common common goals concerns industrial relations in terms of security in the workplace, reduction of work-hours and especially wages. These rarely change, however, the common goal is especially interesting when it fades in its binding strength, and creates an organisational crisis, although this effect depends on other aspects of unionism (Boudreau, 1996: ).

In the 1990s the labour movement in Zambia possessed political power, and had to some extent had a huge victory. However the movement quickly realised that this did not create sufficient policy reform on the labour issues. In other words the achievement of political power either withered the common goal, or changed it to be more oriented towards human rights. When the labour movement seized democratic political power, they changed their targets, therefore the common goal can be said to depend, at least to some extent, on who (or which institution) is targeted (Mulenga, 2011: 5-10).

**Conclusion**

The literature review shows that the definition of the aspects are different in a Zambian or African context, than it is in industrialised western states. The concepts exist interdependent, although the pattern of interdependency is context specific. The differing nature of unionism enacts different approaches to understanding the concepts.
References


