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KAIRIT KALL

FIGHTING MARGINALIZATION WITH INNOVATION: TURN TO TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZING BY PRIVATE SECTOR TRADE UNIONS IN POST-2008 ESTONIA

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School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia

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Supervisors: Triin Roosalu, PhD, Associate Professor and Senior Researcher at Tallinn University, Estonia
Nathan Lillie, PhD, Professor at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Opponents: Marco Hauptmeier, PhD, Professor at Cardiff University, Wales
Jan Czarzasty, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

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Tallinn University
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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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II. Sippola, M., & **Kall, K.** (2016). Locked in inferiority? The positions of Estonian construction workers in the Finnish migrant labour regime. In JE, Dølvik & L, Eldring (Eds.). *Labour Mobility in the Enlarged Single European Market* (pp. 215–240). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

III. **Kall, K**., Lillie, N., Sippola, M. & Mankki, L. (2018). Overcoming Barriers to Transnational Organizing Through Identity Work: Finnish-Estonian Trade Union Cooperation. *Work, Employment and Society*, *33*(2), 208–225.

IV. Mrozowicki, A., Bembic, B., **Kall, K.**, Maciejewska, M. & Stanojevic, M. (2018). Union campaigns against precarious work in the retail sector of Estonia, Poland and Slovenia. In V, Doellgast; N, Lillie & V, Pulignano (Eds.). *Reconstructing Solidarity. Labour Unions, Precarious Work, and the Politics of Institutional Change in Europe* (pp. 144–165). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

V. Samaluk, B. & **Kall, K.** (revised and resubmitted). Innovative trade union project-based organisations in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Slovenia and Estonia. *Submitted to a special issue of a peer-reviewed industrial relations journal with an international scope.*

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Post-crisis innovation within Estonian private sector unions. At the conference Industrial Relations in Europe: Between Core and Peripheries, Warsaw, Poland, September 7–8, 2017.

Union campaigns against precarious work in the retail sector of Estonia, Poland and Slovenia (with Adam Mrozowicki, Branko Bembic, Małgorzata Maciejewska and Miroslav Stanojevic). At Reconstructing solidarity: Labour unions, precarious work, and the politics of institutional change in Europe, Ithaca, USA, June 17th, 2016.

The positions of Estonian construction workers in the Finnish migrant labour regime (with Markku Sippola). At Labour Migration in the European Peripheries, Jyväskylä, Finland, April 26–27, 2016.

Post-crisis innovation within Estonian private sector unions. At Innovative practices within CEE trade union movements, Bratislava, Slovakkia, March 30–31, 2016.

Transnational Union Organizing in a Regional Labour Market: The Baltic Organising Academy and Finnish-Estonian Union Cooperation (with Nathan Lillie, Markku Sippola and Laura Mankki). At Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics 27th Annual Conference, London, England, July 2–4, 2015.

Development of the Model of Organizing across the Finnish-Estonian Border (with Laura Mankki, Markku Sippola and Nathan Lillie). At International Labour Processes Conference, Athens, Greece, April 13–14, 2014.

Additional publications of relevance

Kall, K. (2016). Who Protects Workers in a Neoliberal State? Estonian Employers and Trade Unionists' Conflicting Views on Labour Relations. *Athens Journal of Social Sciences, 3*(1): 27–38.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on dismantling how servicing- and partnership-oriented Nordic and Baltic unions have initiated and sustained a radically innovative, project-based, yet long-lasting transnational union organizing initiative, namely Baltic Organising Academy (BOA). It is an article-based dissertation and this analytical overview integrates the results of two relevant articles and three book chapters into a whole, developes a model of radically innovative union action and answers the following research questions:

1. What were the reasons and processes behind the initiation of the Baltic Organising Academy and its organizing campaigns?
2. What are the processes through which the BOA and its organizing campaigns have been sustained?
3. What have been the constraints for implementing organizing model union campaigns in Estonia?
4. What effects have the BOA and its organizing campaigns had on the Estonian union movement and on companies and sectors affected by the BOA?

The analysis is based on a critical realist case study design, studying the Estonian BOA thoroughly by using different qualitative research techniques. I argue that BOA was initiated not because of a mere reaction to specific changes in the environment, but because of the deliberate efforts of the BOA activists who utilized available power resources and convincingly framed the Organising Academy as an innovative way to cure a problem that both Baltic and Nordic unions are facing. BOA activists also played a crucial role in keeping the Academy resilient. BOA and its organizing campaigns have not generated a smooth process of radical union innovation. From a critical realist stance, transforming the pre-existing social reality is a constrained process. In post-2008 Estonia, the constraints on practicing organizing model unionism firstly derive from the external environment. As regards barriers inherent in the union movement, the organizing approach assumes a considerable change in the ways that unions operate and in the role of union officials. Through BOA unions have been able to propagate considerable changes and increase and reuse their network embeddedness and gain more infrastructural and narrative resources. Most importantly, due to the BOA, Estonian unions have diversified their strategies, tactics and identity orientations. Nevertheless, BOA's organizing has several shortcomings, including being project-based, company-oriented and small-scale, that might hamper its wider and more long-term effects.

Keywords: Estonia; transnational unionism; union innovation; union organizing

RESÜMEE

Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärk on mõista, kuidas suuresti teenindusmudelile ja partnerlusele orienteeritud Balti riikide ja Põhjamaade ametiühingute koostöös sündis ning arenes radikaalselt innovaatiline projektipõhine, kuid kauakestev hargmaisel organiseerimismudelil põhinev algatus, Balti Organiseerimise Akadeemia (BOA). Tegemist on artiklipõhise väitekirjaga, mis integreerib kahe teemakohase teadusartikli ning kolme raamatupeatüki tulemused tervikuks, loob innovatsiooni seletava mudeli ja võimaldab vastata järgmistele uurimisküsimustele:

1. Millised põhjused ja protsessid on viinud BOA loomiseni?
2. Milliste protsesside kaudu on BOAd ja BOA organiseerimiskampaaniaid jätkatud?
3. Millised takistused on ilmnenud organiseerimismudeli praktiseerimisel Eestis?
4. Milliseid muutusi on BOA ja selle organiseerimiskampaaniad Eesti ametiühinguliikumisele ja BOAga kokku puutunud ettevõtetele ning sektoritele kaasa toonud?

Analüüs lähtub kriitilisel realismil põhinevast juhtumiuuringu disainist ning hõlmab Eesti BOA terviklikku uurimist, kasutades erinevaid kvalitatiivseid andmeallikaid ja meetodeid. Väidan, et innovatsiooni, eriti radikaalset, ei saa vaadelda kui vaid pelka reaktsiooni keskkonnamuutustele, kus tajutakse, et traditsioonilised toimimisviisid ei ole enam efektiivsed, ja otsustatakse seetõttu midagi uut praktiseerida. Pigem peavad tegutsejad innovaatilise strateegia veenvalt raamistama, näiteks kui midagi, mis aitab eesseisvaid probleeme edukalt lahendada, ning neil tuleb seda edaspidi ka sihikindlalt propageerida, et innovatsioon kanda kinnitaks ja püsima jääks. BOA ja selle organiseerimiskampaaniate rakendamine ei ole olnud sujuv ning takistusteta protsess. Innovatsiooni takistavad tegurid saab laias laastus jagada kaheks: ametiühingute välisest keskkonnast tulenevad ning ametiühingusisesed. Vaidlused Eestile sobivate ametiühingu strateegiate ja identiteedi üle on endiselt käimas. Kuna organiseerimismudeli praktiseerimiseks kulub ka märgatavalt raha, siis on Põhjamaade toetus olnud siin määrav. BOA on võimaldanud Eesti ametiühingutel kasvatada erinevaid vahendeid, eelkõige riigisisest ja hargmaist võrgustikesse kaasatust, aga ka infrastruktuuri- ja narratiivseid ressursse. Olulised muutused, mille BOA ja tema organiseerimiskampaaniad on kaasa toonud, on aga strateegiaalased ja teataval määral ka identiteedinihkega seotud. BOA hargmaisel organiseerimismudelil on ka olulised piirangud, eriti just selle projektipõhisus, väiksemahulisus ja ettevõttekesksus.

Märksõnad: ametiühingute innovatsioon; Eesti; hargmaised liikumised; organiseerimismudel

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja lisää ymmärrystä siitä, miten pitkälti palvelumallille ja yhteistyölle omistautuneiden Baltian ja Pohjoismaiden ammattiyhdistysten yhteistyöstä syntyi ja kehittyi radikaalisti innovatiivinen, projektipohjainen ja pitkäkestoinen ylikansalliseen organisointimalliin perustuva aloite, Baltian järjestämisakatemia (BOA). Kyseessä on artikkeliväitöskirja, joka yhdistää kahden tutkimusartikkelin ja kolmen kirjanluvun tulokset kokonaisuudeksi, luo radikaalia innovaatiota selittävän mallin ja vastaa seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin:

1. Millaiset syyt ja prosessit johtivat BOA:n perustamiseen?
2. Millaisten prosessien kautta BOA:aa ja BOA:n järjestämiskampanjoita on jatkettu?
3. Millaisia esteitä organisointimallin harjoittamisessa Virossa on esiintynyt?
4. Millaisia muutoksia BOA ja sen järjestämiskampanjat ovat tuoneet Viron ammattiliittoliikkeeseen ja BOA:n kanssa tekemisissä olleisiin yrityksiin ja sektoreihin?

Analyysi perustuu kriittiseen realismiin perustuvan tapaustutkimukseen. Se käsittää Viron BOA:n kattavan tutkimuksen käyttämällä erilaisia kvalitatiivisia tietolähteitä ja menetelmiä. Väitän, että innovaatiota, erityisesti radikaalia, ei voida tarkastella pelkkänä reaktiona ympäristön muutoksiin, kun ymmärretään, että perinteiset toimintatavat eivät ole enää tehokkaita ja päätetään siksi harjoittaa jotain uutta. Toimijoiden on ennemminkin kehystettävä innovatiivinen strategia uskottavaksi esimerkiksi jollain, joka auttaa ratkaisemaan tulevia ongelmia onnistuneesti, ja heidän on myös mainostettava sitä sinnikkäästi, jotta innovaatio vakiintuisi ja jäisi pysymään. BOA:n ja sen järjestämiskampanjoiden toteuttaminen ei ole ollut sujuva ja vaivaton prosessi. Innovaatiota estävät tekijät voidaan jakaa yleisesti kahteen osaan. Ensimmäiset johtuvat ammattiliittojen ulkoisesta ympäristöstä. On myös toisentyyppisiä esteitä, jotka liittyvät ammattiliittojen sisäisiin näkemyseroihin. Viron ammattiliitoille sopivia strategioita ja identiteettiä koskevat kiistat jatkuvat edelleen. BOA:n ansiosta Viron ammattiliitot ovat saaneet erilaisia resursseja, erityisesti kansallista ja ylikansallista verkostoihin osallistumista, mutta myös infrastruktuuriin liittyviä ja narratiivisia resursseja. BOA:n ja sen järjestämiskampanjoiden suurimmat muutokset liittyvät kuitenkin strategiaan ja jossain määrin myös identiteettiin. BOA:n ylikansallisella järjestämismallissa on myös merkittäviä puutteita, erityisesti juuri sen projektipohjaisuus, pienimuotoisuus ja yrityskeskeisyys.

Asiasanat: ammattiyhdistysten innovaatiot; järjestämismalli; Viro; ylikansallinen ammattiliitto

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and European integration have considerably affected national industrial relations systems even in highly institutionalized (coordinated) market economies (Baccaro & Howell, 2011), calling for new (transnational) strategies for trade unions to keep or improve their position as important labour market actors. However, radical union innovation, especially involving a transnational dimension, is rather rare and involves overcoming several barriers (e.g. Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010; Meardi, 2012). This thesis focuses on dismantling how servicing- and partnership-oriented Nordic and Baltic unions have initiated and sustained a radically innovative, project-based, yet long-lasting transnational union organizing initiative.

This thesis advances institutionalist, power resources and social movement literature, integrating elements of these approaches to develop an analytical model that explains the processes through which unions can (radically) innovate. Empirically, the model is applied to the Baltic Organising Academy (BOA), a transnational union cooperation project that aimed to carry out organizing model union campaigns in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The current analysis focuses on BOA's operations in Estonia. In addition to developing a general model for radical union innovation, as a more specific contribution, this thesis shows the importance and functioning of two elements of framing, namely the creation of collective action frames and the process of identity work, both of which make radical union innovation possible, legitimate and resilient, even in contexts where unions have limited power resources (as in Estonia). Thus, this study contributes to our understanding of how, in the current global economy, it is possible for unions to overcome problems related to their national embeddedness, organizational inertia and diminishing power resources.

Furthermore, the analysis advances studies of post-socialism, highlighting the interplay of legacies and innovation and the mechanisms through which a radical departure from path-dependency can be achieved, as well as the barriers to such a departure. Post-socialist Estonian trade unions have not thrived as the country has embraced the global capitalist economy. This is evidenced by the minor role of unions at the company, sectoral and state levels. The union density rate has fallen from 94% in 1992 to 15% in 2000 and 4% in 2017; in 2017, this was the lowest rate in Europe (Visser, 2019). Collective bargaining and social dialogue are limited and levels of labour mobilization low (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Feldmann, 2006; Vandaele, 2014, 2019). Due to low union density, poor legitimacy and related weakness of collective labour regulation, the Estonian labour market is flexible and, to a large extent, employer dominated, and income distribution is rather unequal (Helemäe & Saar, 2015; Kazjulja & Paškov, 2011). Many workers with relatively low bargaining power who are dissatisfied with their working conditions have 'voted with their feet' by migrating, with the main destination country being Finland (Meardi, 2013; Saar & Jakobson, 2015; Tammaru & Eamets, 2015).

Against a backdrop of weakening industrial relations, Estonian trade unions have not made considerable changes in strategies. The *status quo* has been servicing their (diminishing number of) members and practicing a non-confrontational social partnership with employers and the state, even if this is not always effective in improving the unions' position and bringing gains for the workers (Kall, 2016; Woolfson & Kallaste, 2011). Since the 1990s, a rather extensive cooperation has been pursued with Nordic unions, especially with Finnish unions, which aimed to guide the Estonian ones towards the highly institutionalized Nordic model of industrial relations (Häkkinen, 2013; Skulason & Jääskeläinen, 2000). Only in 2010 did this long-existing transnational cooperation turn into an initiative – the Baltic Organising Academy – aiming to implement organizing model union campaigns in Estonian (and Latvian and Lithuanian) workplaces with the financial and strategic help of Nordic unions. This initiative is, to a certain extent, at odds with previous union strategies and identities for both Estonian and Nordic unions. Transnational organizing is an innovative strategy that explicitly criticizes previous ones and aims to 'evolve unions capable of organizing and growth' (Häkkinen, 2013, p. 1).

The aim of this thesis is to understand this unprecedented innovation within the Estonian trade union movement since the 1990s. More precisely, I will develop a model that explains the implementation, development and resilience of the BOA. This is the first academic study on the Baltic Organising Academy and on Estonian industrial relations that takes a transnational perspective. I follow Bernaciak's and Kahancová's (2017, p. 12) definition of innovation as they have adjusted it to fit the analysis of trade union actions. They conceptualise '*an innovative union practice as a course of action differing from the one pursued in the past, staged by a trade union to address a newly emerging challenge or tackle an existing problem more effectively.*' I distinguish between the incremental type of union innovations and radical ones. While the former entails only minor adjustments, the latter type of innovation represents a clear departure from previous practices (Dewar & Dutton, 1986).

As elaborated in **Study I**, firstly, the BOA in particular, and organizing model unionism more generally, are radically innovative, as the Estonian labour movement has generally favoured non-militant social partnership strategies. The organizing model, which had its genesis in the United States of America (USA), does – although the model can vary – generally emphasise the relevance of more aggressive tactics and also more confrontational labour relations than have been prevalent in Estonia. Secondly, organizing also highlights mobilizing and empowering workers at the grassroots level (bottom-up unionism) – in addition to the relevance of union staff and elected members. The model highlights the importance of ordinary (active) union members for setting and exercising union goals, while the *status quo* for Estonian unions has instead been top-down/servicing unionism.

Any innovation within the industrial relations system, especially a substantial one, is not something that can be taken for granted. Rather, the challenge is to understand 'under what circumstances they [unions] succeed in innovating, charting new courses

of action in collective representation' (Lévesque & Murray, 2010, pp. 344-45). Furthermore, industrial relations literature refers to numerous barriers both to implementing the organizing model (e.g. Carter & Cooper, 2002; Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010) and developing common union strategies across borders (e.g. Cooke, 2005; Hancké, 2000; Meardi, 2012). Thus, transnational organizing refers to a double barrier: first, to overcome a nation-centred view of unionism, and second, in the context of social partnership and servicing unionism, to change union identities and strategies (**Study III**). This thesis focuses on understanding how the radical innovation in union strategy and identity pursued by the BOA has been possible in Estonia.

Although Estonia is a country that theoretically could be an ideal ground for implementing the organizing model, as its genesis has been in the liberal, single-employer-bargaining industrial relations system of the USA, organizing has been rather alien to the labour movement before the BOA. This indicates the necessity to move beyond explanations of union strategies based on industrial relations systems and take into account the wider state context, decision making and meaning generation processes within unions. Although this thesis concentrates on Estonia, the results have wider implications. Firstly, two of the studies (**IV-V**) are comparative, putting Estonia into a wider post-socialist perspective and enabling us to compare and contrast factors contributing to the choice of strategies. Secondly, the BOA is a transnational initiative and can provide insight into the factors fostering transnational unionism. Thirdly, due to European integration, Estonian labour relations have an increasing effect on those in other countries, especially in neighbouring Finland (**Studies II-III**). The Estonian economy and labour market are transnationally linked to those in Finland, and in this kind of transnational labour market, developments in one country have a substantial and visible impact on the other.

The main research questions that (to a varying degree and from a specific angle) have been elaborated in my studies are as follows:

1. What were the reasons and processes behind the initiation of the Baltic Organising Academy and its organizing campaigns?
2. What are the processes through which the BOA and its organizing campaigns have been sustained?
3. What have been the constraints for implementing organizing model union campaigns in Estonia?
4. What effects have the BOA and its organizing campaigns had on the Estonian union movement and on companies and sectors affected by the BOA?

This thesis consists of five studies. The first two studies provide context for the BOA. **Study I** gives an overview of the external environment where Estonian unions are operating, the dominant strategies they have used and the innovative practices they have implemented since the post-2008 economic and financial crisis, including analysing their drivers, sustainability and impact. It shows that although Estonian private sector unions have implemented several incrementally innovative practices,

the establishment of the Baltic Organising Academy and the related adoption of organizing model union campaigns has been the most substantial union innovation, as it aims to change both the strategies and tactics of unions and to transform union identity as well. **Study II**, on the other hand, focuses on the position of Estonian labour migrants in the Finnish construction sector and on the traditional strategies that Finnish unions have used to protect their labour market from the corroding effects of non-unionised migrants and foreign companies not following Finnish industrial relations practices. The study emphasises the interconnectivity of the Estonian and Finnish labour markets and sheds light on the motivations of Finnish unions to cooperate with and support their Estonian counterparts.

Study III concludes that the reason why extensive BOA cooperation between Estonian and Finnish unions has become a possibility is the long-lasting and rather extensive previous cooperation between Estonian and Finnish unions that had already created personal relationships of trust and feelings of mutual obligation. Building on that foundation, it has been easier to continue with identity work for re-creating common norms, identities and objectives necessary for overcoming the national focus inherent in union activity and building an organizing mindset among social partnership and/or servicing-focused unionists. **Study IV** takes one of the sectors where organizing campaigns were already started in 2012, namely food retail, as an example of how the BOA's approach has been executed on the ground. It compares this approach to retail union strategies in Poland and Slovenia – Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries with diverging industrial relations systems. The study suggests that both opportunities and constraints embedded in the institutional context have an impact on the power resources that unions possess and on the strategies that they choose to use. Encompassing institutions influence the effectiveness of unions in pursuing their aims, yet the relationship is mediated by the capacity to mobilize different power resources, as without the ability to demonstrate power, favorable institutions function only as a façade. **Study V** focuses on the BOA's initiation, resilience and effects on the union movement, comparing it to innovative project-based union initiatives in Slovenia. This enables us to draw more general conclusions on how project-based organizations are started and how they can become rather resilient, despite their dependence on project funding. In both Estonia and Slovenia, the continuation of the project-based initiatives has been owed mainly to proactive activists skilful in using available power resources and mobilizing external financial resources.

The first two chapters of the thesis aim to develop an analytical framework for the study. In chapter one, I bring together different streams of literature that, from a specific angle, elaborate the possibilities and reasons for change in unions. On the one hand, I highlight the importance of the external environment where unions are operating and the role of power resources that unions have at their disposal, depending on the context, and how they contribute to their use of specific strategies. On the other hand, I explain how, in order to understand why unions in some cases might choose a radically innovative course of action, unionists' capabilities to

mobilize (or first increase) the existing resources, to frame problems in a certain way and to create new collective action frames and identities are equally important. Chapter two provides the contextual background for union innovation in CEE in general and in Estonia in particular by summarising the position, strategies and also the diversity of unions in the region and by giving an overview of transnational unionism and the organizing model as strategies for union innovation in CEE. At the end of the chapter, I show how the BOA represents an example of a radical type of union innovation in Estonia, and I develop a model for union innovation that is later applied to the BOA.

In chapter 3, on methodology and methods, I describe the paradigmatic stance that guides the case study and give an overview of the research design, data set, and methods, and I reflect upon my role in the research process. This is followed by the main results of the five studies that provide answers to the research questions established in the introduction. I start by explaining why the BOA represents a radical union innovation. The chapter then shows how the initiation of the BOA required the construction of an organizing model frame on top of the earlier process of transnational identity work of Estonian and Finnish unionists. The third section of the analysis focuses on factors that have made the BOA resilient despite its dependence on project funding, and the fourth section describes both internal and external constraints for implementing the organizing model union campaigns in Estonia. The fifth section integrates the previous analysis and also brings in more comparative insight from **Studies IV-V** to give an overview of the development of the model of radically innovative union action, taking the BOA as an example. The final analysis section elaborates issues related to the effects of the BOA as an organization, and of organizing model unionism more generally, on the Estonian union movement and on companies and sectors affected by the BOA. The final chapter focuses on the main conclusions derived from the case study, examines their theoretical implications, but also weaknesses and highlights possible further research.

1. TRADE UNIONS: BETWEEN FATE AND CHOICE

1.1. INSTITUTIONS, UNION AGENCY AND STRATEGIC CHOICES

The necessary conditions for change in union strategies have, to a large extent, been explained either as internal processes within unions or as a reaction to changes in the external environment (for an overview, see Heery, 2005). Comparative institutional perspectives in industrial relations provide valuable insights in understanding how a country's institutional setting influences unions' strategies (and their effectiveness) by marking the paths available for its respective union movement. For example, in line with the (firm-centred) varieties of capitalism literature (Hall & Soskice, 2001), in liberal market economies where the role of unions is less institutionalized, e.g. collective bargaining is decentralised and tripartite dialogue is ineffective/non-existent, unions have a greater incentive to organize workers to get bargaining power and legitimacy. In contrast, in countries where the role of unions is more institutionalized and unions can rely, for example, on a central/sectoral-level collective bargaining strategy, organizing new groups of workers might be considered less important (Kelly & Frege, 2004; Phelan, 2007). Thus, a country's institutional setting both encourages and discourages certain strategic choices for unions, and if the settings change, so might union strategies.

However, institutionalist literature is often criticized for being static, simplistic and not putting enough emphasis on politics, ideology, labour-capital conflicts and the interconnections between (union) agency and institutions (e.g. Frege & Kelly, 2003; Godard, 2004, pp. 249-250; McLaughlin & Wright, 2018, p. 571). Thus, it falls short in explaining (the change in) unions' strategic choices. Unions are organizations whose aims and effectiveness, on the one hand, are affected by their external environment, but on the other hand, they are also actors whose strategic choices (even if not strategically planned) matter. Strategy here refers to 'a framework of critical, enacted choices about the ends and means of an organization' (Boxall & Haynes, 1997: 567). If the external environment is rather hostile for unions, as in neoliberal countries and due to increasing globalization, strategic mismanagement by unions can have especially negative consequences (Blyton et al., 2001; Boxall & Haynes, 1997).

Highlighting the potential of strategic choices within labour unions, although they are embedded in their external environment and organizational context, emphasizes the importance of leaders and activists in influencing the course of organizations (Child, 1972, 1997). This also refers to the classical social science agency-structure debate. Concerning this debate, I take a critical realist position, according to which reflexive agents either reproduce or transform already-existing structures and mechanisms. Although agents are constrained by pre-existing entities embedded in the already-existing natural and social world, the latter can only continue its existence if continuously reproduced/transformed by the actions of agents (Archer, 2000, 2003; Fleetwood, 2014). Thus, unionists as reflexive agents are potentially able to

transform their organizations and their strategies (but also the wider social reality). Nevertheless, as social structures are not reducible to an aggregation of individuals but have cultural and material components and emergent properties beyond individual actors (Gorski, 2013), one has to take into account the constraints and opportunities for change in unions and beyond.

The most comprehensive framework of a union's strategic choices was developed by Frege and Kelly (2003), who have taken a step forward to overcome the limitations of institutionalist perspectives by integrating framing processes from social movement literature into their model. It includes four independent variables: change in the economic and social sphere, institutional context, strategies of employers and the state, and union structures. In addition, they include a process variable (framing): although the independent variables (especially institutions) influence the choice of strategies, their influence is interpreted and acted upon through framing processes through which one or the other strategic road for action is chosen.

Although their analysis highlights the role of union strength, they consider it to be part of the institutions (e.g. union density) or union structures (e.g. unity within the confederations, systems of workplace representation). They do not engage with the power resource literature, that, in my opinion, would be a necessary addition to better understand the resources available for unions and the mechanisms through which unions get access to these resources and are able to increase them (Levesque & Murray, 2010). Furthermore, although Frege and Kelly (2003, pp. 19-21) emphasize the important role of framing and give some practical examples (especially regarding the role of union leaders), I argue that framing as a process (e.g. the generation of collective action frames and identity work processes) needs to be further elaborated to understand the formulation of new collective identities and innovative choices in union strategies.

1.2. UNION POWER RESOURCES

In order to understand unions' position and possibilities for action, it is crucial to understand the power resources at the disposal of unions. Union power here refers to a capacity of social agents to further their interests, like negotiating more beneficial working conditions and empowering workers (Lukes, 2005; Levesque & Murray, 2010). Resources are defined as 'fixed or path-dependent assets that an actor can normally access and mobilize' (Levesque and Murray, 2010, p. 335). Scholars have distinguished between structural, institutional and associational (also called organizational) union power (Dörre et al., 2009; Silver, 2003; Wright, 2000), the amount of which varies between unions. Other classifications, notably the one by Levesque and Murray (2010) have also been developed, and they are not necessarily incompatible with each other. In line with Levesque and Murray (2010), I consider structural, institutional and associational/organizational power as power resources, indicating that they are assets that unions can mobilize. Unions' power is not reducible to the available/given power resources alone, but is also constituted of

union capacity (power resources together with actor capabilities to use them), institutions, opportunity structure at a specific time (e.g. economic cycle, political situation), and the capacity of other actors, like employers (Levesque & Murray, 2010).

It is possible to distinguish between power resources that are more external versus those internal to the unions. Structural power is related to workers' position and role within economic systems (Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003), so unions in different sectors and workplaces, but also different countries, possess it at different levels. Therefore, structural power is external to the unions, while associational/organizational power reflects the internal features of the workers' collective organization, like membership density (Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003), network embeddedness and stock of stories available for effective and legitimate action that frame understandings (Levesque & Murray, 2010), for example, to give meaning to the necessity of using specific strategies. Levesque and Murray (2010) have further developed unions' power resources, narrating a theory focusing on the internal aspects of union power, unpacking mostly the associational/organizational power of unions. They distinguish between internal solidarity, i.e. 'mechanisms developed in the workplace to ensure collective cohesion and deliberative vitality'; network embeddedness (links with other organizations); narrative resources, i.e. the 'existing stock of stories that frame understandings and union actions and inform a sense of efficacy and legitimacy', reflecting values and repertories of action; and infrastructural resources, i.e. personnel and material resources (Levesque & Murray, 2010, p. 336). In line with these authors, I classify union structures under organizational power.

Institutional power is characterized by 'the fact that institutions take those social compromises that were agreed upon in the past, and stipulate them for future economic cycles, as well as for times of altered societal power relations, sometimes even establishing them by law' (Dörre et al., 2009, p. 37). Thus, a favourable institutional context in itself is also the result of previous/historical power struggles and needs to be constantly backed by different power resources and actor capabilities to use them in order to work as institutional power. For example, in order for sectoral-level collective bargaining, as an established institution, to function as institutional power, unions need enough legitimacy and leverage. It is hard to consider what Ost (2000) has called 'illusory corporatism' as an institutional power resource for unions, although in this case, the formal institutions of tripartite negotiations have been set up. Available resources alone are not necessarily enough for unions to succeed in advancing their objectives. Unionists also must be capable, skilful and willing to use the resources: they need both resources and resourcefulness (Ganz, 2000). Thus, the next section will go beyond path-dependency and focus on the agency of unionists and the processes though which agency matters for union action, including for innovation.

1.3. UNIONISTS' STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF FRAMING

Levesque and Murray (2010, p. 336) highlight the importance of unionists' capabilities, i.e. 'sets of aptitudes, competencies, abilities, social skills or know-how that can be developed, transmitted and learned' in using and developing union power resources and choosing one or the other path of union action. More specifically, they consider intermediating, framing, articulating and learning capabilities to be of crucial importance for mobilizing union power resources. Although all four are important capacities of humans to develop their repertoires of action, I will highlight the role of framing as it represents a process through which meanings are constructed, ideas mobilised and collective action frames, i.e. 'action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings', generated (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Thus, framing processes can give (new) strategic direction for unions, and framing can also entail other union capabilities like intermediating, articulating and learning.

The importance of framing is also highlighted in Frege and Kelly's (2003) model of union strategic choice, in which social and economic change (external environment) is interpreted and acted upon through framing processes. Through these, a strategic road for action is chosen, keeping in mind that union structures, institutions and state and employer strategies matter and bring their own limitations and opportunities as well. Union leaders have a critical role in framing union action, especially in less-institutionalized contexts where they exercise more power over union organization (Frege & Kelly, 2003). However, I argue that social movement literature, especially developments around the concept of framing, deserves more thorough integration when aiming to develop an approach about how union innovation, especially radical innovation, happens (see also Gahan & Pekarek, 2013).

Benford and Snow (2000) summarise that frames are constructed through core framing tasks – namely diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing – on the one hand and through discursive, strategic, and contested framing processes on the other hand. Through diagnostic framing, the reasons for some problematic situations for the union are identified. Prognostic framing refers to the articulation of possible solutions to the problem and strategies for executing the plan, and motivational framing is necessary for providing rationale for engaging in the planned action (Benford & Snow, 2000). In addition, a number of discursive, strategic and (often) contested framing processes are highlighted in social movement theory that contribute to the creation of collective action frames (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gahan & Pekarek, 2013). For example, frame transformation refers to generating new understandings and/or modifying old ones, and this latter process seems especially relevant in the context of decreasing union legitimacy among certain groups (Gahan & Pekarek, 2013) and for innovating union strategies. Frames that seem more credible (both in terms of what is said and who is saying it), consistent and salient are generally perceived as more effective and persuasive in mobilizing people (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Framing is, generally, a contested process, and several alternative frames, known as counter-framing, are possible. Activists have to engage in the politics of signification: they 'are not able to construct and impose on their intended targets any version of the reality they would like; rather there are a variety of challenges [both internal and external] confronting all those who engage in movement framing activities' (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). Furthermore, framing processes are dialectically related to collective action itself, as participating in collective action and feedback received through it might be incorporated into the frames, and that can modify the discourse and frames as well (Ellingson, 1995). Framing, as part of the strategic capacity of unionists, gives (new) direction to unions and can be used to overcome the weakness of power resources and even to increase some of the resources.

1.4. IDENTITY WORK IN UNION MOVEMENTS

Framing processes importantly also contribute to 'identity work', referring to 'anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves or others' (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996, p. 115), and interactional framing processes help to facilitate the correspondence between collective and personal identities (Snow & McAdam, 2000). According to Polletta and Jasper (2001, p. 285), collective identity refers to an 'individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it might form part of a personal identity.'

Rather than taking collective identity as given – for example, based purely on instrumental rationality and position in a society, although these do matter (for an overview, see Polletta & Jasper, 2001) – I follow a line of literature according to which collective (or individual) identities are created, sustained and modified during the identity work process (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Snow & McAdam, 2000). Indeed, union identities vary. For example, Hyman (2001) has argued that labour movements in different European countries have positioned themselves along two axes out of three: either between class and society, class and market or society and market, each marking different identity orientations. Fox's (1974) distinction between unitatist, pluralist and radical frames of reference are also relevant in understanding how unions can interpret their role and position in labour relations. Although scholars have identified multiple forms and processes of identity work (e.g. Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996; Snow & McAdam, 2000), this thesis is mostly concerned with factors that contribute to considerable collective identity change and how an individual unionist's identity becomes aligned with the BOA's identity. Thus, I mainly focus on collective identity construction, which according to Snow and McAdam (2000, p. 53), is crucially facilitated by the processes of framing, collective action, and the combination of the two.

The identity work concept has been applied to industrial relations literature by Greer and Hauptmeier (2012), who emphasize its role in facilitating transnational

cooperation (rather than competition) between unions in different production sites at General Motors Europe. Greer and Hauptmeier highlight that there is no institutional support for unions to act collectively, and by doing so, unions/workers in some countries might do worse. However, through long-lasting identity work, unionists in General Motors have constructed common interests, agendas, and trusting relationships across the transnational production sites, making transnational cooperation possible (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012). In conclusion, to understand how unions choose a radically innovative course of action, we must take into account the external environment that they are embedded in, power resources unions have gathered over time, and equally importantly, unionists' capabilities to mobilize these resources, to frame problems in a certain way and to generate collective identities.

2. TRADE UNION INNOVATION IN THE CEE

2.1. TRADE UNIONS IN THE CEE: FROM WEAKNESS TO DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION

2.1.1. Trade unions in the CEE

During the post-socialist period, trade unions in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region have often been portrayed as weak, powerless and/or inactive due to both state-socialist and post-socialist legacies (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Crowley, 2004; Ost & Crowley, 2001; Ost, 2009). Scholars have used these legacies in the form of dominant cultural discourses (e.g. Ost, 2009), institutional heritage (e.g. Feldmann, 2006), the structural position of CEE countries within the global/EU economy (Bohle & Greskovits, 2006) or workers' identity construction (e.g. Frege, 2001) to explain the specificity of CEE countries' industrial relations systems and the position – mostly weak – of trade unions. These studies, among others, have largely emphasised common characteristics when examining the countries and have contrasted the region with Western Europe. Even if variation among CEE capitalisms is considered, authors often focus only on statistical indicators and/or homogeneous dominant discourses that differentiate some country or group of countries from others, making Mrozowicki, Pulignano and Hootegem (2010, p. 222) conclude that when explaining unionism's weakness in CEE, deductive structuralist and culturalist approaches have dominated.

One well-known and influential typology highlighting the diversity of capitalisms in CEE was developed by Bohle and Greskovits (2007; 2012). They distinguish between the neoliberal type (Baltic countries) marked by the 'combination of market radicalism with meagre compensation for transformation costs' (2012: 3), the embedded neoliberal capitalism in Visegrad countries characterized by a 'permanent search for compromises between market transformation and social cohesion' (2012, p. 3) and the neo-corporatist type (Slovenia) manifested by 'negotiated multilevel relationships among business, labour, and the state' (ibid.). Varieties of industrial relations have developed in parallel to the different political economies.

Bohle and Greskovits (2007, 2012) argue that the legacies of the past and the perceptions of them by reform elites as either threats to or assets for their countries' future had a deep impact on the types of capitalisms that developed in CEE. The Baltic countries could neither take their nation nor state institutions for granted and had to start 'from scratch', and state-socialism also persisted longer than in other CEE countries. Thus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania inherited the least favourable legacies in terms of economic institutions, and at the same time, these countries felt the strongest urge to distance themselves from those legacies, as they were related to Soviet domination (Bohle & Greskovits, 2007, 2012). In this context, unions have had to struggle to gain legitimacy as independent representatives of workers, as opposed to their state-controlled role under the Soviet regime, when employment

relations were regulated centrally and trade unions functioned mainly as a transmission belt between a company and the Communist party and did not have real power to influence processes that improved workers' rights and interests (Kubicek, 2002, p. 607).

These rather path-dependent accounts tend to be overly deterministic and give little role to union agency (Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017). There is also another, rather recent stream of literature that focuses more on the ways unions have tried to overcome their comparatively weak position by adjusting to the changing environment and adopting new tactics, strategies, and discourses, as well as through forging transnational alliances, especially after the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 (Bernaciak, Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2014; Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017; Czarzasty, Gajewska & Mrozowicki, 2014; Kahancová, 2015; Mrozowicki, 2014). These studies point to the (country-specific) possibilities of changing the course of union action due to both external pressures and unionists' (strategic) choices. Taking into account the previously introduced literature on unions' strategic choices and possibilities for innovation, my thesis falls under the latter stream of literature.

2.1.2. Trade unions in neoliberal Estonia

Even if compared with the rest of the CEE, where unions are often considered to be rather ineffective and powerless, Estonia stands out as an exemplary case of extreme neoliberalism (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012) where market-based coordination of economic relations predominates and neoliberal objectives have been pursued with greater persistence and to a greater extent than in other post-socialist countries. After the restoration of Estonia's independence in 1991, society changed remarkably. The radical transformation of the Estonian national economy – both in terms of restructuring the economy, including massive privatisation and so-called shock therapy, and ideological shifts (Helemäe & Saar, 2015; Lagerspetz, 2001; Lauristin, 2003) – has influenced the position of trade unions considerably. The prevalent discourse in the Estonian political arena since the beginning of 1990s has been one of nationally minded free market liberalism (Lagerspetz, 2001).

The radical market reforms, which led to social problems like structural unemployment, affected the population differently – creating 'winners' and 'losers' – as there was no effective social security system in force (Lauristin, 2003). Moreover, those agents promoting social agendas, like trade unions, did not have any real political influence (ibid.). This has led to a situation in which market-based coordination of economic relations predominates and the industrial relations system is characterized by low union membership, limited employers' coordination, decentralized wage bargaining, low coverage of wage agreements, labour mobilization and limited social dialogue (Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017; Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Feldmann, 2006). Trade union density has dropped significantly since 1990, and nowadays Estonia is characterized as the country with the lowest union density rates in Europe, declining from 94% in 1992 to 15% in 2000 and 4%

in 2017 (Visser, 2019). Some sectors, like construction and information technology, have been practically union-free, and sector-level collective agreements are rarely concluded.

The wider societal influence of unions is also questionable, especially considering that in the years following the economic crisis of 2008, the Estonian government has unilaterally changed or cancelled several agreements concluded between employers, trade unions and state representatives (see e.g. Woolfson & Kallaste, 2011), referring to the existence of 'illusory corporatism' (Ost, 2000). This indicates a situation in which the representatives of labour are involved in a national social dialogue, yet tripartite procedures are just a formality facilitated to keep social peace, under which governments pursue neoliberal objectives. Trade unionists themselves have been rather modest in expressing their wishes, emphasising social partnership and considering more aggressive tactics and strategies (e.g., pickets, strikes) as an option only as a last resource, if even that (Kall, 2016).

In the context of weakening industrial relations, Estonian trade unions have engaged in numerous learning initiatives – both European Union (EU) and foreign-union supported – and cooperation projects with Western European, mostly Finnish, unions. These have been to a large extent educational and rather social partnership oriented, aiming to guide Baltic unions towards the highly institutionalized Nordic model of industrial relations (Häkkinen, 2013; Skulason & Jääskeläinen, 2000). As these strategies have not been overly effective in overturning the decline of Estonian unions' power resources, one can highlight the importance of the national context, including state and employer strategies and work cultures that indicate problems with the transferability of union strategies from other contexts. Only in 2010 did the long-existing transnational cooperation with Nordic unions turn into an initiative aiming to implement a model that is, to a certain extent, at odds with previous union strategies and identities, both regarding Estonian unions, but also Nordic ones that decided to finance the organizing campaigns (alien to their own environment) in Estonia.

2.2. UNION REVITALIZATION AND INNOVATION: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE CEE

2.2.1. Union revitalisation and innovation: applicability to the CEE

In Western industrial relations literature, the academic focus shifted to union revitalization (or its commonly used synonym, 'renewal') approaches several decades ago when the region became heavily influenced by the economic downturn of the 1970s, increasing globalization of production, economic restructuring, the rise of neoliberal ideas and policies, and related changes in the labour market, including the flexibilization of labour relations and the growth of decentralized bargaining. These processes can be considered as an end to the 'golden age of trade unionism' in advanced capitalist economies that started after the end of the Second World War

(Frege & Kelly, 2004; Phelan, 2007; Ross & Martin, 1999). In this changing climate, unions lost members, legitimacy and bargaining power, and some started to experiment with strategies and tactics diverging from their traditional ones (Frege & Kelly, 2004). Following Behrens, Harmann and Hurd (2004, p. 20), union revitalization can be defined as a process in which unions are '(re)gaining power along the various dimensions that capture the main orientations or spheres of union activity.' They consider these dimensions to be economic, political, institutional (internal structure, dynamics, and identity), and membership-related.

Trade union action from the revitalisation perspective has rarely been analysed in the CEE region. Unions are embedded in the national economic and social systems, and their strategies, goals and structure reflect each country's unique historical developments (Phelan, 2007). Each union movement is faced with distinct challenges and opportunities and deserves a closer look on its own, as global trends alone are not sufficient to explain the functioning of any particular national union movement. There is no one specific revitalization strategy that works for all union movements, and the same strategy can produce diverging results in different contexts. As established in the previous chapter, both the external environment and factors internal to unions are relevant in understanding strategic decision making and thus also union revitalization.

I follow the argument of Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017) that the concept of union revitalization is too rigid, as revitalization focuses on trade union endeavours either to enhance their efficiency as organizations or to improve their external influence. It sets an overly ambitious goal, as revitalization expects a considerable improvement or tangible change in unions' position. Thus, some novel initiatives focusing on internal/external challenges might be overlooked by revitalization literature. More importantly, union revitalization might be a problematic concept in the CEE region, as 'the golden age of trade unionism', as understood in the Western literature, has never been present in the region (Czarzasty & Mrozowicki, 2014, p. 100).

Thus, Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017) propose to use a wider concept – namely an innovative union practice – when studying how unions in the CEE region more effectively respond to either already existing or newly emerging internal/external challenges. They (2017, p. 12) adjust the innovation concept to fit the analysis of trade union actions and define '*an innovative union practice as a course of action differing from the one pursued in the past, staged by a trade union to address a newly emerging challenge or tackle an existing problem more effectively*'. Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017, pp. 12-13) consider three dimensions of innovation: (1) innovation in regard to *organisational structure* (e.g. a change of union leadership or union mergers); (2) innovation in regard to *choice of strategies* (e.g. turn to organizing); (3) innovation in regard to the selection of *target groups* (e.g. including precarious workers). Considering the relative weakness and low 'starting' position of the Estonian labour movement, I argue that expecting unions to generate considerable change in their efficiency might be too ambitious a goal when examining how they are trying to fight their marginalization. Thus, looking at innovation instead is a more

viable alternative. In addition, 'the golden age of trade unionism' in the Western sense (unions as free and democratic representatives of labour) has not existed in Estonia, and thus, there is not much to revitalize.

Turning to or putting more emphasis on organizing is one of the frequently used innovative / renewal strategies of unions in the Western world (e.g. Frege & Kelly, 2004), and the organizing approach has been adopted (to a comparatively small extent) by CEE unions as well (Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017). Alternative strategies for unions (that can be innovative in some contexts) include coalition building with political parties or social movements, transnational cooperation, union mergers, new union services, mobilisation of union members or wider public and identity politics (e.g. Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017; Frege & Kelly, 2004). Thus, organizing is only one option among others, and developing a comprehensive transnational organizing campaign is not inevitable, but a process noteworthy to analyse.

2.2.2. Organizing model as a strategy for union innovation in the CEE

Although there is no universal way to define and interpret the organizing model, in this thesis, I understand it as including both internal and external organizing (Connolly et al., 2017; Heery et al., 2000; Hurd, 2004). External organizing refers to 'a model of union good practice which contributes to membership growth by rebuilding or extending organization at workplace level' (Heery et al., 2000, p. 996). This includes targeted organizing campaigns, identifying issues that can be used to mobilize workers, face-to-face conversations with workers, and using community support to gain legitimacy and leverage (ibid.). The other side of the organizing model refers to internal organizing, defined as 'an attempt to rediscover the 'social movement' origins of labour, essentially by redefining the union as a mobilizing structure which seeks to stimulate activism among its members and generate campaigns for workplace and wider social justice' (Heery et al., 2000, p. 996). Thus, the organizing model, as I see it, aims both to empower and mobilize old and new/potential union members, in addition to trying to increase union density. This approach is also in alignment with BOA's model (Häkkinen, 2013, pp. 11–13) that is under scrutiny in this thesis.

The organizing model has its genesis in the 1980s anti-union environment in the United States. Since then, it has travelled across the globe, being quickly adopted, but also adjusted, from country to country and sector to sector in Anglo-Saxon liberal market economies (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom) with low union densities and bargaining power (Carter & Cooper, 2002; Fairbrother & Yates, 2003; Heery, 2001). Later on, the ideas of the model were also adopted and adapted to local contexts in several coordinated market economies like Denmark (Arnholtz, Ibsen & Ibsen, 2016), Germany (Turner, 2009) and the Netherlands (Connolly, Marino & Martinez Lucio, 2017). As an ideal type, the organizing model can be contrasted with servicing model unionism (sometimes also called business or consumer unionism). The latter refers to unionism in which the main emphasis of union action is to provide services to rank-and-file members, without much

consideration of involving them in setting the union agenda. Thus, union officials focus on member grievances, and less or no emphasis is put on mobilizing members, organizing collective action and increasing member militancy (Banks & Metzgar, 1989).

Surely servicing unions can also approach potential union members with the aim of recruiting them into the union, but they would advertise themselves as providers of varying types of (protective/labour market) services, rather than approaching workers as possible new union activists (Heery & Adler, 2004). In practice, although important differences regarding identity and strategy remain, most organizing unions also engage in member servicing to a varying degree and *vice versa*, so the distinction between the two models is not so sharp (Boxall & Haynes, 1997). As organizing usually also entails aggressive tactics (if the employer is hostile towards union activities), it can be at odds with (social) partnership approaches as well. However, union organizing also takes different forms, and in some countries it has not taken as adversarial a form as in the United States. It can also be articulated through partnerships with employers (Fairbrother & Yates, 2003).

On the one hand, the model, when built around comprehensive tactics and being rank-and-file-intensive, has proven to be successful in anti-union environments where more aggressive and worker-mobilizing organizing model campaigns helped unions gain legitimacy and improved their standing *vis-à-vis* employers (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). On the other hand, it has not succeeded in reversing the general trend of declining union density and bargaining power, which might be partially attributed to the fact that organizing campaigns have not been extensive enough (Carter & Cooper, 2002; Hurd, 2004; Simms, Holgate & Heery, 2013). Furthermore, each country and sectoral, or even company, context has its specificities, and in order for organizing to be effective, it has to be adjusted to local circumstances (Mrozowicki, 2014; Simms, Holgate & Heery, 2013). The model has also been criticised as being too adversarial, especially in contexts in which the partnership mindset dominates, and resource intensive – for example, the same resources could be used for servicing existing members (Fiorito, 2004; Heery et al., 2000). Thus, organizing might be in contradiction with existing union practices, priorities and identities, and organizing campaigns might experience organizational inertia or even opposition within their own organizations (Heery et al., 2000; Heery & Simms, 2008).

The other line of critique relates to the meaning and aims of organizing campaigns: how organizing is framed (and practiced) in a concrete context. Indeed, organizing has been interpreted and practiced in varying ways even within a country, and, based on the distinction made by Hyman (2001) regarding union identities, the identity of unions that consider themselves to be organizing can range from radical class/political change-oriented to purely pragmatic market-oriented ones (Simms & Holgate, 2010; Simms, 2012). Several unions, including some in the United Kingdom and Poland, have used organizing as an apolitical toolbox with the aim of recruiting members while neglecting the mobilizing and empowering aspects (Simms et al., 2013; Mrozowicki, 2014). It is questionable whether, without the latter, organizing

entails organizational change or brings wider change within unions (Hurd, 2004). Organizing can also be narrowly focused on company-level topics and neglect larger issues of (re-)building union power in the society and giving strategic direction to the trade union movement (Simms, 2012; Simms & Holgate, 2010). Simms (2012) argues that if the organizing approach does not include the construction of working-class identity, organizing victories will continue to be limited and power distribution between capital and labour remain unchallenged.

It is widely accepted that decentralized industrial relations structures, no alternative channels of worker representation, and legal difficulties in forming bargaining relationships (e.g. certification law in the USA) give unions an incentive to organize, as do a lack of political influence and employers' union-busting techniques (Heery & Adler, 2004; Kelly & Frege, 2004). Furthermore, the role of union officials/activists in promoting the organizing model has been crucial for its successful implementation and sustainment. Although the motivation to start organizing is frequently linked to the diminishing power resources of unions and the realisation that new practices and strategies are needed, different authors have emphasised the role of union leaders and activists who first learn about the model through transnational linkages and then start propagating it in their own unions, often adjusting the model to their local context (Carter & Cooper, 2002; Heery et al., 2000). For example, Arnholtz et al. (2016) argue that in the more institutionalized Danish context, certain actors who challenged the cooperation and passive recruitment-oriented old union leadership had a crucial role in deciding that the model deserves a try and in advocating it across the union movement. Furthermore, the model was translated into the local context, and unions selectively chose elements of the model that they felt suited their environments (Arnholtz et al., 2016).

Unions' role in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Estonia, is weakly institutionalized (e.g. tripartism is underdeveloped), unions have comparatively low legitimacy and union density, collective bargaining is decentralized, and employers (and also political actors) are rather indifferent/hostile towards unions (Ost, 2009; Woolfson & Kallaste, 2011). Thus, the environment is, to a certain degree, similar to the liberal market economies in the West – the main difference in industrial relations institutions being the absence of a strict union recognition rule – and incentives to organize should exist, although there is variation between CEE countries (see Mrozowicki, 2014, p. 300). Still, systematic organizing approaches have been relatively rare in the region, confirming the argument that institutional factors alone are insufficient in explaining the adoption of the organizing approach or fostering innovation in unions (Czarzasty & Mrozowicki, 2014).

The lack of emphasis on recruiting, let alone developing an organizing approach, can be related to both socialist and post-socialist legacies. This includes unions seeing themselves as servicing agents, trying to act at the political level, internalizing the social partnership role advocated by the EU, but also lacking skills and material resources relevant for organizing (Mrozowicki, 2014; Ost, 2009). A notable exception in CEE is the Polish trade union *Solidarność*, which started implementing

the organizing model in the late 1990s. Krzywdzinski (2010) emphasizes how the decision by *Solidarność* to implement the model in Poland can be associated with their contacts with the US union SEIU (a fierce advocate of the model) and to *Solidarność* activists' initiative to convince union leadership to also practice the model in Poland after studying it in SEIU's workshop. Furthermore, a climate for new union objectives was present as the political power of *Solidarność* was dwindling. Although organizing campaigns have been practiced in the union ever since, and a new generation of unionists shares a more organizing-oriented mindset, the approach is still controversial within the union, receives too few resources, and meets ideological resistance from unionists who prefer servicing strategies or devoting more resources to political activities (Krzywdzinski, 2010).

To conclude, adapting and adopting organizing-model unionism relies on willing and capable union leaders and activists who have to contend with considerable organizational inertia in implementing the model. The process might require unionists to consider changing their identity, goals and strategies. This, to a large extent, depends on how much they adjust the model to their local context. The meaning of organizing varies, and the approach can vary from the organizing model definition introduced in the beginning of this section to the approach of simply recruiting new members to unions. On the one hand, cherry-picking tactics from the organizing model that seem more suitable to the local context might bring some gains and not be at odds with more traditional union strategies. On the other hand, if unions only use some pragmatic tactics from the model, organizing might not bring wider changes within unions. Even if unions implement the organizing model, gains through organizing campaigns might be low enough not to motivate unions to practice it further. Thus, there are several barriers and contradictions in importing the organizing model into new contexts.

2.2.3. Transnational unionism as a strategy for union innovation in the CEE

Transnational initiatives are another frequently highlighted way for unions to innovate and strengthen their position in contemporary societies. Although national unions' main focus and arena of action is within concrete national boundaries – and there are considerable barriers to practicing transnational activities – some unions, motivated by several factors, including solidaristic, pragmatic and protectionist ones, have still developed transnational union cooperation that has taken many forms (e.g. Bernaciak, 2010; Gajewska, 2009; Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012).

Union transnationalism is most notably associated with increasing economic globalization, including the expansion of multinational corporations (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2012; Keida, 2006; Lillie, 2004; Lillie & Martínez Lucio, 2004) that threaten local workers' jobs and labour conditions and thus increase demand for (cross-border) union counter-action. Nevertheless, the extent of globalization does not fully explain the nature and scope of transnational activities, as highlighted by Keida (2006), who studied transnationalism amongst USA manufacturing, service and professional sector unions. He concludes that historical, institutional and inter-

organizational dynamics matter as well: for example, transnational strategies may only be adopted if national strategies are not perceived as effective enough to regain the position lost to globalization.

Bernaciak (2010) distinguishes between structural, socialization and interest-based explanations of cross-border unionism and concludes, based on her research of automotive companies, that plant-level East-West union cooperation is best explained by cost-benefit calculations. Similarly to Keida (2006), Bernaciak (2010) argues that transnational union strategies are preferred only when national ones are perceived as absent or less efficient. Greer and Hauptmeier (2012) put more emphasis on the role of socialisation processes (identity work), including the role of union leaders in facilitating cross-border union cooperation in multinational companies, despite having conflicting material interests. In a similar vein, Meardi (2012) highlights the importance of networking between unionists in socializing them into developing further cross-border cooperation.

The European Union's free movement of capital, labour and services provides a particular incentive for European unions to engage in transnational activities, as in the common EU market, labour standards differ considerably between the European countries, and labour cost differentials and non-unionised/hard to unionise workers from low-income countries might be perceived as a threat to unions from countries with higher labour standards (Danaj et al., 2018; Wagner & Lillie, 2014). Although Western and Eastern European unions have launched many joint initiatives with the aim of levelling the playing field and unifying labour standards (Bernaciak, 2010; Gajewska, 2009; Greer et al., 2013; Hammer, 2010; Meardi, 2012), more often than not, these have been temporary, and unions have faced different challenges in sustaining cross-border cooperation. These include the absence of further funding, diverging interests and preference for local responses when these are available. Moreover, joint union cross-border organizing activities have been rather rare. In cases in which unions from several countries have worked together to organize and represent workers (e.g. Greer et al., 2013), many barriers, including financing and organizational resistance, have hindered their activities.

2.3. THE BOA: MAKING THE CASE FOR UNION INNOVATION IN ESTONIA

According to one of the main initiators of the Baltic Organising Academy, Finnish unionist Mika Häkkinen (2013), the development of the BOA can be divided into the preparation phase (2010-2011), construction phase (2011-2012) and fieldwork phase (from 2012 onwards). Before the preparation phase, a small number of key actors were involved in developing the idea. In 2010, the BOA idea was discussed with the boards of Nordic industrial, service and transport federations, who agreed to get involved with preparations for the project if a sufficient number of respective unions from the Baltic countries would get involved as well. A transnational and multi-

sectoral preparation committee was formed, which drafted a clear and detailed project proposal for the Academy by the summer of 2011 (Häkkinen, 2013).

After BOA-minded unionists discussed the project proposal in their respective unions, six sectoral unions from industry, service and transportation, as well as the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL), joined the Academy from Estonia. In order to better coordinate BOA activities, Estonian industrial sector unions (energy workers, metalworkers, industry workers) formed a separate body called the Association of Estonian Industrial Trade Unions (ETAÜ). From Lithuania, two industrial unions agreed to participate, and all Latvian unions declined. From the Nordic side, 11 Finnish, two Swedish and four Danish sectoral unions committed to the plan by providing human and/or material resources. In addition, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Council of Nordic Trade Unions got involved by supporting BOA's general operations and trainings. Baltic unions were committed to reinvest at least 35% of the membership fees that were generated by the organizing campaigns into further organizing. The BOA steering group was formed, consisting of all main stakeholders in the project, and this group took the main role in planning and implementing the project. BOA's funding was based on annual fundraising, and the first fundraiser took place at the end of 2011 (ibid.).

As the most committed unions were from Estonia, the initial project activities were set up there, and organizing campaigns started in May 2012. In the beginning, six Estonian sectoral-level unions (transport, industry, private services) who joined the BOA hired five organizers with the funding from the Nordic unions. The number of organizers – each of whom has mainly focused on one target company – has stayed around the same throughout the years. The BOA ended in 2017, but an agreement to form a new association, the Baltic Organizing Alliance (so-called BOA 2.0), was signed in December 2017. In that sense, the BOA is still operating in 2020, although in a slightly different form.

The idea of the BOA represents a radical departure from previous union strategies and identities. The initiative proposes a radically innovative approach alien to Estonian industrial relations, as the Estonian labour movement has generally favoured non-militant social partnership strategies. Furthermore, the BOA's organizing highlights mobilizing and empowering workers at the grassroots level (bottom-up unionism) and the importance of ordinary (active) union members for setting and exercising union goals, while the *status quo* for Estonian unions has instead been top-down/servicing unionism. Innovation within the industrial relations system is not something that can be taken for granted. Unions may continue old ways of operating even if these seem to not be working due to outdated collective identities, rigid organizational structures and leaders who are not able and/or willing to change (e.g. Frege & Kelly, 2003, p. 14).

Studies that explain innovation regarding union strategies range from deterministic, emphasizing changes in the external environment, to ones focusing on unions' agency and internal decision-making processes. My approach starts from Frege and Kelly's (2003) model of unions' strategic choice, which takes into account both the external

environment and decision-making processes within unions. However, to better understand the resources available for unions and the mechanisms through which unions get access to these resources and are able to increase them, I also integrate insights from power resources literature (Levesque and Murray 2010). Furthermore, I argue that framing as a process (e.g. the generation of collective action frames and identity work) needs to be further elaborated to understand the formulation of new collective identities and strategies, especially those at variance with previous ones. Thus, my analysis brings together institutionalist, power resources and social movement literature that, as also emphasized by Turner (2009), often do not speak to each other. This framework for explaining radical union innovation is outlined in Figure 1.

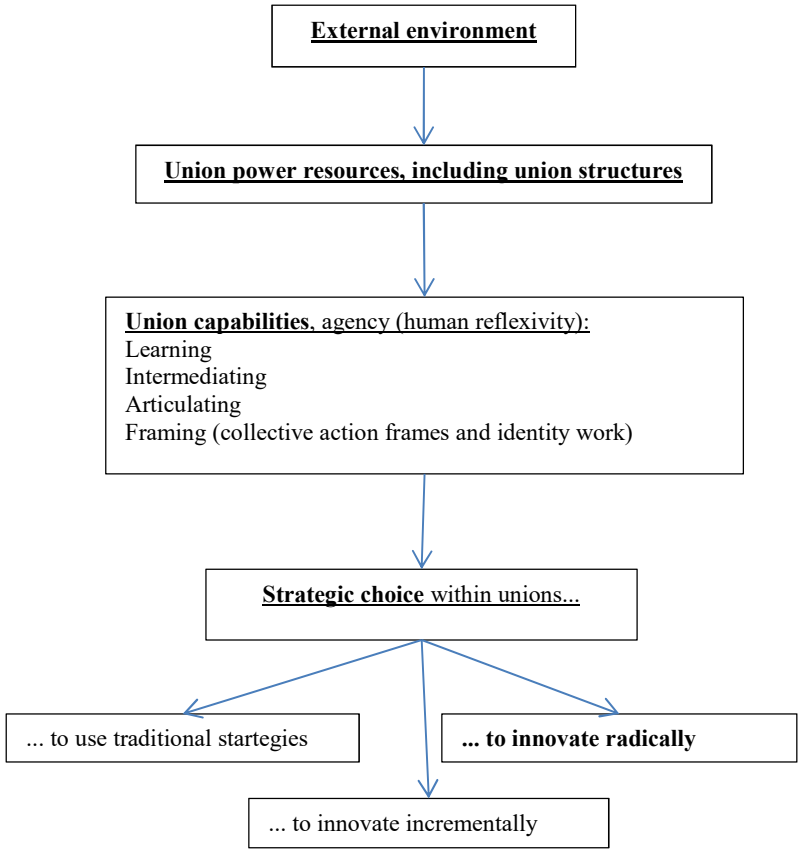

Figure 1: Model of innovative union action
Source: Author's creation, based on Benford and Snow (2000); Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017); Frege and Kelly (2003, 2004); Levesque and Murray (2010); Snow and McAdam (2000).

The case of the BOA is especially telling as an example of radical union innovation, as several authors have highlighted both implementing the organizing model and developing transnational union strategies as highly contested and complicated processes (e.g. Carter & Cooper, 2002; Cooke, 2005; Hancké, 2000; Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010; Meardi, 2012). First and foremost, this thesis focuses on understanding how such radical innovation in union strategy and identity as the BOA entails has been possible in Estonia. As the organizing model has its genesis in the USA, and its transferability to other contexts should not be taken for granted, I will also focus on the constraints of implementing the model and elaborate on the effects that the BOA's organizing has had on Estonian unions.

The thesis advances industrial relations literature, namely studies focusing on strategic choice by unions. This stream of literature, to some extent, has already integrated the concept of framing from social movement literature and institutionalist accounts. I will add to the literature by integrating institutionalist, power resources and social movement literature into an analytical model that explains the processes through which unions are able to (radically) innovate. As a main contribution, the analysis, based on the Estonian BOA case, shows the importance and functioning of two elements of framing, namely the creation of collective action frames and the process of identity work, that are crucial mechanisms for considerable change in unions.

3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. A CRITICAL REALIST CASE STUDY

As a research paradigm, the study follows critical realism (Archer, 2000; Bhaskar, 2013; Sayer, 2000). Critical realism assumes that although social phenomena are to a certain extent constructed, they are not totally so. As an ontologically realist approach, critical realism acknowledges that we are not free to construct the world without being constrained by reality that exists independently of a person's perceptions and theories (Easton, 2010; Maxwell, 2012). Critical realism assumes a stratified ontology of the world consisting of real objects/structures and mechanisms (causal powers), actual events that occur when the powers of real structures/entities are activated and an empirical domain: events influenced by the former domains that we can actually experience and measure (Bhaskar, 2013).

Our knowledge of phenomena is fallible and theory-laden, and understandings are influenced by our perspectives, etc. (epistemological constructivism), but it is nevertheless possible to find causal mechanisms and understand, but also explain, the real world that does exist independently of our knowledge (Sayer, 2000). Theory can be developed as objects, including social ones, have particular powers and ways of acting. Social phenomena are to be interpreted through a researcher's frames of meaning, but they still, to a large extent, exist regardless of how we interpret them. Fundamentally, critical realism aims to find the causes of the studied events. Critical realists acknowledge that social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful. This meaning cannot be measured; it has to be understood, so social science always has an interpretative element (Sayer, 2000). The main difference that distinguishes critical realists from interpretivists and constructionists is that critical realists accept the possibility of causally explaining social processes, and they do not reduce social structures to individual interactions (Gorski, 2013; Easton, 2010); also see section 1.1 on the agency-structure position I take.

This thesis follows a case study research design, which is well-suited for critical realist assumptions (Easton, 2010; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Taking on this clearly bounded case and studying it thoroughly enables us to establish the mechanisms behind the implementation and development of the BOA and also to analyse the effects this innovation has had on other entities, thus answering the main research questions set up for the thesis. Following Easton's (2010) critical realist approach to case research, I have identified key entities related to union innovation, their powers and relationships, and I have analysed my propositions about explaining radical union innovation by moving back and forth between theoretical insights and data gathering and interpretation.

By using different methods of data gathering – interviewing, documentary research, and observation – and different sources of data, I have been able to triangulate data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), gain insight on different perspectives divergent actors

might have, and reveal different parts of the social reality of the BOA and its transnational organizing. The interviews were semi-structured to assure that I would not forget to ask about aspects relevant for my research, but I stayed open to new topics raised by the interviewees. While interviewing different actors has enabled me to gain in-depth insights into their perspectives on the topics, documentary materials often helped to contextualize interview data, get quantitative figures, and better understand historical developments. Observations, on the other hand, have acquainted me with the practicalities of organizing and enabled me to see workers' reactions to organizing. In addition, I have contextualised Estonian trade unionists' actions by comparing them with the situation in Poland and Slovenia (**Studies IV-V**).

I have used an iterative-parallel strategy of data gathering rather than a linear one (Verschuren, 2003, pp. 131-132), as I have been adjusting the need for new methods and data sources based on the information that I found and based on theoretical insights that I determined needed more attention. I have used both inductive and deductive cycles of data collection and analysis in my articles. The focus of my thesis has shifted considerably – from planning to study discourses on labour relations to focusing on a clearly bounded case of union innovation – during the years of my PhD studies. This shift has been mainly guided by the developments in Estonian industrial relations that I became acquainted with during one of my research interviews: radical change in the course of union strategy seemed both theoretically and practically relevant to study.

3.2. DATA SET

Although I have used various types of data in the articles and book chapters (**Studies I-V**), the main data set utilized in this analytical overview consists only of materials directly related to the BOA. These are listed in Table 1 and include: (1) 16 semi-structured, in-depth face-to-face interviews with Estonian trade unionists connected to BOA during 2014-2016, (2) four interviews with Finnish unionists related to BOA during 2014-2016, (3) numerous informal follow-up conversations/email/Messenger exchanges with Estonian unionists connected to BOA conducted up to 2020, (4) non-participant observations during five organizing visits to food retail shops in 2016, (5) participant observation during one organizer training in retail in 2016, notes written during/after observations and (6) documentary materials connected to the Academy since the BOA idea was discussed. I have utilised documentary materials related to BOA that were either publicly available (like mainstream and social media accounts) or made available to me by the people involved in BOA, like BOA meeting minutes and progress reports.

Table 1: Data set related to BOA

Type of data	Number	Years
Interviews with…		
… Estonian union officials	7	2014-2015
… Estonian organizers	7	2014-2016
… Estonian local-level union activists in retail	2	2016
… Finnish union officials	4	2014-2016
Informal follow-up conversations/email/Messenger exchanges with Estonian unionists	10-20	2014-2020
Non-participant observations during organizing visits to food retail shops	5	2016
Participant observation during organizer training in retail	1	2016
Meeting minutes, progress reports, agreements	27	2010-2017

I conducted observations in retail as this was the sector I chose for a more thorough analysis – nevertheless, I did not use this observation data directly in **Study IV**, which focused on food retail union strategies in three countries, as there was no comparative data from Slovenia and Poland. I did use it for **Study III** and for the thesis overview to make sense of how organizers are trained and how they practice organizing principles. During the organizer training workshop on 3 March 2016, I explained to other participants my role as a researcher and also actively took part in the training myself. The training included organizing methodology and practical exercises. The visits to shops, on which I accompanied one retail organizer, took place between April and June 2016 (three in Tallinn, two in small towns of Southern Estonia). During these visits, we did not explain my role as a researcher to workers. The organizer, of course, knew and introduced us both as representing the union. Introducing me as a researcher might have complicated the organizing conversations that were the aim of the visits: time was limited, so the organizer tried to establish contact with workers and focused on explaining his own role and the aims of the union and invited workers to join the union. I used these observations only as a background data and did not quote people I met during the visits.

All interviews with Estonian unionists were conducted by me in Tallinn (where the organizing campaigns were concentrated). This includes seven interviews with six organizers (one follow-up), two interviews with local-level union activists in retail and seven interviews with six union officials (including one follow-up interview). Four interviews with five Finnish trade unionists connected to BOA were conducted by my colleagues from the University of Jyväskylä: Laura Mankki, Markku Sippola and Nathan Lillie (see the list of BOA-related interviews below). Together, we wrote **Study III**, which specifically focuses on the development of Finnish-Estonian union cooperation around BOA. The number of interviews might seem small, yet if we consider the small number of people actively involved in BOA (see section 2.3) and the relatively small size of Estonian unions and the union movement in general, then

I argue that the data set and the collection of studies is well-suited for the set objectives.

List of BOA-related interviews (ordered by date)

Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (ETKA) official (September 2014)
BOA organizer #1 (October 2014)
BOA organizer #2 (October 2014)
Finnish Service Union United PAM official #1 (November 2014)
Former Estonian BOA coordinator (December 2014)
BOA lead organizer (December 2014)
Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) official #1 (December 2014)
Finnish Metalworkers' Union (Metalliliitto) official #1 (January 2015)
Finnish Metalworkers' Union (Metalliliitto) official #2 (January 2015)
Finnish Metalworkers' Union (Metalliliitto) officials #3&4 (March 2015)
Association of Estonian Energy Workers' Trade Union (AEEWTU) official (March 2015)
BOA organizer #3 (May 2015)
BOA organizer #4 (May 2015)
Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (ETKA) official interview nr 2 (August 2015)
BOA lead organizer interview nr 2 (September 2015)
Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) official #2 (November 2015)
BOA organizer #5 (January 2016)
Local-level union activists in retail #1 (February 2016)
Local-level union activists in retail #2 (March 2016)
Finnish Service Union United (PAM) official #2 (December 2016)

Each time I contacted a potential interviewee, I explained the general aims for the interview. Before the interview, I once again explained my objectives and the use of the data (that it is used only for academic writings). If the interviewee had confidentiality or other concerns, we elaborated on those. I found the informants through publicly available sources (e.g. the BOA home page) and through snowballing. The first interview was concluded in September 2014 and the last in January 2016. There were also several informal follow-up conversations/email/Messenger exchanges during 2017-2020. My aim was to interview all people involved with BOA's Estonian operations. However, a small minority of those actors did not answer my emails, refused to be interviewed, or did not speak sufficient Estonian (and I do not speak sufficient Russian). Most unionists agreed to be interviewed, and I ended the interviewing process at a point when I had given all the willing participants a chance to be interviewed and when I also felt that data saturation related to different perspectives had been achieved. I had interviewed both long-time and novice unionists, younger and older ones, both male and female,

and those occupying different positions, both of being very optimistic and rather sceptical towards BOA and organizing. The topics of the interviews varied depending on the respondent's position, but the covered issues included: their role and reasons for involvement in BOA (and plans for the future); cooperation with Nordic unions (BOA in comparison to previous initiatives); and organizing practicalities (aims, methods, successes, problems, support system).

The interviews were conducted in places that suited my informants (a room at Tallinn University, a café or the office of the informant). Data was gathered (also retrospectively) for the whole period in which BOA activities took place (2010-2017), in addition to some informal conversations after BOA ended to see if organizing campaigns have continued. Interviews lasted from 24 minutes to one hour and 54 minutes, although most were around one hour long. In the studies, I have cited officials by referring to their organization and the time of the interview (e.g. Metalliliitto official #1, January 2015), as this was relevant for giving context. I cited organizers as BOA organizer # and time of the interview (e.g. BOA organizer #2, October 2014) to protect their confidentiality, as these people were not in positions of power, and they sometimes wanted to be critical towards the sectoral-level union that employed them. Although this thesis concentrates on the BOA case, I have also co-authored two articles that comparatively analyse BOA (**Study V**) / BOA in the retail sector (**Study IV**) with trade union initiatives in other CEE countries with different industrial relations systems (Slovenia, Poland) to give more comparative perspective and analytical power to the Estonian case and to take one sector, namely food retail, under scrutiny more thoroughly (**Study IV**).[1]

3.3. ANALYSIS METHOD

Concerning the analysis methods, I have recorded and literally transcribed all semi-structured interviews and, together with informal conversations, email exchanges, and documentary materials, (re)-coded and analysed them thematically. In **Studies IV-V**, the data was also compared and contrasted with data from Slovenian and/or Polish cases. Thematic analysis is well-suited for analysing diverse sorts of texts. The main focus of my analysis has been on the content of the data ('what is said'), and less emphasis (other than some other qualitative inquiry, like types of narrative and discourse analysis) has been placed on how narratives are constructed, speech structures, audience, interpretation difficulties and the local context of interview production (Riessman, 2008). The wider context – EU-level, national, sectoral – has been crucial for my study, and thus I have given considerable attention to that as well, both during data gathering and analysis.

[1] Interviews with unionists from other countries used in this thesis were conducted by my colleagues with whom I co-authored relevant transnational/comparative articles (Studies IV-V).

Thematic analysis is not bound to epistemological/ontological underpinnings, nor does it have specific rules to be followed, yet one has to be reflexive in making concrete decisions about analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis can be adjusted to critical realist case study research and seemed to fit well with the objectives of the main study and also with my collaborators' understandings of suitable analysis methods. I have combined inductive and deductive data analysis and kept the thematic stories rather intact – motivated by thematic narrative analysis practice (Riessman, 2008) – coding longer thematic sequences (as this enabled me to show the variety of views and details of the same topic/issue), rather than small segments (e.g. line-by-line coding, which would be detached from the longer theme that is relevant for context).

First, I started by familiarizing myself with the gathered materials, reading through them several times and taking notes. Then I started the initial coding across the data set based on patterns of meaning that I detected, next joining these codes into categories and larger initial themes. During that process, I also started planning research papers with a specific focus. The next steps of the analysis were motivated by the specific focus of the articles, including research questions I proposed together with my co-authors (that often required further data gathering and analysis), new data and theoretical insights I got acquainted with, and reviewers' and editors' feedback to draft papers. **Study I** involved the most deductive analysis from my point of view, as specific research questions and the structure of the analysis were set by the editors of the book to which I wrote a chapter. All the authors did, however, have the opportunity to provide theoretical and empirical insights for developing the book's focus. Generally, I did not rely only on chosen theoretical insights to give meaning to data (gathering and analysis), nor did I approach research questions based only on empirical assessment, but rather, the approach was to move back-and-forth between reading theoretical insights, developing a methodological approach, gathering data and analysing it.

New and surprising data required searching for alternative theoretical explanations, inspired a need to re-conceptualize existing explanations and provided the rationale for alternative data sources (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). For example, although my initial research questions were guided by theoretical and methodological considerations – although in the beginning, my knowledge about organizing literature was very limited – and discussions with colleagues, insights from my interviewees directed me towards including new interview questions, and they also highlighted the importance of personal relations. This moved me towards reading new materials that would help to explain this phenomenon and towards using the concept of 'identity work' as a crucial process through which BOA was initiated. Furthermore, in comparative **Studies IV** and **V**, data from Poland and/or Slovenia guided me to elaborate Estonian data from a different angle and go back to the initial data source (and also to gather more data) to check for alternative interpretations and answer questions from a different angle.

One of the main limitations of a case study approach can be considered its limited explanatory power, as my arguments are based on a single case. However, case research generally does not aim at being representative of wider populations (though it might be representative of similar ones), but the aim is rather to gain greater explanatory richness through thorough analysis of a particular case(s) (George & Bennett, 2004). Furthermore, critical realists consider that, through an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon, it is possible to make claims and detect causal processes based on a single case (e.g. Easton, 2010). Testing the assumptions and mechanisms developed in this thesis on several cases and contexts could be a preferable further direction of the research. The study is also limited because interviews were only conducted with Estonian and Finnish unionists, leaving out – due to the lack of resources – other Nordic and Baltic unionists connected to BOA. However, focusing on Finnish and Estonian union cooperation around BOA is beneficial, as organizing campaigns started first and remained the most extensive in Estonia, and these campaigns motivated Finnish unions to also try organizing principles in Finland. The BOA has had a comparatively limited impact on the other participating Nordic and Baltic countries. Although Estonian unions were to some extent also supported by the Swedish and Danish unions, Finnish–Estonian cooperation was the most extensive.

Furthermore, documentary data and the reflections of Estonian and Finnish unionists towards others have enabled me to draw some broader conclusions about the BOA. To gain a wider perspective, **Study I** focuses on different innovative practices of Estonian unions and sets the background of BOA in Estonia, whilst **Study II** contextualizes the traditional strategies of Finnish unions in regard to migrant workers. **Studies IV** and **V** juxtapose BOA to comparable cases in Poland and Slovenia, countries with rather different industrial relations systems. The BOA has been quite a unique endeavour in the CEE region, and during my research, no similar transnational initiatives were established, making it impossible to do a comparative analysis of similar initiatives in different regions (which would have possibly been too wide a task for a PhD thesis anyway)[2].

3.4. POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER

In the next section, I will reflect on my position as a researcher related to the study process. Qualitative research, especially when dealing with power relations, is often considered to be rather subjective or even biased. I tend to incline towards the position that research in general, especially of social phenomena, is never neutral, but

[2] In 2016, the Central European Organising Center (Centrum Organizowania Związków Zawodowych – COZZ) was established. This initiative might have been a suitable transnational organising project to be compared with the BOA. However, due to time and other limitations it was not possible, but a comparative study of COZZ and BOA might be a fruitful topic for future research.

researchers can acknowledge their so-called biases by reflectively elaborating on their position (Berger, 2015).

Firstly, the topics we choose to study usually (if not provided by someone else) reflect the researcher's preferences. Indeed, numerous times I have (especially during the first few years of my studies) encountered surprise and/or confusion by Estonians when introducing my topic, as if studying union-related issues is something peculiar (and, there indeed are very few studies done in the field in Estonia). I do consider unions to be important organizations in capitalist societies for balancing power relations between capital and labour, which otherwise would be extremely biased towards capital (Colling & Terry, 2010), and for guaranteeing sustainable and more durable employment relations and stable labour markets where workers can use their 'voice' rather than relying on an 'exit' strategy (see the classic work by Hirschman, 1970).

Through unions operating at the company level, workers can collectively express their voice and influence work-related processes, and this can increase industrial democracy. Furthermore, unions can play an important role in a sector and in society at large, e.g. through participating in labour and social policy making, providing (social) alternatives for political discourses and cooperating with other actors in civil society (Behrens, Hamann & Hurd, 2004; Boeri, Brugiavini & Calmfors, 2001). There is evidence that higher union density correlates to lower rates of poverty, low-paid employment and income inequality (e.g. Checchi, Visser & Van de Werfhorst, 2007; Lee & Sobeck, 2012). As actors in civil society, unions can also increase social capital by building norms and networks and generating trust (Putnam, 2000). This is only the potential of unions, not always the reality, as there are very weak, inactive and/or corrupt unions as well who might not guide workplaces/societies towards more industrial, economic, and social democracy. Although I am sympathetic towards unions, my aim as a researcher has always been to provide a balanced picture of the phenomenon I am studying.

I started my research as an outsider to the union movement. My only experience with unionists thus far had been during my master's studies when I interviewed some, mostly company-level, union trustees. During the PhD research process, I became more of an insider, although I still identified myself as a researcher and looked at the problems I studied as a bystander. I consider that being sympathetic with unionists' topics and aims helped me to gain their trust and to better understand the issues I studied. I think that if my respondents had not gained trust in me (e.g. considered that my aim is to 'destroy' unions, help employers, etc.), I would not have been able to conduct my research as I did and gain such detail. For example, there were a few interviews during which the interviewee provided me some details and added that this information should stay between us. I considered it only as context that can be used in a very general way for making sense of the phenomenon, not for direct reference. Moreover, if respondents had thought that my only aim was to conduct research and that I otherwise do not care about the topics, then their motivation to speak to me would probably have been lower. During my data gathering and part of

the analysis period, I strictly identified myself only as a researcher. However, in 2015, I joined Tallinn University's trade union, first, as a rather passive member, and since 2018, as a board member of the union. In 2018, I became actively involved in union activities, and currently I consider myself to be a trade unionist as well.

Several months after I ended the main part of my fieldwork (although I had some follow-up conversations later as well, and parts of my analysis were still to be written) I developed a close personal relationship with one of the organizers I had interviewed. This made me even more conscious about my position related to the study. Although we often discussed union-related issues, I considered this person's position as one among many others (that I probably knew better) and validated my research propositions based on other sources of data as well. However, this relationship provided me with better access to knowledge about where I could find or ask for relevant information, or if some major changes were happening in the BOA.

Although all the interviewees were related to the trade union movement, there was still a wide variety among them. The group ranged from people in their 20s who had rather recently started their position as union officials/activists to people who had done union work for several decades. As a younger female, I felt that it was most difficult to interview middle-aged/older men, whose social position differed the most from mine (based on gender, age, experience with the topic) and who also generally considered themselves to be very experienced on the issue. With these interviewees, it seemed that it was crucial to first establish a position where I would be taken seriously. I felt that this happened when I asked questions and reflected back on their answers in a way that showed that I do have knowledge about the topics.

With some younger interviewees, on the other hand, I had to reconfirm (I had done it already in the beginning of each interview, together with explaining that the material will stay confidential) that I am interested in their perspective and position and that there are no right or wrong answers. Their insecurities might have been partly related to their lack of experience, partly because they might have thought that I know the topic more comprehensively from the researcher's point of view: perhaps they might say something 'stupid' or 'wrong'. I tried to be friendly and reflective and to ask questions in a manner understandable to the interviewees, when necessary also rephrasing or explaining my questions. The fact that I was studying and during some periods also working in Finland also influenced the way respondents perceived me, as I was open in discussing my background, and Finland was referred to by some of the interviewed persons as an example of how unions should be.

To conclude, increasing the quality of my analysis included reflecting on my findings by keeping in mind my own potential preconceptions about the studied phenomenon and my role in the data gathering process; using multiple sources and types of data and analysing them several times over the years; discussing results with colleagues (with whom I also wrote articles together) and sharing them during conferences and research seminars; sending drafts of papers to interviewees for them to check if their ideas are interpreted correctly; and sending papers out to be peer-reviewed.

4. MAIN RESULTS

4.1. THE BOA AS RADICAL UNION INNOVATION IN ESTONIA

For providing the context for the studied case and locating it within Estonian industrial relations, **Study I** focused on giving an overview of the external environment where Estonian unions are operating, identifying the dominant strategies they have used and documenting innovative trade union practices within Estonian private sector trade unions since the post-2008 economic and financial crisis, including analysing their drivers, sustainability and impact. As highlighted by the study, Estonian unions – related to both the external environment and factors internal to the union movement – have struggled with maintaining, let alone improving, their legitimacy and increasing or even maintaining their power resources ever since the restoration of Estonia's independence. Unions have, to a large extent, strived for non-confrontational collective bargaining with employers and social dialogue with government representatives. The other dominant (and connected) approach has been routine servicing of the decreasing number of union members, with little emphasis placed on mobilising and empowering new and existing members. Furthermore, **Study II** indicates that collective bargaining and social dialogue have been the dominant strategies (also related to migrant labour) of Finnish unions as well, raising the question of why and how transnational organizing unionism, which is rather alien to both union movements, became a possibility.

The economic and financial crisis of 2008 further diminished Estonian unions' associational, institutional and structural power: unemployment levels rose, unions lost members, and employers and policy makers were unwilling to bargain with unions. With this background, Estonian unions have launched many innovative practices that are mostly complementary to their previous ways of operating. For example, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) has implemented organizational innovations, like developing a new electronic communication system. Unions have also implemented innovative strategies, including heightened mobilisation, identity politics (awareness-raising campaigns) and innovative elements of servicing. Some unions have targeted groups of workers in sectors or companies that have previously been unorganized.

It can be concluded, based on **Study I**, that most of these have been incremental innovations, entailing only minor changes in standard ways of operating. The establishment of the Baltic Organising Academy and the related adoption of organizing model union campaigns, however, represent a radical change. They mark a shift in unions' strategy compared to the previous *status quo* of union action, as organizing emphasizes empowering workers, engaging with them at the shop-floor level and focusing on new target groups, instead of just servicing existing members. Furthermore, organizing presumes a more confrontational position *vis-à-vis* employers than has been traditional when more moderate tactics do not work. To

conclude, the BOA and its organizing campaigns have not aimed only to change the strategies and tactics of unions, but to transform union identity as well.

4.2. INITIATION OF THE BOA: OVERCOMING A DOUBLE BARRIER

Innovation in union strategies is not something that just happens, for example, as a reaction to changes in the external environment. The questions that need further elaboration are rather why, when and how unions break loose from path dependency and innovate their strategies to better respond to the challenges they encounter (Frege & Kelly, 2003; Lévesque & Murray, 2010). **Study I** proposes that although different innovative practices that unions have started address challenges deriving from the external environment – for example, in the Estonian post-crisis situation, unions' power resources were extremely depleted – the decision to choose one or another initiative, nevertheless, has been made by union leaders.

Studies I, III and V emphasize that for Estonian unions, the mixture of overall weak power resources, cross-border labour market interdependencies and relatively high organizational power in the form of transnational networks were the factors that stimulated the establishment of the BOA. Estonian unionists mentioned personal relations with Nordic unions, low and declining union density, problems with signing collective agreements, subcontracting tendencies that might even further decrease their membership base and financial problems as the reasons for joining the Academy. For Finnish unionists, the motivation was first and foremost the competitive threat that the largely union-free zone in the Baltics provides, both in terms of the free movement of capital and labour and the realization that previous union strategies in Estonia have not brought hoped-for results.

Nevertheless, external conditions and available resources alone are not sufficient for unions to innovate (Heery, 2005), and the role of agents in promoting ideas of change should not be overlooked (Hauptmeier & Heery, 2014). First, it is possible to continue old ways of operating, and second, there are multiple ways of innovating. The establishment of the BOA and related organizing campaigns is a telling case. While trade union density has dropped in Estonia since the 1990s, and unionists have been generally aware of their marginal and weak position, organizing campaigns were not started before 2012 – and then only because Nordic unions, with their better financial position, supported them. BOA is, however, an even more specific and complicated case of union innovation. Union literature refers to various barriers to importing and implementing the organizing model (e.g. Carter & Cooper, 2002; Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010) on the one hand and to developing and sustaining transnational union strategies (e.g. Cooke, 2005; Hancké, 2000; Meardi, 2012) on the other hand.

Thus, initiating and sustaining a transnational organizing initiative, as BOA is, refers to a double barrier: first, to overcome a nation-centred view of unionism, and second, in the context of social partnership and servicing unionism, to change union identities and strategies. Understanding how this barrier has been overcome is the topic of

Study III. BOA is a rather rare example of resilient transnational organizing cooperation that includes both higher-level union strategies and the implementation of those strategies on the shop-floor level. Specifically, **Study III** focuses on Finnish and Estonian union cooperation around BOA (and also gives an overview of their joint operations before BOA). The Study argues that although the underlying rationale for trying the organizing model has been the need to increase union leverage – as the weak union movement in Estonia is harmful for both Estonian and Finnish unions (also see **Study II**) – the extensive BOA cooperation became a possibility mainly due to the long-lasting and rather extensive previous cooperation between Estonian and Finnish unions. This had already created personal relationships of trust and feelings of mutual obligation, making it easier to continue with identity work for re-creating common norms, identities and objectives. The latter are important aspects for overcoming the national focus inherent in union activity and for building an organizing mindset among social partnership and servicing-focused unionists.

Specifically, overcoming barriers inherent in transnational organizing required the construction of an organizing model frame on top of the earlier process of transnational identity work that had resulted in developing a cadre of trade union officials/activists to rebuild union strength in the connected labour market of Estonia and Finland. Thus, even if the interdependence of labour markets was an underlying motivation for BOA, the continuous process of identity work built on the routines of cooperation made common introduction of the organizing model possible. BOA's main advocates have had to first frame the new project to potential participating unions in such a way as to overcome their initial scepticism about participating in yet another project, especially in one that is, to a certain degree, at odds with previous strategies and identities. **Study III** emphasizes the importance of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing (Benford & Snow, 2000) as part of creating collective action frames and doing identity work that Estonian and Finnish BOA advocates undertook together. Through these framing processes, the idea of the BOA and organizing model unionism were introduced and domesticated, and transnational organizing identities developed. Low union density in the Baltic countries and previous social partnership/servicing unionism without member activism were diagnosed as problems, and rerouting efforts to organizing, seen as the only way to save Estonian unions from constant membership and influence decline – harmful also for Finnish unions – was proposed as the only solution. This included providing positive examples from other low-density countries. Inspiration came from studying other unions, like the American Change to Win (CtW) initiative, and CtW European office staff also provided initial training for the BOA members. Furthermore, for Finnish unions, organizing was served not as something alien, but rather as a return to origins based on how the labour movement's strength had been established decades ago.

Prognostic framing included laying out a detailed plan for the Academy, which was introduced during several formal and informal meetings with potential participants, so those who decided to join already had ready-made instructions to follow,

decreasing the need to come up with concrete project activities. On the other hand, all participating unions were promised a rather high degree of autonomy and access to project leadership. A steering group consisting of both Nordic and Baltic project-supported organizations – the unions who decided to join the Academy – was set up, and it served as a leadership group for setting and implementing project goals (**Study V**). Furthermore, the advocates of the BOA provided a 'rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action', what Benford and Snow (2000, p. 617) call motivational framing. BOA activists highlighted the interdependency of labour markets (e.g. Finnish capital moving to Estonia and Estonian workers to Finland), mutual obligations, and 'being in the same boat', as the largely union-free zones in the Baltics are beneficial to neither Baltic nor Nordic labour movements. These interactional framing activities, together with numerous meetings, were part of the identity work process through which common understandings and objectives were (re-)created and old and new union members were socialised into accepting them (**Study III**). Through framing, activists also provided new narratives for the labour movement, thus increasing their narrative power resources.

4.3. RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOA AND ITS ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS

In addition to framing, participating in collective action is also relevant for the creation of collective identities (Snow & McAdam, 2000, p. 53). A group's collective identity in itself also influences the strategies and targets that movement activists choose (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, pp. 292-3), explaining why rather moderate union strategies have previously prevailed in Estonia and more militant ones have been discredited, even if the former have not brought the desired results. After the BOA project was initiated, it started influencing both the identity and the strategies of participating unions. As the Academy took off and related organizing campaigns were tested on the ground, identity transformation, but also identity disputes over the most suitable union identity, continued, and some unionists who previously were sceptical about the approach became more open to it as they saw promising results (**Study III**). Estonian unions set up a campaign office in 2012, recruited and trained organizers – a previously non-existent position – and planned and executed organizing campaigns with the financial and strategic help of their Nordic counterparts. BOA's approach followed Anglo-Saxon organizing model principles. The main elements of the campaigns were one-on-one conversations with workers, finding local leaders among workers, building high-density union departments on site, electing shop stewards and board members, and signing a company-level collective agreement with the help of industrial action (see more from **Studies I** and **III**).

Study V that focuses specifically on BOA's sustainability and compares it to innovative, project-based union initiatives in Slovenia, enables us to draw more general conclusions on how project-based organizations can become very resilient. While BOA started as a network of connected enthusiasts – at first, only a few

activists took the role of motivating others to join a new initiative and holding both formal and informal meetings about the need to change the course of union action – it gradually evolved into a rather resilient, project-based organization. Gradually BOA members developed distinct identity, the Academy had portfolio of successful funding decisions (through annual fundraising) and campaigns and project-workers (organizers) dependent on these decisions; in addition, part of the funds generated by the organizing campaigns were invested back into further organizing efforts. This analysis emphasizes how BOA provided Estonian unions with relatively easy access to Nordic unions' finances without the necessity to compete for rather difficult-to-attain EU funding streams. However, BOA was based on annual fundraising, in which, at the end of each year, project activities were evaluated by participating organizations, and Nordic unions decided if and to what extent they were willing to fund the next year's activities. Furthermore, as organizer positions were funded from the project budget, they also only had yearly employment contracts and below average wages accompanied by stressful work and frequent health problems. This introduced a considerable precarious dynamic into permanent union organizations.

In both Estonia and Slovenia, the continuation of project-based initiatives has been owed mainly to proactive activists skilful in utilizing and increasing available power resources. Related to BOA, an organizing-minded group of unionists has developed, composed of mostly young activists. They cooperate with each other and provide support beyond sector and country borders, continue to promote organizing ideas, and try to secure further funding for organizing campaigns. The comparison of neo-liberal Estonia and neo-corporatist Slovenia also indicates that union movements with fewer resources, especially those without activists capable of competing for demanding (EU) funding streams and not possessing the know-how to reframe union agendas to take on and manage bureaucratic projects, might be less successful in increasing union power resources through projects and might be more dependent on cooperation projects with unions from other countries (**Study V**). This factor can push weaker union movements into transnational cooperation.

The sustainability of the BOA has also been related to the questions of how many unions will continue to be involved and whether new unions will decide to join the project, seeing that there are certain benefits in engaging. New Estonian unions were able to join the BOA if they found a Nordic counterpart willing to support them. There are organizations that have stepped out of the project and new ones that joined after the first few years of the BOA activities. Also, two Finnish unions that have supported the BOA have started practicing organizing model strategies in Finland after seeing that the model has provided promising results in Estonia. More recently, organizing campaigns have also been started in Latvia and Lithuania, and an Estonian organizer has become the coordinator for the campaigns in all three Baltic countries, resulting in more organizational cohesion and widening the circle of common identity construction.

With the year 2017, the BOA project ended, and in December of the same year, a new cooperation agreement for the Baltic Organizing Alliance (the successor of

BOA, the so-called BOA 2.0) was signed between three Estonian, one Latvian and two Lithuanian sectoral-level unions. Unlike the original BOA, the Alliance has its own bank account, assets, and one salaried employee, it was founded with an unlimited term and it does not have any Nordic unions as its members, indicating a move towards a more permanent organizing organization. Nevertheless, BOA 2.0's funding is still largely dependent on Nordic unions' contribution, with whom a separate cooperation agreement is signed, although Baltic unions are required to direct at least 20% of their annual income into organizing.

The most crucial process through which organizational continuity has been achieved seems to be continuous identity work and framing more generally. There is a network of activists who share an organizational identity, believe in organizing principles, and are continuously advocating for the continuation of the organizing campaigns. They are also trying to find relevant transnational funding opportunities, as organizations that have belonged to BOA and are still taking part in BOA 2.0 continue to lack resources, willingness or both for employing organizers themselves. Importantly, identity disputes over the suitability of organizing model were still ongoing during the time I ended the follow-up research. However, my follow-up research on BOA 2.0 during 2018-2020, which was not the main focus of this thesis, has not been systematic and thorough, and thus, it does not enable me to make strong conclusions.

4.4. CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZING MODEL UNION CAMPAIGNS

Constraints in implementing the organizing model in Estonia, and thus in radically innovating, can be divided largely into two groups: those deriving from the external environment and those related to union organizations' internal features. Some of these are quite similar to those found in the United Kingdom (Heery & Simms, 2008), except for those that can be related to Estonia's Soviet past. External obstacles, as highlighted in **Studies III and IV**, relate to neoliberal ideas, socialist and post-socialist legacies and characteristics of the workplaces. These include hostile employers who have used ideological manipulations (like classifying unions as communist organizations) and pressured workers not to join or to step out of unions. Importantly, there is also high staff turnover in many companies and lot of worker passivity and/or individual work 'strategies' that demotivate organizers and make the campaigns less successful. BOA's organizing (at least to a certain degree) assumes that a conflict between labour and capital exists and that workers collectively can shift the power balance in this conflict. In order for the campaigns to be successful, workers should also (start to) believe this, which might be a difficult task.

As regards constraints inherent in the union movement, **Studies I, III and V** highlight that an organizing approach assumes a considerable change in the ways that unions operate and in the role of union officials. Such an approach puts more emphasis on shop floor activism and empowerment and might diminish the influence of top-level union officials. It also puts more demands on the sectoral-level union

office/management – as successful campaigns generally require various types (e.g. legal) of support from the central office – and active members themselves might ask for more help than passive ones, thus increasing the workload. Balancing the role of union leaders and shop-floor activists is a difficult task inherent in organizing campaigns (Simms et al., 2013). Organizing also assumes considerable financial resources, and after several years of practicing the model, Estonian unions still need foreign funding to support their campaigns. Last, but not least, it is a more militant approach, at least when employers are not cooperating. There have been disputes both between BOA activists/officials and unionists outside BOA and also within BOA between those who favour a more radical strategy and identity change and those favouring more traditional and less radical union approaches. For unionists who long have had a unitarist view of labour relations, it can be a difficult task to move to a more pluralist or even radical one that sees diverging interests between capital and labour as something inherent in organizations.

Identity work is a contested process, and several alternative frames or counter-frames are possible (Benford & Snow, 2000). Although newly hired organizers, whether with prior or little union experience, generally have found it easier to take on organizing model practice and a more radical identity, some older generation unionists socialized into a different union culture have had more opposition, and some unions experienced considerable organizational inertia. Especially difficult seems the step towards a more confrontational approach to employment relations in cases in which an employer is not on board with the unions' agenda. Although some unions left the BOA after a few years of trying, some joined later, and some have stayed from the beginning and have also moved on to the BOA 2.0. Whether organizing will gain ground in Estonia depends on whether it becomes broadly domesticated in Estonia, so that unions would be willing to support the campaigns after foreign funding ends. Identity disputes over suitable forms of unionism for Estonia were still ongoing when I ended this research, and these are extremely relevant for the continuation of organizing.

4.5. A MODEL OF INNOVATIVE UNION ACTION: THE CASE OF THE BOA

This section shows how the model of innovative union action presented in Figure 1 in section 2.3 applies to the BOA case. For demonstrating that I will integrate the previous analysis and also bring in more comparative insight from **Studies IV-V** to give an overview of the development of the BOA and its organizing model (Figure 2). The arrows in the model point only one way, as the aim is to study how innovation happens. I acknowledge that the influences and causal relations can go into the other direction as well.

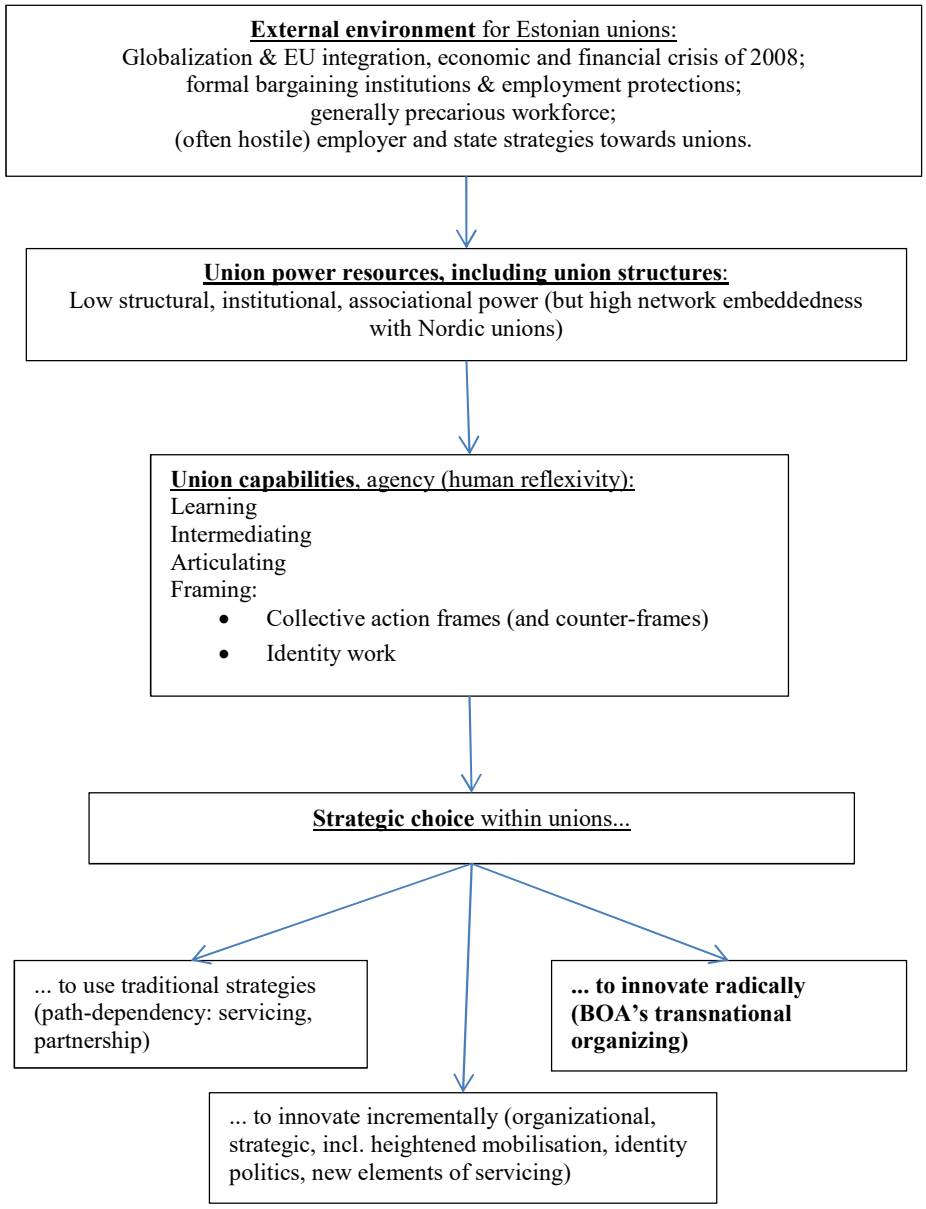

Figure 2: Model of innovative union action: the case of the Estonian BOA
Source: Author's creation, based on Benford and Snow (2000); Bernaciak and Kahancová (2017); Frege and Kelly (2003, 2004); Levesque and Murray (2010); Snow and McAdam (2000).

Study V, which compares project-based union innovation in Estonia and Slovenia, highlights how Europeanization has created a distinct opportunity structure for these two countries' unions. On the one hand, the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries into the EU has enhanced East-West union cooperation and mutual aid (Bernaciak, 2010; Gajewska, 2009; Meardi, 2012) and has given Estonian and Slovenian unions access to EU governing and project-based funding mechanisms (Verschraegen et al., 2011; Heyes, 2013). On the other hand, Europeanization's impact is mediated through the national industrial relations systems and activists' capabilities and choices in using different opportunities and resources. **Study V** concludes that the country context importantly influences both the focus and the forms that innovative union practices take. Although the Slovenian neo-corporatist model came under pressure after the country joined the EU and Eurozone and experienced the economic and financial crisis of 2008, Slovenian unions still have a relatively high density rate and mobilizing power, especially compared to Estonian unions. Slovenian unions also possess more know-how to compete for the often difficult and time-consuming EU funding streams.

Similarly, the analysis made in **Study IV** suggests that both opportunities and constraints embedded in their institutional context have an impact on power resources that unions possess and also on the strategies that they choose to use. Encompassing institutions (which are also the result of previous power struggles), like the extension mechanisms for collective agreements, influence the effectiveness of unions in pursuing their aims, yet the relationship is mediated by the capacity to mobilize different power resources, as without being able to demonstrate power, favorable institutions function only as a façade. As the study demonstrates, only Slovenian unions, and not Estonian and Polish ones, are in a position where they are able to successfully use collective bargaining and social dialogue institutions (available in all three countries) to increase the protection of precarious workers (despite the will of employers/politicians), as they are supported by a relatively high union density rate, other unions, political parties and social movements, and they have the capacity to mobilize this support if, for example, social dialogue is bypassed. Furthermore, although to some extent, formal protective labour market institutions (e.g. unions' right to collective agreement negotiations) do exist in Estonia, they are weakly enforced, and this fact further highlights the importance of utilizing union power rather than formal institutions in improving working conditions.

Study IV also emphasizes that, for Estonia and Poland, where unions do not possess enough power resources, trade unions' first focus has been on increasing their associational power, especially by making use of their network embeddedness. Network embeddedness is an especially crucial resource for Estonian unions, for unlike Polish unions, they also lack narrative resources legitimizing social protest. The Study also highlights the fact that, in all three countries, unions did not only follow path-dependency, but innovative approaches were emerging as well, some transcending institutional opportunities and constraints, reflecting the strategic choice of union leaders (Turner, 2009) and activists able to build new ties of solidarity. Thus,

union responses to precarisation are related to strategic utilization of options available in a specific context in the course of continuous social struggles between labour and capital.

To conclude this and the previous analysis sections, although unions are embedded in the concrete socio-historic environment, and the strategies they choose to use reflect path-dependency and developed industrial relations systems, radical and rather fast innovation is still possible. As highlighted in Figure 2, an innovative choice of strategy results from the strategic choice made by a union to either continue old ways of operating or choose a divergent approach. To choose and implement a radically innovative strategy requires unions to be capable of using their available power resources (or first increasing them). Although unionists' strategic capabilities of learning, intermediating and articulating are probably also relevant and might need further analysis, this study highlights framing as a central mechanism that makes change possible and legitimate, especially in contexts in which unions' power resources are very limited.

Framing as a union capability is relevant both as a way to create new collective action frames and for doing identity work through which (innovative) common understandings and objectives are (re-)created and old and new union members are socialized into accepting them. Thus, rather than seeing innovation, especially radical innovation, as something that happens as a reaction to specific changes in the environment that render old ways ineffective, this thesis concludes that relevant actors have to be able to convincingly frame an innovative strategy as a cure for a problem facing unions for it to be implemented, and they also have to constantly promote the innovation as a way of keeping the union resilient.

4.6. EFFECTS OF BOA'S ORGANIZING

As Mrozowicki (2014) highlights, relatively little is known about how organizing influences CEE countries and, more generally, how transferable strategies developed in different contexts are to the CEE. The final analysis section elaborates issues related to the direct effects of BOA as an organization, and of organizing model unionism more generally, on the Estonian labour movement and on companies and sectors affected by the campaigns. I acknowledge that I do not have enough quantitative data to make strong claims, so the arguments made here need further testing in the future.

Studies I and III-V conclude that although BOA is a project-based initiative and its organizing campaigns have relied on foreign funding, they might have both short- and long-term effects on the standing of Estonian unions – at least those connected to the Academy – regarding membership levels and legitimacy. Firstly, BOA's organizing campaigns have brought small membership gains. Statistics provided by the BOA officials indicate that by November 2014, in the third year of operations, BOA campaigns had increased union membership by 1,234 new members, elected 48 new shop stewards and set up 15 new self-sustaining union departments in Estonia

(BOA, 2014), and in 2016, Estonian BOA unions organized 544 new members (Mölder, 2016). Although the numbers are rather small, the initial position was very low as well, and Estonia is also a small country with around 1.3 million inhabitants. The organizing results also indicate that the economic sector is not crucial for determining the success rate of the campaigns. Although most successes were initially from the manufacturing and transportation sectors, there were also failures there and successes in the service sector (see **Study III**). Thus, structural power resources, i.e. workers' position within the economic systems (Wright, 2000; Silver, 2003), must be accessed and mobilized by capable leaders/activists in order to be effective.

Study I concludes that the organizing campaigns' impact on organized companies has been manifold. Organizers have stated that many workers have gained more confidence in influencing their working lives and/or have become more pro-union. Some employers have started to respect workers' voices more; some have unified pay systems giving the same wage for the same work; some have replaced illegal fixed-term contracts with proper open-ended ones; and some have increased wage levels either because of signed collective agreements or before making an agreement (trying to prevent signing one by pre-emptively improving employment conditions). **Study IV**, which analysed two Estonian food retail companies where organizing campaigns were launched, concludes that organizing campaigns have produced several tangible results, including a company-level collective agreement in one of the studied companies, but also improvements in employment conditions, union density, monitoring and fulfilment of labour standards, and workers' self-confidence in demanding better conditions.

Nevertheless, the campaigns have been small-scale, and most workplaces in any sector (or the country at large) remain uncovered, and thus organizing might create islands of good practices whilst most of the economy stays un-organized. Furthermore, based on **Study IV,** it can be concluded that in order for organizing to have a greater material and identity-related impact on the union movement, unions should connect economic (mainly company-level) struggles to political ones. If focused only on the pragmatics of organizing and its technical aspects (like a rise in union density or signing an agreement), the results might be short-term and will not challenge the power relations between capital and labour on a wider scale (Simms & Holgate, 2010). On the macro scale, organizing has not managed to increase union density in Estonia. This, instead, has kept falling during the years of the campaigns (Vandaele, 2019).

On a more general scale, however, BOA unions have been able to increase different aspects of their associational power by further extending network embeddedness (both nationally and transnationally) and gaining more infrastructural and narrative resources. However, the crucial effects of BOA have been changes in identity and strategy within the union movement taking place at multiple levels. Firstly, long-term unionists involved with the BOA and organizing campaigns have become more acquainted with the organizing model, and for some, this has transformed the way

they see their role as union officials. Secondly, a new generation of unionists/organizers who have been socialized into unions through the BOA have committed themselves to advancing the union movement through organizing unionism. Although generational changes might have eventually happened in Estonian unions anyway and might have influenced union strategies and identity as well, BOA has definitely sped up the process. As the model is, to some degree, also advocated by the central federation, EAKL, which has integrated parts of organizing logic into its general shop-stewards training module, organizing ideas have also spread wider than just the BOA circle of unionists. Furthermore, some people active in BOA have moved on to positions in union organizations outside the Academy and have started advocating organizing principles within them. Especially in union organizations as small and top-down managed as the Estonian ones, the role of union leaders and activists is crucial for organizing to actually gain ground – or to otherwise remain as something that a small group of unions practices when foreign unions keep providing resources. This aspect, again, highlights the role of identity work (see also Figure 2 and **Study III**). BOA has made it possible for a group of committed activists to keep developing a common organizing mindset and advocating it widely across the Estonian union movement (and beyond).

CONCLUSIONS

By integrating institutionalist, power resources and social movement literature, this thesis developed an analytical model for union innovation. By applying the model to the Baltic Organising Academy, the analysis explains the implementation, development and resilience of the BOA, a radically innovative transnational union cooperation project aiming to enact organizing model union campaigns in the Baltic countries with the financial and strategic help of Nordic unions. This thesis focuses on BOA's operations in Estonia and provides an especially telling case of how radical and resilient union innovation can happen against all odds, even within a labour movement in which power resources are limited and which has previously relied on path-dependent strategies and has innovated only incrementally.

Empirically, this is the first academic study on the Baltic Organising Academy and on Estonian industrial relations that takes a transnational perspective. Thus, the study contributes to a better understanding of industrial relations in the Estonian context, connecting micro-, meso- and macro-level processes, outcomes and their interaction. The analysis also advances our understanding of studies of post-socialism, showing mechanisms (but also obstacles) for radically departing from path-dependency. As the analysis also relies on two comparative studies and contrasts union innovation and strategies in Estonia, Slovenia and Poland (representing different varieties of capitalism in the CEE region), we can conclude that unions, indeed, are embedded in concrete socio-historic environments that influence their activities and power resources. However, the country context does not determine the paths available for unions and the choices that they make. This thesis adds to the recent stream of studies (e.g. Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017; Czarzasty, Gajewska & Mrozowicki, 2014; Kahancová, 2015; Mrozowicki, 2014) that see unions in the CEE region not as totally powerless and inactive, but as active agents finding ways to enhance their position and adopt new strategies.

This study contributes to our understanding on transnational unionism, showing how transnational identities, goals and norms can be formed, and it highlights the preconditions of extensive and long-lasting cross-border cooperation. The case of Estonian-Finnish union cooperation shows the importance of starting gradually with smaller-scale initiatives to build trust, enhance mutual obligations, and create common understanding, norms and identities (as they have before BOA). The analysis indicates that in cases in which unionists were doubtful whether to (continue to) take part in the Academy, personal relations and discussions with BOA activists usually convinced them to do so, demonstrating the importance of these relationships in maintaining cohesion within the movement. The results are in accordance with previous literature, emphasizing that transnational cooperation is preferred when no better alternatives at the local level are perceived to be available (e.g. Bernaciak, 2010; Keida 2006). However, it is important to highlight that this perception is, to a certain extent, constructed through the framing processes, and through skilful framing, it is possible to stress the importance of (innovative) transnational strategies

instead of local ones, even when the (short-term) benefits of the latter might be greater.

I conclude that the BOA was initiated not because of a mere reaction to specific changes in the environment, but because of the deliberate efforts of the BOA activists who utilized available power resources and convincingly framed the Organising Academy as an innovative way to cure a problem that both Baltic and Nordic unions are facing. BOA activists also played a crucial role in keeping the Academy resilient. They have had to constantly promote innovation, engage in collective action, conduct identity work and take part in the process of creating new collective action frames and trying to push through frame transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gahan & Pekarek, 2013) — a move from nation-centred, social partnership and servicing-oriented unionism to transnational organizing. Importantly, the study elaborates the importance and functioning of framing processes through which (innovative) common understandings and objectives are (re-)created and old and new union members are socialised into accepting them. This should be seen as a crucial precondition for making radical union innovation possible, legitimate and resilient.

BOA and its organizing campaigns have not generated a smooth process of radical union innovation. From a critical realist stance, transforming the pre-existing social reality is a constrained process. In post-2008 Estonia, the constraints on practicing organizing model unionism firstly derive from the external environment, including neoliberal ideas prevalent in the society and both socialist and post-socialist legacies: e.g. hostile employers, low legitimacy of unions and worker passivity. As regards barriers inherent in the union movement, the organizing approach assumes a considerable change in the ways that unions operate and in the role of union officials, and not all unionists have adjusted to that. Nor are all unionists willing to take on a more confrontational approach to labour relations.

As the social movement literature highlights, framing is a contested process (Benford & Snow, 2000), and such a radical change in identity and strategy as the BOA entails is neither easy nor straightforward, no matter how convincing its proponents might be. Organizing also assumes considerable financial resources, and after several years of practicing the model, Estonian unions still need foreign funding to support the campaigns. Thus, even if there are enough activists willing to support organizing, the end of foreign funding might just end the campaigns as well. The challenges of implementing organizing model unionism highlighted in this study are, to a large extent, similar to those reported in Poland (e.g. Krzywdzinski, 2010), but also, with the exception of post-socialist legacies, in other contexts (e.g. Heery & Simms, 2008).

The effects of BOA's organizing for the Estonian labour movement and companies and sectors affected by organizing campaigns are manifold. These include union density gains, signed collective agreements and improved working conditions, but also improved self-confidence of workers in organized companies and increased visibility of unions in the media. This shows that organizing model union campaigns can bring desired results in Estonia. Additionally, BOA unions have been able to increase and reuse their network embeddedness (both nationally and transnationally)

and gain more infrastructural and narrative resources. Thus, this thesis also contributes to power resource literature by showing how unions can increase their (associational) power resources through project-based initiatives. Most importantly, due to the BOA, Estonian unions have diversified their strategies, tactics and identity orientations. Some unionists have embraced the transnational organizing model as developed by the BOA activists. Others have taken only pieces of the model and applied them in their work.

Nevertheless, BOA's organizing has several shortcomings that might hamper its wider and more long-term effects. BOA and BOA 2.0 are project-based initiatives that depend on foreign funding that might not be sustainable in the long run. Furthermore, this has introduced a considerable precarious dynamic (including short-term employment positions) into rather permanent union organizations. BOA's campaigns have also been small-scale, reaching only a fraction of the workers and practiced only by a relatively small group of unions. Through the campaigns, unions have only managed to negotiate company-level collective agreements, but not sectoral ones. This indicates, as Simms (2012) and Simms and Holgate (2010) also highlight, the need to connect company-level organizing campaigns to larger issues of building labour power on a wider scale (e.g. constructing working-class identity, cooperating with other social movements); otherwise, organizing victories might stay short term.

This research has limitations, especially as its main analysis has been based only on the Estonian BOA case. Although the current approach has made it possible to study the case thoroughly, further research could explore the arguments and the model proposed in this thesis in different contexts and related to different (radically) innovative union strategies, preferably using a comparative approach, and developing quantifiable indicators to apply these in empirical research. It would be worth studying BOA-related actors from other countires than Estonia and Finland as well, especially from Latvia, as they initially declined taking part in the Academy, but in a few years, decided to join. Understanding their reasons might provide us better insight on why transnational union innovation might fail, and it might enable us to test whether the lack of previous extensive cooperation with Nordic unions might have contrinuted to that (as suggested in this study).

A follow-up study focusing on the BOA 2.0 could also provide insights on the resilience and suitability of organizing model unionism in the Baltic region. Furthermore, in 2016, the Central European Organising Center (Centrum Organizowania Związków Zawodowych – COZZ) was established. Comparing this initiative to the BOA might also be a fruitful topic for future research. Lastly, the effects of organizing could be elaborated with a comparative analysis of different sectors and different (innovative) union strategies, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to make stronger claims.

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Post-crisis innovation within Estonian private sector unions

Kairit Kall

Introduction

This chapter[1] depicts the innovative practices that Estonian private sector unions, mostly the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit, EAKL) and its affiliates, have pursued since 2008. EAKL is Estonia's biggest trade union confederation and unites mostly private, but also some public sector, unions. In addition, the chapter documents the establishment of the Estonian financial workers union, which is not a member of the central federation, but certainly a new development in the Estonian trade union movement given that, before its establishment, the finance sector was without union coverage. The account focuses on private sector unions since, during the period under consideration, most innovation has taken place within them.

The chapter shows that, since 2008, Estonian private sector unions have demonstrated innovativeness on all three dimensions outlined in this book's introductory chapter. Firstly, unions have implemented new strategies, having recourse to organising and heightened mobilisation, as well as service-oriented instruments; and they have also engaged with identity politics and disseminated benchmarks on employment standards within Estonian society. Secondly, they have targeted new employee groups in previously unorganised companies and sectors. Thirdly, EAKL has implemented several organisational innovations insofar as it strengthened sectoral unions' administrative capabilities and developed a new electronic communications system. Innovation has been driven by factors engendered in the post-crisis environment which are external to unions but unionists' agency has also played an important role.

The analysis is based on 16 semi-structured interviews (including two follow-ups) conducted between 2014-2016 with officials and activists from trade unions that have demonstrated innovativeness during the period under study. Interview data is supplemented with documentary research, including union documents and media reports. Innovative union practice is defined as 'a course of action differing from the one pursued in the past, staged by a trade union to address a newly-emerging challenge or tackle an existing problem more effectively' (see Bernaciak and Kahancová in the Introduction).

1. This research has been conducted within the framework of the Academy of Finland's project 'Industrial Citizenship and Labour Mobility in the EU: A Migrant Centre Study of Estonia-Finland and Albania-Italy Labour Mobility', funded by the Research Council for Culture and Society (Principal Investigator Dr. Nathan Lillie), and the project 'Alternatives at Work and Work Organisation: Flexible Postsocialist Societies', funded by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (Principal Investigator Dr. Triin Roosalu).

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it gives an overview of the country's socioeconomic setup in relation to the position of unions. Secondly, it presents selected instances of union innovation and examines their drivers. Finally, it evaluates the sustainability and impact of unions' initiatives. Brief conclusions follow.

1. Estonian industrial relations before, during and after the crisis

In order to gain legitimacy and establish themselves as the representatives of workers' interests, Estonian unions have had to overcome socialist and, later also, post-socialist legacies (for example, Ost 2009) after Estonia regained its independence. However, this has been difficult both because of factors external to the trade union movement and internal union bureaucracy, as well as the lack of experience and the meagre resources within the union movement. To make up for the latter shortcomings, Estonian unions have been supported by their Western, especially Finnish, counterparts since the early 1990s in a variety of ways, with the central aim of capacity building (Skulason and Jääskelainen 2000). Cooperation projects have mostly focused on building up sectoral-level bargaining mechanisms, but these have been not very successful as employers have shown very little interest in engaging with unions.

Concerning the factors external to labour organisations, following Estonia's regaining of its independence in 1991 its political and economic elite has tried to distance the country from anything associated with the previous Soviet order, including politically left ideas and trade unions. The result has been that it has adopted radical socioeconomic reforms, including extensive privatisation and liberalisation of the economy. The country has pursued neoliberal policies ever since and these have been generally accepted by the public without major protests, as macroeconomic stability and independence from Russia have been seen by large segments of society as the ultimate goals. Lagerspetz (2001: 413) argues that, by the end of the 1990s, 'the prevailing goal – national prosperity as expressed in monetary terms – has become taken-for-granted; other possible meanings of a free and just society have become forgotten or delegitimized.' In a similar vein, public discourse on class and inequality issues has been marginalised – although Estonia is a highly unequal society – and the focus has rather been on the national/ethnic discourse, together with 'transition culture' lionising the capitalist future (Helemäe and Saar 2015). Estonia, together with other Baltic counties, has also undergone heavier deindustrialisation and deskilling compared to other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (Bohle and Greskovits 2007), which has further undermined unions' position by destroying their industrial strongholds.

Present-day Estonia's industrial relations are characterised by low union density, limited employer coordination, decentralised collective bargaining, low collective bargaining coverage and weak social dialogue (Feldmann 2006; Bohle and Greskovits 2012). Trade union density has declined since the early 1990s and stood at around seven per cent in 2011 (Visser 2015). The company is the main focus of collective bargaining, while sectoral level agreements are rare. The initiative to bargain is usually taken by trade unions whereas employers are not interested in concluding collective agreements.

Estonian unionists have been influenced by the West European union movement: they see themselves mostly as social partners both to the state and employers and try to stay on good terms with them, without expressing more radical ideas about class struggle and without exercising more militant tactics to reach their goals (Kall 2016). Industrial action has been very rare in Estonia and has mostly taken place in the transport sector (Carley 2013). Unions have generally declared themselves apolitical organisations, representing members with different world views and cooperating with all political parties that are willing to cooperate. Social movement unionism and joint activities with non-union civil society associations have not been high on the agenda for unions, either, which can, to some extent, be explained by the general weakness of civil society in Estonia. Cooperation with civil society actors takes place mostly when unions consult different actors before formulating their opinions on planned policy changes. New civil society actors who would partly take over the role of unions have, so far, not appeared.

Throughout most of the postsocialist period, routine servicing has been the instrument used by Estonian trade unions; they have also been characterised by low levels of worker mobilisation and involvement in union action (Kall *et al.* 2015). These characteristics can possibly be explained both by the socialist unionism legacies of passive union membership and by the most extensive cross-border cooperation projects in which Estonian trade unions have participated being run by the Nordic, especially Finnish, unions who are traditionally focused on servicing and collective bargaining. One of the Estonian union officials noted, after being engaged in a new organising-model initiative presented later in this chapter:

> '[...] in previous years... maybe communication with workers was a bit superficial meaning that, well, let's say a person came, wanted to join a union; we were really glad that he/she joined and we did talk a bit about trade unions, but long and comprehensive conversations with workers we did not have. Moreover, workers should actually realise that they are the trade union. [...] That the trade union is not somewhere far away, it is not the president, it is not the finance officer [...] Actually, they themselves [the workers / union members] can make a change, can improve their situation in the company' (interview ETKA 2014).

Moreover, unions have targeted mostly 'traditional' employees on standard employment contracts – and often in sectors and companies with strong traditions of unionism dating back to the Soviet period, without having any special initiatives towards those in non-regular employment arrangements – the self-employed, part-time and agency workers and those on temporary contracts. This might be because the latter groups are more difficult to represent, considering the limited resources that unions have, even though this might also stem from non-standard forms of employment being less widespread in Estonia than in other European countries (ILO 2015; cf. Butković, this volume, for the Croatian case).

As regards the public perception of trade unions, survey results indicate that, rather than being anti-union, a large proportion of workers are unaware of the role of unions or perceive them as ineffective organisations. For example, in a representative survey conducted in 2011, 43 per cent of Estonian non-unionised respondents answered

the question 'What should unions do, so that you would join a union when you have the chance?' by responding that trade unions should be more active and vigorous so that they would be listened to and that being a member would provide real benefits. In addition, 15 per cent stated that trade unions should provide more information or advertise themselves more and only 7.5 per cent claimed that they did not want to join (Hill and Knowlton 2011: 21).

During the economic crisis, Estonia's neoliberal policy paradigm became even more pronounced (Kattel and Raudla 2013) and the position of unions as political actors further weakened. Consultative processes with the social partners remained limited; decisions were made fast and at the level of the ministries, with a particularly strong position held by the Ministry of Finance. In contrast to several other European countries, public protests were practically absent even though unemployment levels rocketed. The reason for societal quiescence was that the government was successful in constructing a simple and persuasive crisis discourse: Estonia could not abandon the currency peg and the euro must be adopted (and it was, in 2011), and thus adjustments to the budget, together with expenditure and wage cuts, were inevitable (Kattel and Raudla 2013; Thorhallsson and Kattel 2013).

After the economic crisis hit Estonia hard in the second part of 2008, it became even more evident that trade unions were weak and largely incapable of negotiating tangible gains or even reducing the losses incurred by their constituencies. Gonser (2010) argues that, during the downturn, unions further lost their structural, associational and institutional power. Structural power was negatively affected in view of rising unemployment levels. The loss of associational power was mainly due to union members either being made redundant or stepping out of the union as a cost-saving measure. Declining institutional but also associational power resulted from the further weakening of collective bargaining and social dialogue mechanisms. The result was that the number of newly signed collective agreements decreased considerably during the economic crisis. There were 88 either company or sector level agreements signed in 2007, but only 53 in 2010 (Kollektiivlepingute andmekogu 2016). At sectoral level, in two sectors with extended collective agreements, unions' attempts to start dialogue during the crisis were unsuccessful. At company level, 'successful negotiated responses' to the crisis included achieving a consensus on postponing bargaining and making trade-offs (such as substituting a decrease in wages with unpaid leave), but there were also unilateral employer actions (Kallaste and Woolfson 2013).

At national level, the government to a great extent ignored unions' voice during the crisis. Firstly, in 2009 it unilaterally modified a pre-crisis tripartite agreement on amendments to the new Employments Contracts Act that was supposed to follow the principles of flexicurity. Its main argument justifying the unilateral changes, reducing previously-agreed unemployment benefits and the number eligible for those benefits, was economic feasibility. The unions demanded that social dialogue was resumed and, when this did not happen, they organised small-scale strike action in 2009 in protest at the government's unilateral approach (about 1 800 people took part in the strike; Nurmela and Osila 2009). The changes pushed through by the cabinet were, nevertheless, adopted. Unionists themselves were not very satisfied with how the industrial action

turned out as too few people participated and there were no transport disruptions that would make the protest more visible (interview EAKL1 2014). In the end, the new law decreased employment protection and simplified redundancy procedures so unions' institutional power was further weakened (Gonser 2010).

Social partners also felt excluded from decision-making when the government formulated and enacted austerity measures (Nurmela and Karu 2008). There was a tripartite agreement signed in 2009 that dealt with the (re)training of employees, but it remained of marginal importance and did not counterbalance all the unilaterally imposed measures (Kallaste and Woolfson 2013). The government continued to ignore social dialogue practices when the economy started to recover. For example, the reserves of the Unemployment Insurance Fund were consolidated into the general state budget despite the opposition of unions and employer federations (Kallaste and Woolfson 2013: 260). By the same token, between 2008 and 2012 annual minimum wage negotiations between employers and union representatives were also not held and the minimum wage rate remained constant. All in all, with the government not taking into account any proposals for anti-crisis measures formulated by the unions, making unilateral changes in the labour legislation and continuing to ignore tripartite negotiations even when the economy recovered, the weak social dialogue structures that had previously existed were completely marginalised (Woolfson and Kallaste 2011).

To conclude, trade unions have struggled to maintain their legitimacy and power ever since Estonia regained its independence. They have mostly relied on routine servicing of their members and been involved in peaceful collective bargaining and social dialogue. However, given low and declining membership levels, a continuing lack of legitimacy and the failure of social dialogue and other traditional ways of operating, especially during the crisis, but also before and after it, they have launched several innovative practices that depart from or are complementary to the ways in which they have operated so far. The next section examines these initiatives in more detail.

2. Innovation within Estonia's private sector unions

This section explores the innovative practices undertaken by Estonian private sector unions since the outbreak of the crisis. All instances of innovation presented below are, to a certain extent, interrelated: for example, both the implementation of the organising model and changes within EAKL have facilitated the extension of union activity into previously non-unionised companies and sectors; while they have widened the scope of the activities that unions are engaged with as well as the range of instruments that they use.

2.1 Innovative choice of strategies and instruments

As regards new service-oriented instruments, EAKL – together with its member organisations – launched a four-year training programme in 2009 for union activists and officials at different levels. The project was financed by the European Social Fund

and aimed to improve unions' ability to engage in social dialogue and policy-making and to prepare development bargaining plans and strategies for unions. Within the framework of the programme, various information materials and strategic documents (such as 'Trade Unions 2020') were prepared,[2] surveys were conducted that identified both the external and the internal problems that unions faced and training sessions and seminars were organised for nearly 2 000 participants (Sõelsep 2013).

After the crisis, EAKL and its affiliates took several other initiatives to build and disseminate benchmarks on employment standards. For example, in 2010 they organised a week-long campaign in several Estonian towns, for the first time actively consulting people on the problems in their working lives and discussing how unions could help resolve them (EAKL 2010). Similar information days were also staged in subsequent years. A more recent example of an initiative of this kind involved a nationwide signature collection campaign to restore compensation for the first days of sick leave, launched by EAKL in April 2015. This has been the most extensive signature-collection initiative in which the unions have, so far, been involved. Currently the first three days of sick leave are without any compensation for workers; according to unions, this means that workers, especially low-wage earners, go to work sick because they cannot afford to stay at home. Signatures were collected electronically, but unionists also travelled across the country to collect them and to inform the wider public about the issue. Around 25 000 signatures were accordingly handed over to Parliament in May 2015, in addition to a policy proposal for a change in the legislation. At present the issue is still under debate: the Parliament's social commission has agreed to support the proposal in part and has ordered an analysis of its potential effects. EAKL also created a Facebook group (which in June 2016 had over 4 500 members) to disseminate information on this topic and to collect the stories that people have related of going to work while sick. There is wide popular support behind this issue and, this time, politicians are at least not able to ignore the unions' policy proposal. Having hired some young officials, EAKL is generally extending its activities in social media (interview EAKL3 2015).

The most significant instance of strategic innovation within the Estonian trade union movement, however, is the establishment of the Baltic Organising Academy (BOA), financed by Nordic unions, and the related adoption of an organising model of unionism. Estonian unions have traditionally, as mentioned in the previous section, relied on a social partnership ideology coupled to a servicing model of unionism. The turn towards organising marks a shift in unions' strategy insofar as it puts an emphasis on empowering and engaging workers at shopfloor level and implies a more confrontational stance vis-à-vis employers (Kall *et al.* 2015). In this respect, it is not only changing the strategies and tactics of unions, but it is also transforming the way unionists see themselves and their roles within companies and in society as a whole.

BOA was born out of the acknowledgment among some Nordic and Baltic union leaders (of whom the Estonian and the Finnish have been the main advocates) that, in order to prevent the Baltic countries from becoming a totally union-free zone, it is necessary to work beyond national and sectoral boundaries. The Baltic unions have been supported

2. The materials are still available on EAKL's internet site at http://www.eakl.ee/?pid=228&lang=5 (in Estonian).

by their Nordic counterparts in numerous ways since Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia regained their independence but attempts to transfer the Nordic model, based on social partnership and a solidaristic wage policy, to the Baltic region has not been very successful, as evidenced by continuously falling union density and the dwindling power resources of labour organisations.

Estonian unions were willing to engage with the initiative to a greater extent than their Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts, so the BOA project was first launched in Estonia where the fieldwork started in 2012. Estonians' openness and Finnish unions' support resulted from previous sustained cooperation between unions from these two countries which facilitated trust, common understanding and shared objectives. However, the main advocates of the model devoted considerable time to convincing their more sceptical counterparts to join the initiative: they had to demonstrate the suitability of this new strategy in Baltic countries, while previous failures of cooperation projects had to be overcome. The Latvian and Lithuanian unions were less willing to engage with the project possibly because of a reservation towards being controlled by Nordic unions. In addition, compared to Finnish-Estonian cooperation, their interactions with Nordic unions had been less frequent and had not led to the emergence of close, trust-based relations (Kall *et al.* 2015).

In Estonia, six manufacturing, service and transportation sector unions, as well as EAKL, got involved in BOA. From the Nordic side, 11 Finnish, two Swedish and four Danish unions in different sectors committed financial and/or human resources to the programme. In addition, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Council of Nordic Trade Unions supported the initiative (Häkkinen 2013: 6). Finnish unions justified their support for the project by pointing to the notion of free movement of labour and services within the European Union. Specifically, they argued that, due to the interconnectivity of the Estonian and Finnish labour markets, non-unionised Estonian workers working both in Estonia and Finland influence working conditions in Finland. In addition, Finnish unionists agreed that previous cooperation had not been successful in raising unionisation rates in the Baltic states (Kall *et al.* 2015).

BOA's funding is based on annual fundraising and the funds obtained in this way are directed to organising work. Estonian unions are committed to invest at least 35 per cent of campaign-generated membership fees in further organising (Häkkinen 2013: 7). In each sector, organisers focus on several strategic companies. Campaigns aim to achieve a high trade union membership rate in the target companies, set up an on-site organisation, elect shop stewards and start collective activity leading to the conclusion of a company-level collective agreement. The most important elements are one-to-one conversations with workers to figure out the topics that are most important to employees and what employees want to improve the most. In addition, a significant amount of organisers' time and energy is devoted to explaining to employees what a trade union is and what its goals are.

In order to organise workers and start collective agreement negotiations, organisers apply a comprehensive set of tactics that depend on both company and sectoral

specificities going beyond the scope of the tactics traditionally used by Estonian unions. These include conducting surveys among workers to identify the most acute problems in a specific workplace, petitions, campaigns to raise awareness (both towards customers/ the general public and certain groups of workers), attracting media attention when an employer is hostile to unions, establishing Facebook groups, wearing signs to create a feeling of unity and solidarity between workers and, in the case of multinational companies with Nordic origins, asking for support from union operations at company headquarters. One major difference to American organising campaigns is the lack of cooperation with social movements, as social movement unionism is practically non-existent in Estonia and weakly developed also in other CEE countries (Mrozowicki 2014; for recent Slovenian experiences, see Samaluk, this volume).

Sectoral-level unions connected to the Academy have also started to cooperate more closely with each other by staging joint social campaigns and helping each other with industrial actions, given that this kind of activity is also financed by BOA. For example, in 2014 seafarers' and private service workers' unions (EMSA and ETKA, respectively) launched an awareness-raising campaign 'Decent work, decent salary'. With this campaign, financed by the Danish union for hotel workers, the unions aimed to raise awareness among both workers themselves and the general public of the employment conditions of hotel workers (cleaners and chambermaids) by distributing leaflets near harbours and large hotels in Tallinn (ETKA 2014). Such activities can be regarded as engaging with identity politics as they intend to empower low wage-earning (mainly female) workers while, at the same time, making these groups of workers and their employment conditions more visible to society.

The Estonian Seafarers Independent Union (EMSA) has also used the organising model, although it was not part of the official BOA project. One of their officials, however, was previously engaged with the Academy and, when he started working for EMSA, got involved in promoting and practising the approach within the union. Following BOA's logic, he led one-to-one conversations with staff in the Tallink hotel chain and soon identified a future trade union activist who later became a head shop steward. Despite management opposition and the different tactics used by the employer to undermine the trade union which included, inter alia, the creation of a 'yellow' union, EMSA staged several successful campaigns. In December 2014, the unionisation rate at Tallink hotels was 60-90 per cent; in addition, EMSA managed to sign a collective agreement that secured hotel workers a gradual wage increase and other benefits. Moreover, EMSA was financed in 2014-2015 by the Nordic Transport Workers Federation (NTF) and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to organise one of the dry bulk terminals, so it also used the strategies inspired by the organising model there (interview EMSA 2014).

In addition to BOA's launch, 2012 was marked by a considerably heightened mobilisation of trade unions in Estonia – the country that traditionally recorded the lowest strike records in Europe (Vandaele 2014). In early March 2012, several unions, as well as non-unionised workers in transport and healthcare, organised solidarity strikes to back the industrial action being staged by teachers and to support trade union demands of the government. Unions explicitly demanded that the government restored social dialogue

and included trade unions in the decision-making process on labour policy issues.[3] The strikes spread over the whole country and are known as the 'strike week' – the most extensive industrial action since Estonia regained its independence. The protests gained considerable attention, partly because they affected people's daily lives due to transportation stoppages; they were also widely covered in the media. Moreover, the healthcare unions mobilised their ranks later that year and carried out an extensive strike wave that lasted for 25 days. Both strike waves brought modest wage increases and some other benefits to teachers and healthcare workers but, equally importantly, they have shown that unions are capable of mass mobilisation.

2.2 Organisational innovation within EAKL

In 2013, EAKL saw a leadership change as well as the replacement of some of its officials. In late 2012, Harri Taliga, president of EAKL since 2003, suddenly announced that he would resign and a new, younger president, Peep Peterson, was elected.[4] Peterson has a Social Democratic party background and, because of that, some unionists considered him unsuitable for the position. One of the union officials interviewed put it that the Estonian trade union movement had been 'a bit allergic' to political parties and thus some members preferred to retain the organisation's political neutrality. Peterson promised to withdraw himself from party politics while being President of EAKL. Before taking up the post, he had run one of Estonia's most visible sectoral unions, the Estonian Transport and Road Workers Trade Union. He stated that he was not satisfied with the way EAKL was reactive rather than proactive in relation to the policy-making process; he was also determined to halt the trend of membership decline (Vahter 2013).

The leadership change facilitated several changes within the confederation. For example, in 2014 the organisation hired an analyst, a civic activist connected to the Social Democratic Party with an economics and philosophy (ethics) background. The aim of hiring her was, arguably, to make EAKL more forward-looking and strategically capable (interview EAKL3 2015). Currently, EAKL is administering a project that aims to strengthen sectoral unions' administrative capabilities and, where possible, make them less dependent on EAKL. The project includes developmental conversations between EAKL and its affiliates to examine the strengths and weaknesses of specific unions and to facilitate possible mergers of different unions from the same or overlapping sectors.[5] In this context, an EAKL official concludes that the lack of financial resources hampers unions' prospects for innovation and growth:

> '[Based on the developmental conversations] I dare say that about half [of the 19 affiliates] are willing to develop further, but half of those don't have the resources

3. At that time, collective labour legislation was also under review and there were plans to make changes to the legislation, to which unions were opposed (EAKL 2012), in addition to the failed social dialogue negotiations in 2008-2009 during the implementation of the Employment Contracts Act.

4. In the past, Peterson had twice been nominated to run against Taliga, but lost.

5. On the other hand, during the interviews some officials from the sectoral unions affiliated to EAKL expressed concern that they were not as aware of the activities and plans of EAKL as they had been during the previous administration.

for that; as you know, if you have few members then you have little money and you cannot perform those tasks' (interview EAKL3 2015).

Recently, EAKL launched another major initiative – a new electronic communications system that would facilitate communications between EAKL and its affiliates and which would enable organisations to share information and resources, and increase organisational democracy (interview EAKL3 2015). This has the potential to boost affiliates' engagement with the confederation but, as it is still in its initial stages, it is not yet possible to evaluate its effectiveness.

2.3 New target groups

Within the framework of the Baltic Organising Academy, several Estonian sectoral unions are expanding their reach and organising previously non-organised companies as well as sectors operationally linked to them. For example, the Estonian Transport and Road Workers Trade Union (ETTA) organises workers employed in logistics. Furthermore, EAKL's analysis detected the sectors without any trade union presence and developed a strategy to cover the whole economy with sector-specific unions. Construction was one of the industries without any union, so EAKL initiated several meetings with the aim of setting one up. These meetings were directed towards workers in construction and encompassed employer representatives and labour inspectors. Worker participation was low, but one of EAKL's affiliates, the Estonian Metalworkers Trade Union Federation, decided to change its name into the Industrial and Metalworkers Trade Union Federation (IMTAL) and to widen its scope so that it could organise construction workers (interview EAKL3 2015). In 2016, IMTAL concluded a cooperation agreement with Finnish construction workers union Rakennusliitto, which states that members of IMTAL can also turn to the Finnish union while working in Finland, and vice versa (IMTAL 2016).

In 2013, the first Estonian union for financial workers (Eesti Finantssektori Töötajate Liit, EFL) was created. In contrast to the top-down organising approach adopted in the construction sector, EFL was a bottom-up, grassroots initiative. Several finance sector workers set up a union for which they work pro bono and which workers can join for free. An EFL official explained that they had decided not to set a membership fee to encourage workers to join but that, in the long run, introducing a fee might become a necessity (interview EFL 2015). At the end of 2015, EFL had around 150 members without staging any campaigns or organising activities. According to the official, the need to create a union was related to there being no form of worker representation in the sector and to the example set by the Nordic finance sector unions.

In Nordea, one of the multinational banks operating in Estonia, workers established an EFL unit and used the new structure to counter the dismissal of workers and company restructuring proposals, and to address the gender pay gap in the finance sector that is the biggest in Estonia (Mets 2015). Sustaining union activity at Nordea is difficult as the management fired union's shop steward after he had turned to the Labour Dispute

Committee, claiming that the employer had discriminated against him because of his involvement in the union. The Committee ruled that there was indeed discrimination and that the bank should cease, but the shop steward was sacked instead. When he appealed to the Labour Dispute Committee, the latter ruled that the dismissal was unlawful and that the worker should be reinstated and compensated. However, the bank did not follow the Committee's ruling and appealed to the court. Ultimately, Nordea agreed to pay significant financial compensation to the shop steward and he withdrew his statements. However, he is still involved in the activities of Nordea's union, while the bank continues to refuse to cooperate with workers' representatives (Postimees 2016).

Unlike unions in several other CEE countries (see, for example, Mrozowicki and Maciejewska, this volume), Estonian labour organisations have not been active in representing non-standard workers. This is likely to be due to the lack of resources that makes it difficult for unions to represent workers even on standard contracts, but it also stems from non-standard working arrangements not being as widespread a phenomenon in Estonia as in other countries (ILO 2015). The share of workers with non-standard working arrangements being rather marginal, unions have not framed these types of employment as particularly problematic and, consequently, have not engaged with them.

2.4 Drivers of innovative union practices

It can be argued that the innovative practices presented in this chapter address the challenges of the external post-crisis environment, in which unions' structural, institutional and associational power had declined even further. Unions had lost their members, employers were unwilling to engage in collective bargaining and national level social dialogue mechanisms were further weakened due to the government's unilateral policy-making. Employees' increased mobilisation – in particular the 'strike week' of 2012 – was, to a large extent, a consequence of the government's unwillingness to acknowledge unions' consultative role; it also resulted from workers being tired of wage cuts and other employer-directed changes and it was thus easier for union leaders to mobilise them.

In the context of the crisis demonstrating that unions were incapable of defending workers' rights through social dialogue and collective bargaining, several administrative capacity-building initiatives have been launched. However, the decision to launch one or the other initiative has still been in the hands of union leaders, which points to an important role being played by union agency. This assertion is consistent with Heery (2005), who claims that external factors alone are not sufficient to push unions to innovate. In the Estonian context, the role of both local and, in the case of BOA, also Nordic trade unionists should not be underestimated. In Estonia, trade union density has been on the decline since the early 1990s but the organising approach was adopted only in 2012, under the influence of strong advocates of the model from Finland and Estonia. Several other innovations – hiring an analyst; strengthening sectoral unions' administrative capabilities via developmental conversations and mergers; and

developing a new electronic communications system – similarly materialised only after the change within EAKL.

3. Sustainability and impact of union innovations

Estonian unions have, since the late 2000s, demonstrated all three dimensions of innovation identified in the Introduction: they have used new strategies and instruments; implemented organisational changes; and targeted new employee groups and the wider public. The most important instruments used in this regard have been heightened mobilisation, engagement in identity politics and in the dissemination of benchmarks within society, servicing and the adoption of the organising model.

As regards the direct effects of the heightened mobilisation of private sector unions and the 'strike week' of 2012, collective labour legislation is still on hold and the changes to which the unions were actively opposed have not been implemented. However, union mobilisation might be only one of the reasons for this development. In 2014, the International Labour Organization sent a letter to the Estonian government in support of several of the unions' demands, claiming that some of the changes proposed by the government were against international labour standards (ILO 2014). In addition, the legislative standstill might be related to continuing political games. However, at least one of the union officials interviewed (interview EAKL2 2014) considered it a small union victory that the changes had not been implemented.

Unions have also engaged with identity politics and attempted to build and disseminate benchmarks on employment standards within Estonian society. There have been several awareness-raising campaigns directed towards the general public and/or particular groups of workers. Engaging with these instruments helps unions gain greater legitimacy; workers seem increasingly to feel that unions are dealing with issues which are important to them, an important consideration given that, in Estonia, the awareness of what unions do and belief in their effectiveness has been rather low. In addition, the campaigns have given the general public the possibility of demonstrating that they agree with unions' objectives. By putting their signature on a union petition, people feel that they are, in some way, involved in the policy-making process.

Moreover, it is likely that new elements of servicing, such as EAKL's training programme for union activists and officials, has raised unions' professionalism in representing workers and engaging in social dialogue. In addition, EAKL has also carried out, and is still planning to implement, several organisational innovations, led by the new president of the federation. These aim to strengthen the capabilities of the sectoral unions and those of the central federation alike, but also to cover the whole economy with unions. These initiatives, if successful, will certainly strengthen the Estonian trade union movement, even though it is early at this point to be evaluating their effects.

The biggest innovation, however, was the launch of BOA and the adoption of the organising model of unionism. BOA has brought membership gains and influenced the identity of the trade unionists engaged in the project, but it has also had wider

implications for the Estonian labour movement. BOA's strategy has proven to be successful on several accounts. First of all, organisers I interviewed are certain that, given enough time, many people would become more open towards the idea of joining unions, change their thinking and gain more confidence. Secondly, after the start of organising activities, employers seem to have changed their attitude towards employees. Some have taken steps to unify pay systems (the same wage for the same work), replaced (illegal) fixed-term contracts with open-ended ones and increased wages even on sites without collective agreements. There is also some evidence of the success of the model in terms of membership growth, even though growth has been rather slow and the campaigns small-scale. According to data provided by BOA officials (Häkkinen 2014), by November 2014, that is, less than three years after the launch of the organising drive, the BOA project has brought over 1 200 new members, 50 shop stewards and 15 new union organisations. In several of the organised companies, unions have also managed to sign collective bargaining agreements. Concerning the BOA-induced changes in union identity and ideology, trade unionists themselves have become more acquainted with the organising model and the 'organising turn' seems to be making ground among union officials both within and beyond the BOA project. The organising model is currently also advocated by EAKL, which has incorporated elements of it into its general training module for shop stewards. It therefore seems that these ideas have spread within trade union structures and might also influence unionists outside the original BOA structures.

Still, despite several victories, the organising approach is not without disadvantages and some unionists have questioned its suitability. It is, in many respects, different from previous forms of union action, so it is understandable that some union officials feel uneasy about it. Firstly, it is different since the aim is to mobilise and empower workers at shopfloor level so that they themselves set the agenda. Thus, it decreases the autonomy of sectoral unions and challenges the role of union officials. One of the organisers explained:

> '[…] XXX [an older trade union official] who is running it [one of the unions involved in BOA], she is, well, old-school. […]. For her, the trade union is still like… sitting in the office and waiting until workers come there' (interview BOA 2016).

Secondly, BOA's organising approach assumes that union members are willing to get involved in more aggressive tactics, such as keeping organising secret for a certain period or organising industrial action, especially if the employer refuses to cooperate. This increased worker/union activism has facilitated tensions among some unionists favouring less radical approaches (and ones more traditional for Estonian unions) when communicating with employers.

Thus, the most important future challenges for unionism based on the organising model are whether officials currently chairing unions perceive the approach as something of their own, and will want to engage with and invest in it when the foreign funding ends, and whether the model gains ground outside BOA structures as well. There are some promising developments. For example, the Finnish metalworkers and private service sector unions are also making use of the organising model after seeing that it works in

Estonia, while one of the Estonian organisers has recently started working as a BOA coordinator in all three Baltic countries, and trains also Latvian and Lithuanian unions on the model's principles.

Unfortunately, there are no comparative studies that would enable an evaluation of how the public perception of unions has changed during these years. Nevertheless, a survey (n= 2007, age 15+) carried out in 2015 showed that 67.5 per cent of the Estonian population agree that employees need strong trade unions to protect their interests, with only 7 per cent disagreeing with that proposition (ISSP 2015). This might indicate that initiatives like the awareness-raising projects that have kept unions in the picture have had a positive impact on the perception of unions. According to the same survey, union density in late 2015 was 8 per cent (ISSP 2015), which is around the same as it has been in previous years (Visser 2015).

Another indicator that helps evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives described above is the number of collective bargaining agreements signed. Information included in the collective agreements register (which, however, might not cover all agreements) does not provide a very optimistic picture. In 2014, the number of newly signed agreements was 50 and in 2015 only 38, compared to 53 in 2010 and 88 in 2007 (Kollektiivlepingute andmekogu 2016). Alongside the argument that the external environment has become more difficult for unions during the post-crisis period, so one could wonder if the number of accords would be even smaller without unions' innovative actions.

Finally, most of the new developments within the Estonian trade union movement have relied on funding either from foreign unions or the EU. This raises the question of the sustainability of these activities and highlights the project-based nature of recent trade union initiatives in Estonia. It seems, however, that organising new sectors and unorganised companies, but also conducting different awareness-raising campaigns, might help strengthen the unions immediately (as regards membership levels and increased legitimacy) and bear more long-term results for the union movement as well. Capable and forward-looking leaders have a major role in the process, especially in the case of organisations as small and top-down managed as Estonian trade unions.

Even so, it has to be noted that the innovative practices presented in this chapter have been carried out by a certain group of private-sector unions, but a large number of labour organisations have been rather passive. Therefore, the question remains how to motivate the more passive unions to get involved in assertive, innovative actions.

Conclusions

This chapter argued that, despite a generally weak position and meagre resources that were further depleted during the recent economic crisis, several Estonian private-sector unions and the Estonian Trade Union Confederation have become involved in a variety of innovative initiatives. These have included the development of new strategies and instruments, an increased focus on unorganised sectors and companies, and the

implementation of organisational changes within the confederation. At the same time, unions have put much more effort in being visible: they have launched awareness-raising campaigns, showing that unions are there and are dealing with 'real' problems. There have also been periods of heightened mobilisation which indicate that, if Estonian unions are pushed too far, they are willing and able to react more militantly as well.

The most far-reaching innovation in the Estonian context has been the adoption of the American-style organising model. For unions that have embraced it, it signifies a move away from routine servicing to direct engagement with rank-and-file members and the latter's involvement in setting unions' goals. It has also brought more militancy into unions' actions and thus departed from the cooperation-oriented union-employer relations that had been characteristic of Estonian unions prior to BOA. This innovation can have a considerable impact on the Estonian labour movement as a whole but, in order to achieve this goal, unions that are currently outside the BOA project need to demonstrate a willingness to take on the organising agenda. In any case, expanding to new sectors and companies, and aiming to cover the whole economy with at least the possibility of joining a union, has been an important development, as sectors like finance and construction have, previously, been union-free. The next step for Estonian unions might be to target non-standard groups of workers as these groups have, thus far, not featured high on unions' agenda.

All in all, these innovations might stop, or at least slow down, the downwards spiral of membership decline and have the potential to increase the legitimacy of unions. On the other hand, at least up to this point, most Estonian unions have continued to require considerable foreign financial assistance to get engaged in them, which raises the question of their long-term sustainability.

Interviews

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Interview with the Baltic Organising Academy (BOA) organiser, Tallinn, 27 January 2016.
Interview with the Estonian Seamen's Independent Union (EMSA), Tallinn, 3 December 2014.
Interview with the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) #1, Tallinn, 3 April 2014.
Interview with the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) #2, Tallinn, 10 December 2014.
Interview with the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) #3, Tallinn, 5 November 2015.
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II

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Locked in inferiority? The positions of Estonian construction workers in the Finnish migrant labour regime

Markku Sippola and Kairit Kall

Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse how different policies and actors have structured the current migrant labour regime in the Finnish construction sector and to discuss the consequences for migrants. Our study shows that a strong industrial relations system such as in Finland is able to curb the posting of workers regime (the most disadvantageous for migrant workers). The position of labour migrants has become more diverse in the segmented labour market, although it remains inferior compared to that of the natives. Consideration of the policy development revolving around the changing migrant labour regimes constitutes the first part of the analysis and is based on government and trade union officials' accounts. The more substantial part of the study draws upon biographical interviews with Estonian construction workers and analyses the division of migrant labour according to their employment in four 'patterns of firm ownership' that range from the most unfavourable to most favourable position: workers posted by Estonian firms; workers employed by firms registered in Finland but operated by Estonians; self-employed/small business owners; and workers employed by Finnish firms. The structuring of the regime according to the pattern of firm ownership can be interpreted as a manifestation of employers' intentional strategies to adapt to or avoid national regulations and to some extent as also reflecting workers' individual and collective agency.

Introduction

This study, which draws upon biographical interviews with Estonian construction workers working in Finland and expert interviews with union and government officials, analyses the emerging migrant labour regime in the context of the large inflow of Estonian construction workers to Finland. Firstly, it elaborates on the structuring of the regime and shows that labour market regulations and industrial relations are crucial in shaping it. Secondly, it aims to show the differing position of migrant workers within the regime, which is contingent upon their employment in different patterns of firm ownership. Although some studies have shed light on the internal division of segmented migrant labour regimes (e.g., Fan 2002; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2006; Friberg 2012; Wills et al. 2009), to our knowledge there is no previous scholarly attempt to grasp the internal variation of the migrant labour market regime on the basis of workers' employment in firms with different ownership types within one nation-state and taking a particular sector as an example. This study seeks to fill this void. Based on biographical interviews with workers, we consider firm ownership as an important factor contributing to the segmentation of employment conditions.

Prior to the accession of 10 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries to the European Union (EU) in 2004, the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) warned that there would be 400,000 Estonian workers coming to the Finnish labour market if no restrictions on free mobility were imposed. In Finnish 'corporatist' tradition trade unions, alongside the government and employer associations, play a major role in shaping national industrial relations (Sippola 2015). Significantly influenced by the opinion of the SAK, the Finnish government used the option to impose a 2-year transition period on the free movement of labour (May 2004- April 2006), during which time the mobility of workers to Finland occurred mainly in the form of the posting of workers. This policy choice had peculiar consequences for the Finnish construction labour market (unintended by the unions): hundreds of Estonia-based construction firms were established in order to provide services for Finnish main contractors, while the conditions of labour in this 'posting of workers' regime varied between Estonian and Finnish standards. The regime that emerged placed a huge burden on labour market actors, including trade unions and labour inspectors, endeavouring to monitor the fulfilment of the conditions of labour agreed upon among the Finnish labour market parties. Reports on breaches of the Labour Code were regularly seen in the media; labour inspectors as well as union officials provided numerous accounts of violations of labour conditions on the part of Estonia-based service providers.

Worker posting has proven to undermine strong industrial relations systems in Europe (Wagner & Lillie 2014). This is a European-wide problem, where the nexus of subcontracting, transnational mobility, legal insularity and employer anti-unionism complicate union and legal enforcement of labour market standards (Berntsen & Lillie 2014; Eldring, Fitzgerald & Arnholtz 2012). The 'posting of workers' regime remained widely used in the Finnish construction sector for many years after the lifting of the restrictions on free movement of labour in 2006. Posted work gave employers the means to 'opt out' of national regulation (Lillie & Sippola 2011). However, a change towards a greater variety of employment relationships has occurred in the 2010s. The use of posted workers from Estonia has lost its attractiveness for companies, as the 'beating of the system' has become more difficult. This has occurred mainly due to deliberate politics by the Finnish government, which have been influenced by social partners. Today, there are signs that the policies of the government aimed at regulating the construction sector have had a positive overall effect on the construction labour market. This suggests that even within the single EU labour market, certain (strong) national industrial relations systems are more resistant to the corroding effects of post-accession labour migration than others.

Based on our data we elaborate on the internal division of the current migrant labour regime and introduce the notion of 'pattern of firm ownership'. It refers both to the distinct division of labour between main contractors with Finnish ownership and

subcontractors with Estonian ownership and to the migrant workers' relationship with and distance to the main contractor. The pattern of 'firm ownership' is thus a conceptual short form that points to the fact that the Estonian migrants are incorporated into a system of production where staffing strategies and working conditions differ systematically in accordance with their employers' nationality, the relationship to the main contractor (and function in the production chain) and workers' contractual status.

Accordingly, a major part of the analysis concerns the division of migrant labour according to four main patterns of firm ownership, ranging from the most unfavourable to the most favourable position for the Estonian workers: posting of workers; employed by a firm registered in Finland but operated by Estonians; self-employed/small business owners; and employed by Finnish firms. The sequence of the presentation of these different positions is based on the observed ranking of precariousness (in terms of uncertainty) and the level of wages of the various positions. We also argue that even though it is possible for Estonian construction workers to end up in a rather secure employment situation, they mostly remain in positions materially inferior to and culturally detached from those of natives.

The article is structured as follows. First, in the theory section foundations for the different regimes for natives and migrants are presented, including the factors structuring the evolving migrant labour regime in Finland. The second section familiarises the reader with the Finnish construction sector. Then follows a methodology section, after which the making of the 'migrant labour regime' – a heuristic concept emphasising political and relational grounds for labour migration – is elaborated on; this elaboration is mainly based on government and union officials' accounts. Section five describes the structure of the current migrant labour regime prevailing between Estonia and Finland and is based largely on worker biographies. The discussion and conclusion section sums up the findings and suggests issues for future research.

Different labour regimes for natives and migrants

In his seminal work Piore (2008 [1979]) developed the idea that labour markets in the advanced industrial economies are divided into two tiers. The migrant workforce occupies positions mainly in the lower one which is characterised by lower wages, inferior working conditions, less stability, lack of advancement opportunities and less autonomy than those in the first tier that are mainly occupied by natives. The uncertain and temporary nature of work in the lower tier is best captured by the concept of precariousness. According to Kalleberg (2009: 2), precarious work refers to 'employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker'. In a similar vein, Friberg *et al.* (2013: 112) conclude that rather than a lack of income, 'precariousness is related to lack of stability, security and control in

one's employment situation'. Although precarious working conditions have become more widespread throughout the Western world during recent decades and are no longer only characteristic of migrant jobs, migrants tend to experience a higher degree of precariousness.

One cannot ignore the role of governmental and intergovernmental regulations in shaping the segmentation of the labour market. Here, the EU's principle of free movement of labour and services serves as an incentive for institutional changes at the national level; local state apparatuses, in their turn, serve as active progenitors of neoliberalisation 'from above' as they call for greater wage differences and the use of different standards for foreign subcontractors (Sippola 2012). The regulation by the nation state can also function in the opposite direction by curbing the effects of labour market flexibilisation through legislation. However, national and multinational employers as well as migrants themselves can still reinforce the flexibilisation tendency. As Meardi, Martín and Riera (2012: 7) argue:

> Cross-border worker mobility, especially but not only within the EU, offers a possible solution to the problem of combining flexibility and security: the creation of a hyper-flexible buffer of migrant workers who, being disposable in case of downturn, can carry most of the uncertainty burden without causing political problems.

We argue that migrants more often than not indeed find themselves in less advantageous positions than natives, but the position of migrants is becoming diversified according to their employment status within the segmented labour market. This might especially be the case in Finland and other Nordic countries where the labour market is still rather highly regulated and employers try to find ways to gain competitive advantage by circumventing national regulations (Herrmann 2008; Lillie & Sippola 2011) via, for example, employing migrant workers through foreign subcontractors. To fully capture the variation of employment statuses (in the labour market), and to incorporate the role of the state in the contemporary shaping of the labour market, we use the concept of *labour market regime*. The notion of 'regime' itself is based upon Elvander's (2002: 118) use of the term that embraces:

> …the totality of a country's labour market relations, from the workplace to the central political level where the political conditions for the development of labour relations are decided, such as general economic policy, labour market and incomes policies, labour law, etc. The scope and main direction of policies directed to the labour market will be an important element in comparisons between regimes or groups of regimes.

The regime concept has some parallels with concepts such as 'industrial relations (IR) systems' or 'IR models'. A difference between the IR concepts and the concept

of ‘labour market regime’ resides in the fact that the latter attributes a more active role to the state. Furthermore, the labour market regime presupposes some degree of permanence and path-dependency. Historical trajectories have been essential in shaping the Nordic labour market regimes (Elvander 2002). Potentially, there is one important feature in the Finnish regime which might prevent some employers from circumventing national regulations: the legal extension of collective agreements. In this respect, Finland differs from the other Nordic countries, in particular Denmark and Sweden (e.g. Ebbinghaus 2004). The Finnish wage bargaining system is based on sectoral collective agreements which set industry minimums and in most sectors, including construction, are extended over the whole sector by government decrees. Thus, also workers employed in companies without collective agreements are covered by the minimum provisions set in the legally extended agreements. The conditions of sectoral collective agreements are also extended to posted workers; posted workers can also authorise trade unions to take legal action on their behalf against their home-country employer for not complying with the host-country’s collective agreement.[1]

Our notion of migrant labour regime, however, cuts across the original concept as Elvander (2002) sees it, which makes our term more distinctive. We argue that the emerging Estonian-Finnish migrant labour regime has dissimilarities with the Finnish labour regime for natives in two respects. Firstly, as those coming from outside into the Finnish labour market will often remain outsiders (culturally and economically), it is reasonable to speak in terms of a distinctive cross-border regime reserved for migrant labour. Secondly, as our definition of ‘regime’ also involves supranational (EU) regulation, it makes sense to differentiate between the labour regime for locals – which is mostly national by nature – and the labour regime for migrants – which entails quite a high deal of European, regulation.

The concept of a migrant labour regime provides the state and social partners with an active role. One proposition of this study is that in the host society the national regulations that are shaped by national legislation and social partners, in interplay with the supranational regulations, have a significant impact on the labour market position of migrants. As of 1 May 2004, Estonia joined the European Union. However, because of the Finnish 2-year transition period for free movement of labour, Estonian labour mobility to Finland mainly took the form of the posting of workers rather than individual migration. In May 2006, when the restrictions were lifted, the posting of workers remained a major form of labour migration. The financial crisis of 2007-2009 gave a major boost to individual emigration from all the Baltic countries, which was connected with the deteriorated social and labour

[1] An important preliminary ruling concerning this was made by the European Court of Justice in February 2015 (Case C‑396/13 Sähköalojen ammattiliitto ry v Elektrobudowa Spółka Akcyjna).

conditions in these countries (Sippola 2013). Based on the interplay of regulations, employer and worker strategies, we argue that the regime has become more diversified and segmented according to the pattern of firm ownership, as it is no longer predominantly based on the posting of workers.

The internal division of segmented migrant labour regimes has been scrutinised in Australian (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2006), Norwegian (Friberg 2012) and Chinese (Fan 2002) contexts. Also, Wills et al.'s (2009) study on the division of migrant labour in London provides an important contribution to understanding the shaping of a local labour market regime in terms of migrant citizenship status, employer preferences and government regulation. An important observation by Wills et al. (2009) – which is also acknowledged in the present study – is that the regime undergoes constant changes due to intersecting decisions by the government, employers and workers. Our approach introduces the internal differentiation of the migrant labour market regime on the basis of one's employment in different patterns of firm ownership, which has not been elaborated on before, but according to our data is an important factor contributing to the segmentation of the regime.

The construction sector in Finland

In the following we will give a brief overview of structural features of the Finnish construction sector. There are around 170,000 employees in the sector, of whom 100,000 are in manual jobs; 20-25% of the latter are foreigners, around a third of whom are working in the Helsinki metropolitan area (Alho 2013). Estonians form the biggest foreigners' group in the construction sector (Statistics Finland 2013). The unionisation rate of migrant workers is relatively modest. Alho (2013) has calculated that in 2012 the unionisation rate among migrant construction workers was 12-14%, which is far from the 70% rate prevailing in construction in general (Union official #3).

International subcontracting and cross-border labour mobility, especially the posting of workers, have characterised the labour process of the construction industry in recent years (Lillie and Sippola 2011). This development has contributed to obscuring the main contractor's liability for the wage and working conditions at the lower end of the subcontracting chain. Thus, the main contractors are capable of evading the norms of the Finnish labour code by using foreign (mostly CEE, especially Estonian) subcontractors, who bring their own low-paid labour onto construction sites (Lillie and Sippola 2011; Sippola 2012). Foreign labour and especially workers posted from abroad as 'service providers' bring forth such circumstances on the sites that workers executing the same jobs can have different labour conditions and their social security contributions are made to different countries – or they are not made at all. Cases in point are as follows: the commuting of Estonian workers from Estonia to Finland, which has created a 'translocal' labour market in the construction sector (Alho 2013) and the use of Polish posted workers

at Olkiluoto 3 construction site, which has turned the site into a 'space of exception' in regard to the Finnish industrial relations system (Lillie and Sippola 2011).

In recent years the Finnish government – first and foremost pushed by the construction union Rakennusliitto – has taken deliberate steps to reregulate the construction sector. Since January 2013, all construction workers are obliged to obtain a tax number, which has enhanced the controllability of construction sites. In July 2014, the so-called 'construction site register' and main contractor liability were introduced to get fuller access, for example, to hours worked and tax information of all individuals involved in a construction project. A change in the subcontracting chain management of the main contractors is visible: the posting of workers is no longer the most favoured form of operating in the Finnish construction sector. Instead, a new practice of prodding Estonian firms to register themselves in Finland can be seen. Earlier it was easier for both domestic companies and transnational firms to find alternative ways of circumventing institutional constraints at the national level (Herrmann 2008; Lillie & Sippola 2011). We assume that these developments have had an effect on the restructuring of the migrant labour regime as well.

Methodology

This study applies a migrant-centred focus on studying the structure of the Finnish migrant labour regime. The analysis is mainly based on 18 biographical narrative interviews (Schütze, 2005) conducted during 2013-15 with Estonian men (as the sector is highly male-dominated) working in the Finnish construction sector (see Table 1). Although a couple of them were small business owners, they also worked in their own company as construction workers. In addition, we made 7 follow-up interviews 1.5-2 years later. Respondents were found through the personal contacts of the research group, snowballing and also social media.

Using workers' employment stories to examine the position migrants occupy in Finland is especially valuable as statistics about different forms of employment are either not available or not very reliable, given that companies often use illegal employment practices that are not reflected in the register data. The biographical approach also enables us to track the changes in the employment situation, analyse the meanings people give to them and examine what kind of barriers and opportunities migrant workers experience in the Finnish labour market. Importantly, these interviews provided us insight into the situation related to different kinds of employment arrangements and enabled us to construct the notion of 'pattern of firm ownership' that helps to understand the internal division of migrant labour regime.

Table 1: Overview of interviewed construction workers

Name	Currently employed by...	Experience with being a posted worker	Years in Finland

			(during first interview)
Mart*	Estonian temporary agency firm	Yes	7-8
Anti	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Unclear**	4
Timo	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Unclear**	6
Tom	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Yes	3
Aleksandr*	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Yes	3
Ragnar	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Unclear**	9
Aivar	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Most probably (at an Estonian subcontractor providing piping works)	4
Evert	Finnish firm owned by Estonians	Unclear**	4
Arno	Finnish construction firm	Yes	4
Veiko	Owner of a company with 3 workers	Yes	Smaller periods
Kalev	Owner of a company with 11 workers	No	Many years
Jaan*	Self-employed (2013), Finnish construction firm (2015)	Yes	7
Vello*	Finnish agency firm	No	3
Rein*	Finnish construction firm	Yes	6-7
Edgar*	Finnish construction firm	Yes	3
Valdo	Finnish construction firm	Unclear**	6-7
Lembit*	Finnish construction firm	Yes	3
Dagmar	Finnish construction firm	No	11

* Also follow-ups

** Often the workers themselves do not see a difference as to whether they are posted, agency workers or in a normal employment relationship; the blurred borders between 'posted' and 'normal' statuses have also been evidenced elsewhere (Eldring 2011).

Although the main body of the data builds on the migrants' views, we also wanted to include information on policy developments influencing the migrant labour regime. Therefore we contextualise the migrant experiences with 11 background expert interviews (conducted between spring 2014 and spring 2016) with Finnish government officials; embassy representatives; officials of the construction workers union Rakennusliitto; the Rakennusliitto representative in Tallinn; the Estonian labour inspector in construction; and the official from the Estonian labour inspectorate dealing with posted work regulation. Before going to the positioning of the workers in the evolving migrant labour regime, we will describe the development of the regime through accounts of the government and union officials.

The making of the migrant labour regime: Government's deliberate strategy and construction companies' reactions to it

This section, which is based on the interviews with the experts, concentrates on the drivers of regulation that have paved the way to the contemporary shape of the migrant labour regime. State regulation and structures – to which social partner institutions also contribute – are either enabling or constraining the activities of the primary labour market actors; that is, national and transnational employers and migrant workers. In order to understand the structure of the regime, it is also important to see how and by whom this regime is constituted.

During the 2-year transition period to the free movement of labour from May 2004 to April 2006, the mobility of workers to Finland mainly took the form of worker posting. Due to this policy, hundreds of Estonia-based construction firms were established in order to provide services for Finnish main contractors, while the conditions of labour in this 'posting of workers' regime varied between Estonian and Finnish standards. However, the regime has undergone changes since then, the main difference being the extent to which the posting of workers has been used. One indicator of the trends in the posting of workers is the number of A1 portable documents issued by the sending country. The statistics of the Social Insurance Board of Estonia show that the number of A1 documents issued for Estonian companies sending their workers to Finnish construction sector peaked in 2011 (being 10,220 postings) and has declined since to 1,995 official postings in 2015 (Social Insurance Board 2015). These statistics do not show the full picture of the phenomenon, as not all companies apply for these forms, and some of the postings fall into the grey area, but they do indicate the major trends in the construction labour market.

Union officials' interviews provide background information about the change in the regime. After the introduction of tax numbers in the construction sector in 2013, there

appeared 10,000 – 11,000 more workers in the sector who turned their 'black' status into official employment (Union official #1a). At the time of the interview, there were around 80,000 Estonians on the pension insurance register in Finland plus around 15,000 posted workers; these numbers included, however, workers from all sectors. However, the union official noted that the number of posted workers was decreasing in the construction sector, while Estonians seemed to have been given more permanent positions in enterprises (Union official #1b).

Rakennusliitto's cooperation with the employers' association in the construction sector, the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT, has been fruitful in initiating regulatory changes in the sector. This started with joint efforts in lobbying for the law on main contractor liability, followed by the reverse-charge VAT system and culminating in the introduction of mandatory tax numbers in the construction industry in 2013 (Union official #2). Finally, the construction site register was introduced in summer 2014. Under the new system, the main contractor is liable to provide information for the tax authority on the employees, subcontractors' employees, sums of contracts and wage sums of the entire site. The union official (#2) insisted that in this way the Finnish contractors, who do their work in accordance with the rules, will gain back the competitive advantage they have lost due to grey economy actors. In the official's (#2) opinion, the tax numbers and main contractor's liability have worked well. What is more, the tax authority got more resources for inspections. Trade union officials have held regular meetings with tax officials, who are bound by their clauses of confidentiality but who are willing to listen to instances in which the trade union officials have discovered violations to the rules.

These observations seem to indicate that there are fewer posted workers from Estonia in the Finnish construction sector nowadays, because the Finnish government has taken strict measures against the grey economy. It is not easy, after all, to establish a company in Estonia and then provide services in Finland. And, further, if the posting of workers is done according to the rules, it is not economically very beneficial. In addition, Rakennusliitto has pressured Finnish main contractors not to use companies established in Estonia; and Estonian companies are not any more seen as very reliable by the main contractors. Neither can we exclude the effect of the economic crisis: Estonian firms are probably among those that lose their contracts first.

Simultaneously, with the decline in posting of workers from Estonia, there have been fluctuations in regard to Estonians establishing their own businesses in Finland. There was a peak at the beginning of the 2010s, when the main contractors started preferring Finnish companies as suppliers to Estonian ones; according to the municipality official (#1), the change occurred because the customers of these contractors did not trust Estonian-looking company names. This did not imply distrust in Estonian workers *per se* but in Estonian companies. There were cases where Estonians founded firms for one season only; they founded the companies, completed the operations of the companies, closed down the companies and then

came to the market with new companies the following year. The increased regulation in the Finnish construction labour market might have impaired possibilities for such strategising. A Rakennusliitto official (#3) noted that Estonian firm owners have started realising the tighter control regime in the contemporary Finnish construction sector:

> …these Estonian firms when they arrive, the main contractor has the liability to check… It needs to check everything. When a small company comes to carry out subcontracting, everything will be checked: how taxes are paid in Estonia, how the things with the workers have been dealt with. They now will understand that it's not that easy any more to try anything… If the Rakennusliitto hears about it, you'll immediately be boycotted. If you do subcontracting for XXX [a big Finnish company], it tells you directly to take your guys and return back to the other side [of the Gulf of Finland]. Nobody wants that any more. It was possible earlier.

This underscores the importance of monitoring the compliance according to the rules, not only by state authorities but also by trade union officials, in efforts to curb illegal business in construction. The tax numbers have also made Estonian employers straighten up their operations (Union official #3). Also, the access control imposed as a part of the site register system has affected the situation. Estonian employers are under dual pressure: on the one hand, workers have realised that there is no reason to remain posted and instead it is better to pursue a regular employment relationship or to find a job in another country; on the other hand, employers are facing increasing bureaucratic pressures because of the new tax and inspection arrangements (Union official #3).

The change in the business environment is also noticed among our interviewees who are Estonian small-business owners. Kalev, who had a company doing welding work in construction, is a case in point in regard to the changing atmosphere. There were 11 employees working at his company; of whom two were Finns and the rest Estonians. Kalev had a positive attitude towards the new ID-card system and the measures implemented to prevent a grey economy in Finland. He deemed it as necessary on the part of the Finnish government to introduce such measures. Also, he gave the new 'construction site register' arrangement a positive assessment. He seemed to have internalised the sentiment that 'we' have to make sure that nobody should be able to work illegally in Finland.

Moreover, both Estonian unions and the Estonian Labour Inspectorate have put an emphasis on informing the public about worker posting. They have published pamphlets and conducted information days about posted workers' rights. The Estonian Labour Inspectorate also signed a cooperation agreement with the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Töökeskkonna ülevaade 2014: 29).

Furthermore, the Finnish Construction Trade Union established a department in Estonia, Tallinn, with the objective of informing Estonian construction workers that are working or planning to work in Finland about their rights there and to help if they encounter problems. Thus, the awareness about posting rules has probably increased in recent years both among workers and employers. Workers posted from Estonia have the right to turn to Estonian courts and the Labour Dispute Committee if they are mistreated, and there have been several cases where posted workers have gotten their lawfully earned wages through the verdicts of these institutions.

The Structure of the Finnish Migrant Labour Regime

Grounded on our data, we argue that the pattern of firm ownership – referring both to the distinct division of labour between main contractors with Finnish ownership and subcontractors with Estonian ownership and to the migrant workers' relationship with and distance to the main contractor – is a major factor shaping the structure of the emerging migrant labour regime. We found that the nationality of ownership of the companies employing Estonians is an important determinant for the construction of the regime and consequently, for the position of the worker. Although this can be regarded as a 'natural' development (the Finnish firms tend to more readily implement the Finnish standards in their employment policy than the Estonian-originated companies do), this might also reflect the strategising of the main contractors and subcontractors around the 'translocal' labour market (Alho 2013).

We put forward four different positions (in terms of uncertainty and the level of wages) of workers in the Finnish migrant labour regime. The position of a posted worker is located in the bottom of the hierarchy; this is the position that Estonian workers would most eagerly like to get rid of (wages are the lowest and insecurity the highest). The position as a worker in an Estonian-owned company registered in Finland implies an improvement in terms of labour conditions compared to that of the posted worker. It is, however, evident that Estonian company owners are registering their business operations in Finland mostly for the sake of reputation in the eyes of Finnish contractors and not for the sake of providing better labour conditions for their workers. The third group, the self-employed and small business owners, consists of somewhat more privileged workers in terms of income and autonomy, but they are still precarious in terms of job security (there is no guarantee that work will continue; the responsibility for employment is completely on them). The fourth group, consisting of those workers employed in a Finnish company, is the one in which the workers are in the most secure position in terms of income, employment and rights. It would have been possible to distinguish those employed by Finnish temporary work agencies as a sub-category, since such workers have a distinctive position in the contracting chain, and they risk being employed for shorter time periods. However, we decided to include agency workers in the 'employed by Finnish companies' category, because migrants did not perceive it as considerably

unfavourable to being employed by the Finnish construction company. It was argued that wages are good and paid according to the rules, regular working hours offered and employment contracts extended.

Posted workers

Although only one of the construction workers we interviewed was posted at the time of the interview, several of them had experiences of being posted during their earlier careers in Finland. The stories about being a posted worker indicated that these were difficult times characterised by uncertainty, poor working conditions and disputes with employees over unpaid wages. The following examples illustrate some aspects of this kind of working arrangement.

Aleksandr, who now worked for a scaffolding company owned by Estonians but registered in Finland, had previous experience of being posted from Estonia in 2010. In his words, the business idea of that company was 'to hire people for a certain job and then get new people in for the next job.' Aleksandr was, however, hesitant to share further details of the posting. He regarded himself as lucky because he later found a permanent job via a job advert; a job in which he has been for 3 years at the time of the interview. Jaan, Rein and Edgar did not complain about the levels of either working conditions (wages were not at the Finnish level, but they were not expecting Finnish salaries at that time) or living conditions at the time of being posted workers in Finland in the first decade of the 2000s. They seemed to regard that phase in their migrant work history as being almost a necessary part in a career path that eventually lead to permanent positions in Finnish firms. This indicates that those who are new in the Finnish labour market might accept staying at the bottom of the migrant labour regime until they gain more experience and knowledge about labour rights.

Arno, who was working as a posted worker 5 years before the interview, had more to complain about his treatment. He was employed by an Estonian agency firm that had an agreement with a Finnish agency firm on posting him to Finland. The wage, 8 euros, was paid into an Estonian bank account, and it 'was no wage at all, say, but at that time it was normal,' since the living costs in Estonia were lower. However, he coincidentally learned that the main contractor paid 34 euros per hour for him, which meant that the agency firms through which he worked at the site earned a high surplus. Arno decided to give notice of leaving the job the same day. Similar strategising between the contractor and subcontractors was seen in Lembit's story when he came to work for the first time in Finland in 2009. The Estonian company for which he was working did subcontracting for a Finnish construction firm. As a posted worker, he sought work directly from the Finnish main contractor, but he was informed that the Finnish main contractor had an agreement with the Estonian subcontractor: the former was not allowed to hire Estonians from the subcontracting firm. Finally, he managed to get a permanent job at a different Finnish contractor.

Lembit considered that the typical way of entering into the Finnish labour market is via an Estonian construction company or agency firm:

> As far as I know, there are many people who have come either through an Estonian firm or agency firm. First you get employed by an agency firm, and then you do good work somewhere and finally end up being employed by a Finnish company.

Moreover, Mart's story provides an example which shows that some Finnish firms still exploit the posting regime. He had been commuting between Finland and Estonia for almost 10 years, building houses for one firm and then for the last 8 years doing construction work for another Finnish firm through an Estonian temporary agency company. He had asked about the possibility to work directly for the Finnish firm, but the employer had said that it is not possible (because there are periods during which there is no work to offer). The Finns, in Mart's words: '/.../ won't choose this option and for them it is easier to hire us through a rental company because then they don't have to pay us anything when they can't guarantee work for us.' Most optimally, he can have a schedule 2 weeks in Finland – 2 weeks in Estonia. With the agency firm, Mart does not have any clear-cut contract, and sometimes he has no work at all, but he is still satisfied: 'At least our wages are always paid on time, and the pay isn't small, it's more like average or above average compared to those Estonian firms who have workers in Finland.' As Mart argues, there is a real dependency relationship between the Estonian agency workers and the Finnish contractor: 'I think it makes more sense to talk about the company on the Finnish side, who we work for – there isn't much to say about the Estonian company, it just rents out workers.' However, the tight dependency relationship does not imply any responsibility on the part of the Finnish contractor:

> /.../ we are a rental workforce, we've been sitting at home for over a month now, there simply is no work at the moment. But it's really easy with a rental company or agency workers – if there's no work, the Finns have no responsibilities towards us.

The human resource strategy for the Finnish company Mart was working for seemed to be based on the following principle: permanent jobs for Finns, temporary agency jobs for Estonians. The Estonians, therefore, were the auxiliary workforce which is to be 'purchased' if need be.

Employed by a firm registered in Finland but operated by Estonians

Some accounts of the interviewed workers let us understand that there is a tendency that Estonian firms move from posting (of Estonian workers) to registering a company in Finland and then to employing Estonian workers. The reasons for this shift can be derived from both the concern for the reputation of Estonian companies

in Finland and the stricter regulations in the Finnish construction sector. For example, Tom reported that the Finnish main contractors were not willing to subcontract purely Estonian firms any more. That is why the Estonian owner of the firm he was working for registered the firm in Finland.

Although the recent legislative changes had affected the situation, the Estonian firms were still able to circumvent the labour regime aimed at native workers. For instance, Peter, an interviewed Estonian worker who later became a Rakennusliitto official, regarded the tax number system as ineffective since the tax authority was not authorised to completely inspect working hours. Peter also maintained that it is easier for a Finnish contractor to deal with Estonian workers, since the former has no obligation to arrange fixed working hours or take financial – for example tax payment – responsibilities for the latter. The influx of cheap labour from Estonia has meant that the Finnish construction workers have had to accept lower hourly wages (which however are according to the construction collective bargaining agreement) instead of having higher contract-based wages. This is due to the pricing of the contracts below the Finnish standards by the Estonian firms. In Peter's view, Finnish companies were equally guilty for this development as main contractors.

The stories the migrants working for Estonian companies registered in Finland told us indicated that although through this kind of arrangement working conditions and wages might have been better than when posted, there were also several factors that remained 'Estonia-like'. For example, long working hours resembled those of posted workers. Although Timo was locally employed in Finland, his work schedule hinted at an arrangement typical for posted workers: 3 weeks work in Finland, 1 week free time in Estonia. Another resemblance to the Estonian labour regime is that the Estonian employers did not generally allow their workers to belong to a union.

Similar patterns of irregularity and insecurity as in the case with posted workers were seen in Anti' story. He was generally unsatisfied with his position and considered working under Estonians as not being very beneficial for workers, as 'under Estonian management […] the system is still like you are working in an Estonian company.' Anti was, however, unmotivated to change this arrangement due to his current flexible work schedule and to his ultimate plan to move back to Estonia. In the meantime he had to be flexible, as he did not have a permanent contract and there were breaks without any work between successive temporary contracts given by his employer. He had complementary job spells as a painter, a job he needed for the breaks when he was not offered any work. The introduction of the tax numbers had had some effect on the conduct of the Estonian employer, but there was still 'some kind of tricking' by the employer. The payment of the salary was often irregular. Anti felt himself to be bullied by the employer, when he found out that he was the last one to whom the employer paid the salary. This is a telling example of how the workers can be at the mercy of a single employer:

> I knew that I am going to be paid, but it really got to me that I was the last one /.../ I do not believe that he [the manager] kind of, or directly thinks of me badly, but, but yes, he just, like he knows, that I will manage.

Valdo once worked for a company that was registered in Finland but that had Estonian owners and similarly to Anti he was very sceptical about Estonian employers in Finland: '…well, let's say 99% of the time, if you are working for Estonians then you either don't get paid or they don't pay you that … you know, all the extras and things that you need for construction, you usually don't get that.' Valdo belonged to Rakennusliitto. He regarded the union as powerful enough to curb the illegal activities of Estonian companies:

> But yeah, the Rakennusliitto, they can go to the workplace and stop a company from working, for example. They ban you and you can't work, for example. It happened to me once at a company. We went to work in the morning, the big boss from the main contractor came and said … the guys from XXX [A Finnish company with Estonian ownership] … you are not allowed to work in Finland. So you can't work. Go home.

Valdo told, however, that the boycott imposed by the Rakennusliitto and the ban on business operations imposed by the authorities did not prohibit the company owners from establishing a new company with a different name and starting operations again in Finland.

Evert's story illustrates how the Estonian construction business arranges its human resource policy in a way which is beneficial for Finnish contractors. He was employed by a middle-sized Estonian construction company (with around 100 employees), in which almost all of the workers were Estonians. The company did subcontracting for major Finnish construction companies in the biggest Finnish towns. He mentioned that he had applied for work for a Finnish main contractor (for whom they did subcontracting) a couple of times. The fact that the main contractor refused to hire the Estonian (subcontracting/agency) firm's workers bears resemblance to Lembit's story (see 'Posted workers' section). When applying for a job the first time, Evert did not even receive a reply because the company – as he was told – did not need any workers; however, that company had a new Finnish worker hired the following week.

Self-employed and small business owners

On the basis our analysis, we regard that being a self-employed service provider or a small business owner might provide better labour conditions for Estonians in the Finnish migrant labour regime than the statuses of being a posted worker or employed at Estonian-owned companies registered in Finland. First and foremost, it is

manifested in better remuneration and a higher degree of autonomy, although in regard to employment security this kind of position is less secure and predictable than being employed by a 'real' Finnish company. It is also to be noted that certain Estonian owners of construction companies are in comparatively advantageous positions (they sometimes exploit their co-nationals), but those are beyond the scope of this article as they represent the position of managers or employers rather than that of workers.

Veiko had established a small firm of his own. Through his company, he provided his services in the construction sector in both Estonia and Finland. The idea of establishing the company derived from the seasonality of his earlier job spells in Finland; typically he worked from March-April until November-December, and then he was sent on unpaid holiday. So far, however, the emphasis of his business activity had been in Estonia, and there had been only a few contracts in Finland. He acknowledged that working in Finland is project-based and seasonal; however, he did not seek more secure, long-term commitments. As an Estonian employer in the Finnish market, Veiko saw the pros of the well-regulated Finnish system, although foreign contractors were undermining it. Veiko's account, therefore, reflects awareness of the positive side of regulation on the one hand, but also acknowledgement of the fact that a foreign employer can circumvent institutional constraints on the other:

> In many respects, the system like this is good. When you [the employee] achieve a certain level, you see that you are supposed to have such a wage. But the market puts everything in place […] one told me that their firm does not get contracts anymore, because Estonians and other foreigners have put the market price at a low level. There is, indeed, quite tight competition in that respect.

Arno, who was currently working in a Finnish firm, also pondered the pros and cons of entrepreneurship. Some of the colleagues with whom he used to work in Estonia were self-employed in Finland. They appeared to have a better income than Arno. While his net earnings per hour were 13 Euros, he argued that as a self-employed person he could get 22 Euros, minus taxes and other costs. However, Arno maintained, the main contractor had no responsibility for a self-employed person. Were he 10 years younger, he would consider becoming self-employed. He was also aware of the downside of being employed by himself: 'there wouldn't be any work in the wintertime.'

The difference between the statuses of being self-employed and a wage-earner is seen in the fate of three fellow workers, Jaan, Rein and Edgar. Jaan had worked in Finland for 7 years, whereas Rein and Edgar had only worked for 3 years. The status of the workers was different in the first round of the interviews in 2014: while Jaan had an enterprise of his own, based in Estonia, Rein and Edgar had been directly employed

by a Finnish company since summer 2013. For some reason Jaan had not got a permanent position, as the other two had, although he was working for the same Finnish contractor. In fact, the company owner (a Finn) tried his best to persuade Rein and Edgar to establish a firm of their own, but as they delayed their decision, the owner eventually agreed to employ them directly. Rein concluded that 'it would be easier [for the Finnish owner] to get rid [of me] if I had a firm of my own. But now I am satisfied.' The structure of the small construction company, for which Jaan, Rein and Edgar worked, actually consisted of a web of several smaller companies in which 'everyone came up with a firm of their own.'

Employed by a Finnish firm

Working for a 'real' Finnish company, even if only a temporary agency firm, was seen as something desirable but hard to achieve by several of our interviewees. Despite his employment as an agency worker, Vello was quite satisfied with his position as carpenter at one of the biggest Finnish labour agency firms. Although he did not have a carpenter's degree in Estonia, he was given a salary corresponding to a carpenter's qualification. However, the work was hard, and he was interested in educating himself to do a less-demanding occupation, such as that of a crane driver. Vello realised there would be better paid positions in other firms, but he was afraid of changing the job because there would be a 4-month probation period during which the employer could dismiss him at any time. He had tried to get onto courses to get educated as a crane driver, but his employer (the Finnish labour agency firm) had refused to pay for that. He considered that this was odd: the company would benefit from his higher qualification.

After having been employed by the same Finnish agency firm as Vello, Arno had managed to get a permanent job at a 'real' Finnish construction firm. He worked as an excavator driver. The difference between these two workers seemed to have been that Arno had the required qualifications already when coming to work in Finland, whereas Vello had just started to pursue a higher qualification. Arno clearly saw the pros of being employed by a Finnish employer: 'Well, he pays the salaries, and… working hours are at 8 hours a day, you are at home on Saturdays and Sundays and nobody forces you to work more than that.' In the current firm, Arno worked without a written employment contract, or at least he had not seen the contract. However, 'the salary has always been put onto the account.'

The fact that Jaan, Rein and Edgar have worked for the same Finnish employer for a few years might indicate that they have found secure employment. On the other hand, they might not have any other option, that is, any other place to go; all of them would have liked to get a job within a 200 km radius of Helsinki but have not succeeded so far. Even though they had been working as a team for years, basically doing contract work for the owner of the company, they were persuaded to become self-employed. All agreed that the boss was 'bad tempered' sometimes, even though they had done

a good job. Moreover, even if a Finnish employer hires Estonians it might be because they are not as demanding as locals, but rather 'good workers' in the eyes of the employer (MacKenzie & Forde 2009), as Anti concludes:

> They [Finnish employers] do hire [Estonians] if you are able to prove yourself, then I believe, they do hire you. Well, I think, that… that it is possible to pay a minimum rate to Estonians. Well, I do not know, we do a lot of demolition work that Finns do not want to do, and as such some Finnish company will gladly hire Estonians. Firstly, they do not have to pay as much since who is working is working for less money. I do not know, I don't know any Estonian currently who is being paid as much as a Finn. Well, I do not know about numbers, but I am rather sure, that no Estonian, perhaps some highly skilled specialist is getting paid as much… but I doubt it [...].

Lembit, who worked for a Finnish construction firm had noticed the racism that prevails on Finnish construction sites. According to him, Finns do not regard Estonian colleagues 'as their own', and the former are likely to exclude the latter:

> Well, it [the racism] appears in wages, labour relations, but going to work is also very bad when... Like we were, went to work, took our clothes off, put them in the closet and took our shoes off. Then men [Finnish co-workers] would come and take them and throw your shoes into the dustbin, for example. /.../ Or they would come and yell at you. /.../

Lembit related this kind of behaviour to the fear of Finns that foreign workers would either take their jobs or that the Finnish workers would not be able to be 'as lazy' anymore while working. The accounts of the interviewed Estonian construction workers were uniform in arguing that Estonians tend to be more flexible and hard-working than locals and thus 'good workers' (MacKenzie & Forde 2009). Arno was similarly as sceptical as Lembit of the possibility of becoming culturally and economically equal to local workers either in the eyes of Finnish co-workers or Finnish employers.

All this seems to be evidence that despite the Estonian workers' ability to climb up the career ladder up to the position of 'employed by Finns', they still seem to be locked in a less favourable position than the native workers. There seems to be, however, an exception to the rule, which is Dagmar's story. Dagmar's story of getting a job in Finland is exceptional, since he got it through a trade union contact in Finland while being a trade union activist in Estonia at the beginning of the 2000s. He called the employer and asked for a job and got an affirmative response. In his words, the employer appeared to be benevolent especially to those foreign workers who had

been fired by other (dishonest) employers in Finland. The employer had also a positive attitude towards the trade union membership of the workers.

Concluding discussion

The aim of this analysis has been firstly to throw light on the drivers of regulation that lie behind the emergent migrant labour regime in the construction sector in Finland. Although employer and labour strategies are important in shaping the regime, the roles of EU (e.g., through different directives) and government regulation, which are influenced by social partner institutions, remain crucial. There are clear signs indicating that the policies of the Finnish government alongside trade union efforts and lobbying activities (sometimes in cooperation with the employers' federation) have had a positive overall effect on the evolvement of the construction labour market. Thus, a strong industrial relation system such as that in place in Finland seems to be more resistant to the corroding effects of post-accession labour migration than other systems; even within the single EU labour market. The Finnish government, in contrast to the effects seen elsewhere, has been able to deter the undermining of the strong industrial relations system in construction (Wagner & Lillie 2014). Further research is needed in different sectors and national contexts to analyse whether also alternative ways of circumventing institutional constraints at the national level (Herrmann 2008; Lillie & Sippola 2011) can be prevented by interventionist regulation and cooperation between authorities at the national and international level.

Secondly, we have explored the current migrant labour regime apparent in the Finnish construction sector. We have identified four differing positions within the regime: posted workers; those working for a company registered in Finland but owned by Estonians; self-employed or small business owners; and those working for a 'real' Finnish company. We have seen that the pattern of firm ownership – reflecting both the nationality-based division between the main contractors and subcontractors and the workers' relationship with and distance from the main contractor – is a major factor shaping the structure of the emerging migrant labour regime. The translocal labour market setting that has emerged between Estonia and Finland has generated different worker positions based on their employers' nationality, the relationship to the main contractor and workers' contractual status that reinforces the segmentation of labour.

This study further reveals that irrespective of employer strategies, the Estonian workers had managed to improve their position through hard work and lucky coincidences, partially rendered possible by the recent development of labour market regulations. There is indeed a variety of forms of the use of labour, and the position of migrant workers might have improved compared to that of posted workers. However, the migrants still do not regard themselves as 'full' members of the labour collective. Although the analysis showed marked differences between the four

positions in the construction labour market – the first position (the posted workers) being most and the fourth position (those working for a Finnish company) being the least precarious and low-paid – the whole migrant labour regime seems to be based on the inferiority of the Estonians. It is remarkable that the Estonians were still in a more disadvantageous position in terms of career advancement, cultural acceptance by locals, dependency on the employer and flexibility demanded from the side of the employer. Moreover, the expectation of the employers that Estonians tend to be more flexible workers than locals often persisted even though the employer was not any more an Estonian. Whether this is due to the overall deterioration of the position of the workers in the Finnish construction sector or to a systematic tendency of segregation in the labour market remains a question to be considered in future research.

By means of the biographical lens, this study suggests that migrant workers' agency also plays a role in shaping the migrant labour regime. Seemingly, these Estonian workers desired to leave their precarious positions behind and enter the ranks of fully respected and valued worker-citizens (see e.g. Anderson 2013) by seeking employment in 'real' Finnish firms. However, the Estonians appeared to seek improvement in their positions via becoming 'good workers' (MacKenzie & Forde 2009) – referring to qualities attributed to workers by employers – rather than demanding their rights as workers *per se.* Thereby, migrant workers were on the one hand able to gain a 'competitive advantage' over local labour and to secure employment, but on the other hand, they simultaneously consented to inferior employment conditions in comparison to natives. Analysis of different forms of workers' individual and collective agency was beyond the scope of this study but is an important aspect that ought to be scrutinised in further research.

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III

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Overcoming Barriers to Transnational Organizing Through Identity Work: Finnish–Estonian Trade Union Cooperation

Kairit Kall
Tallinn University, Estonia; University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Nathan Lillie
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Markku Sippola
University of Tampere, Finland

Laura Mankki
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Abstract

This article analyses a project by Finnish and Estonian unions to adopt 'organizing model' strategies through establishing the transnational 'Baltic Organising Academy'. Initially aimed at Estonian workplaces, successful campaigns inspired Finnish unions to copy the model in Finland. This cooperation was originally motivated by labour market interdependence between the two countries, and the failure of past social-partnership oriented union strategies in Estonia. The willingness of Finnish and Estonian unions to commit resources to transnational cooperation around an 'organizing model' marks a dramatic departure from the unions' previous strategies. This change was accomplished by transnational activists who have developed and raised support for the adoption of an 'organizing model' in the face of structural challenges and ideological opposition by some union officials. The project's transnational organizing exemplifies one possible solution to union weakness in Eastern Europe, and underlines the importance of 'identity work' in building transnational trade union coalitions around organizing.

Keywords

Estonia, Finland, organizing model, transnational union cooperation

Corresponding author:
Kairit Kall, Tallinn University, Narva mnt 25, 10120 Tallinn, Estonia.
Email: kairit.kall@gmail.com

Introduction

In 2010, a coalition of unions from countries in the Baltic region formed the 'Baltic Organising Academy' (BOA), in an attempt to halt union decline by introducing 'organizing model' strategies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. While the project has so far had limited impact in the other Baltic and Nordic countries, the project inspired Finnish and Estonian unions to develop strong bilateral transnational organizing cooperation. For Finnish and Estonian unions implementing the BOA has involved not only reimagining union geographies, but reorienting union identities, away from social partnership and towards more confrontational forms of unionism. The Finnish–Estonian BOA cooperation is a rare example of sustained, successful transnationalism backed by high-level strategies, and fully implemented in action on the ground.

The article argues that behind this success is a long process of identity work by Finnish and Estonian unionists, which pre-dates and extends well beyond organizing. Finnish and Estonian unions have overcome a 'double barrier' in developing cooperation around bi-national organizing. First, they had to overcome the national focus and insularity inherent to union activity. Second, they had to 'sell' their organizing project to union leaderships focused on social partnership and membership servicing. These adjustments have involved a process of 'identity work', to build among Finnish and Estonian trade unionists an organizing mindset, and a cadre of unionists skilled in and committed to organizing. Although trade union survival and improved bargaining leverage provide the BOA's rationale, the key factor behind its success is 'identity work', through which trust has been established and common norms, objectives and identities have been (re)constructed. A cadre of transnational union activists have skilfully framed organizing as a viable approach in Estonia and Finland. Following Greer and Hauptmeier (2012), the article argues that 'identity work' is essential for initiating and sustaining transnational trade union cooperation.

Estonia and Finland are linguistically and culturally similar neighbours, whose labour and product markets are linked by European Union (EU) free movement. Finland, however, has a comparatively high union density of 69 per cent, while Estonia's is 6 per cent (Visser, 2015). Since independence in 1991, Estonia has become a magnet for Finnish capital, a source country for low wage migration into Finland and a laboratory for Finnish multinational companies to try out non-union working practices. Finnish unions have aided Estonian unions since the early 1990s, trying to build in Estonia the industry-level bargaining and social dialogue typical in Finland. Since Estonian unions are weak, management has usually seen little reason to engage with them (Kall, 2017). While cooperation around social partnership in Estonia has failed, this history of cooperation has provided a shared background on which like-minded factions in both countries built in promoting the 'organizing model'. The original idea was to implement the organizing model in Estonia but Estonian successes inspired Finnish unionists to imitate these practices in the very different environment in Finland.

The article begins by describing the 'organizing', 'transnationalism' and 'social partnership' frames, their compatibilities and tensions, and then turns to explaining how

'identity work' can reconcile the tensions in service of transnational organizing strategies. Then follow sections describing case study methodology, the pre-BOA Nordic–Baltic union cooperation, the BOA's genesis, the success and spread of the 'organizing model' in Estonia, and its imitation by Finnish unions. The study highlights the role of various aspects of 'identity work' in building and sustaining the transnational organizing model and concludes with a discussion of the factors supporting the BOA's success and assessing its long-term prospects.

The organizing model

The 'organizing model' is understood here in terms of both internal and external organizing (Connolly et al., 2017; Heery et al., 2000; Hurd, 2004). Internal organizing refers to mobilizing and stimulating activism among already existing union members. External organizing describes practices that contribute to membership growth, such as targeted organizing campaigns in workplaces where there is as yet no union presence (Heery et al., 2000: 996). Although the main focus of BOA has been external organizing (especially in low-density Estonia), internal organizing has also been relevant (Häkkinen, 2013: 11–13).

The organizing model developed in the 1980s and 1990s as a union response to the virulently anti-union environment of the United States. Advocates of the model have promoted mobilization of current and potential union members and a set of aggressive union tactics, which when taken together have improved union 'win-rates' in the National Labor Relations Board representation elections which are typically the focus of US organizing campaigns (see Bronfenbrenner, 1997). The model assumes a hostile management which unions counter by mobilizing rank and file workers. Unions organize in secret for as long as possible, preparing workers mentally for a management onslaught, researching the vulnerabilities of targeted firms and building rank and file organization. This process encourages workers to 'reimagine' their interests as collective and class-based, in opposition to management (Simms, 2012). In short, the frame takes conflict as given, and emphasizes tactics which have been proven effective (Bronfenbrenner, 1997), though under an admittedly narrow set of assumptions (De Turberville, 2004).

The model has been criticized on many fronts. Union officials focused on partnership and membership servicing sometimes oppose the organizing model because they believe it competes with their own goals and priorities (Fiorito, 2004). Although emphasizing grassroots mobilization, it is staff-driven, following a strict playbook, and implemented by professional organizers (Fletcher and Hurd, 2001). Unlike partnership, which focuses on process legitimacy and compromise, the organizing model emphasizes specific goals, and mobilizes resources such as staff, political influence and worker support, to achieve those goals. It requires unions to allocate resources which might have been used elsewhere. This is arguably facilitated by a strong central leadership (Krzywdzinski, 2010), which is however in service of a rank and file-based mobilizing strategy (Milkman, 2006). The apparent uniformity of the organizing model as a one-size-fits-all approach belies the complex environments and organizing challenges unions face in different contexts (De

Turberville, 2004). Some question its potential to succeed as a macro revitalization strategy for the labour movement as a whole because the obsessive focus with organizing practice neglects broader issues of rebuilding class power (Simms, 2012; Simms and Holgate, 2010). Related to this, organizing is often seen only as a way to bring in new members and increase union density, leaving aside the issue of empowering and mobilizing existing union members (Connolly et al., 2017: 321–2).

In practice unions adjust the model to local circumstances. Lessons from the 'organizing model' have proven attractive to unions in many countries, including highly regulated industrial relations systems such as the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Inevitably, this has involved adaptation to local conditions. The end goals of organizing campaigns differ from one country to another, since these usually involve building workplace institutions, and the forms these take depend on national labour law. For example, in Germany organizing emphasizes establishing works councils instead of signing collective agreements (Turner, 2009). For Dutch unions, internal organizing, or mobilizing and activating the membership, is usually more important than winning collective agreements per se, since the legal extension of collective agreements means that workers are typically already covered. However, the enforcement of these agreements requires shopfloor union leverage which can be achieved through internal organizing, which strengthens the unions' legitimacy by promoting reforms and democratization within unions. This does not exclude external organizing, which the Dutch unions also do, to extend union representation and regulation to previously unorganized groups of workers (Connolly et al., 2017). Arnholtz et al. (2016) note that organizing advocates in Denmark 'translate' the organizing model in ways which legitimate it in the Danish context, selecting only the parts which they regard as well suited to Denmark's high union density, highly institutionalized context.

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) unions face weak institutional contexts and low union density. In some ways this environment is similar to the USA, and could theoretically be fertile ground for external organizing. An important limitation has been, however, that CEE unions lack the resources for organizing. Furthermore, they are often caught in a tradition of servicing unionism inherited from state socialist times. Polish unions, and in particular Solidarność, enthusiastically adopted the organizing model in the late 1990s, inspired by international cooperation and the entrance of a new generation of unionists into union leadership. Polish organizing, however, has had to fight for its budget share and remains relatively small scale (Krzywdzinski, 2010).

The transnationalism frame

Compared to the organizing model, union transnationalism represents a broader field of activities, with more varied ideological underpinnings. While much of it can be understood as conventional trade union interest micropolitics within firms (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2012), or the geographical expansion of union activities to regain bargaining leverage lost to globalization (Lillie, 2004), at the EU level unions push pro-integrationist and social dialogue agendas, shaped by the EU's political opportunity structure (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). There is also an international campaigning

undercurrent (Lillie and Martinez Lucio, 2004) and many examples of cooperation motivated by radical leftist internationalism (Durrenberger, 2009).

It is unusual for unions to directly organize members across national boundaries. International organizing assistance usually occurs in partnership with local unions supported by foreign unions' finances, training and sometimes solidarity. A recent failed effort proving the rule is the German construction union IG BAU's initiative to establish the European Migrant Workers Union (EMWU). The EMWU accepted members from any industry or country, and tried to establish effective representation for Polish migrant workers in Germany. It encountered resistance from other German unions jealous of their jurisdiction. It also had difficulty recruiting migrant members. Its resources were eventually absorbed back into IG BAU (Greer et al., 2013). On the other hand, the London-based International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Section has for decades maintained a successful global bargaining system allowing for direct seafarer membership, although these bargaining rights are normally transferred to member unions. The ITF's situation is unusual in that 'organizing' is mostly through secondary action, so convincing the seafarers to join is useful but not essential (Lillie, 2005), obviating the problem of recruiting workers into a 'foreign' union.

The social partnership frame

'Social partnership' in some contexts is defined as mutual gains bargaining (Kelly, 2004), but its Nordic implementation is heavily imbued with a social regulatory role for unions. In Finland, it is more common to use the term 'labour market parties', recognizing the role of regulated conflict in Nordic labour policy (Kettunen, 2012). Since industrialization in the 1970s and 1980s, strong national social partner relations in Finland have been backed by a societal consensus supportive of the role of unions, and nearly universal union membership. Unions assure membership through shop steward networks and a Ghent-system linkage of membership to unemployment benefits (Böckerman and Uusitalo, 2006). External organizing has not been important, because there has not been anyone to organize. Unions regard themselves as partners in national politics, with a role in shaping Finland's political-economy and safeguarding its competitiveness. This role is sometimes at tension with collective action or 'movement' (Kettunen, 2004: 305), such as organizing often entails.

In Estonia social partnership is weak – although unions strive for it – and at the national level often takes an 'illusory' form (Woolfson and Kallaste, 2011). With low membership levels and withdrawal of state support, Estonian unions have lost the financial stability and policy influence which was the legacy of their state-socialist heritage and subsequent EU promotion of their social partner role (Woolfson and Kallaste, 2011). Due to employers' disinterest, sectoral bargaining is rare and most collective agreements are company level. Unions mainly operate through peaceful collective bargaining and routine servicing of existing members. The lack of a union protest culture hampers the use of more aggressive tactics (Kall, 2017).

Finnish and Estonian unionists value their membership servicing and social partnership regulatory roles, which involve a mind-set in conflict with that of the organizing model. However, in line with De Turberville (2007) servicing is not incompatible with

organizing. Social partnership relies on union power resources (Turner, 1998), which in some cases depend on organizing. In the absence of union power resources, partnership either collapses, or becomes a legitimation tool for management or the state (Woolfson and Kallaste, 2011). The organizational infrastructure of social partnership and servicing, in the absence of continuing struggle to establish unions' position in society, can over time result in unions no longer having the ability to mobilize workers. In such cases, implementing 'organizing unionism' requires changes in union structures, personnel and identity (Krzywdzinski, 2010; Voss and Sherman, 2000). The introduction of organizing is sometimes opposed by unionists who believe it wastes resources which could be used for servicing, or disrupts existing trust relations with management. These tensions between organizing, partnership and servicing are inevitable, and managing them is an integral part of adopting the organizing model.

Identity work

Transnational union organizing cooperation requires organizational innovation both in terms of transnational linkages as well as the development of an organizing model. Both dimensions require 'identity work', to bring about the oppositional and campaigning orientation needed to organize and deepen the mutual trust needed for successful transnational cooperation. 'Identity work' refers to 'anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves or others' (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996: 115). During the process collective (or individual) identities are created, sustained and modified (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Snow and McAdam, 2000). Identity construction, as a form of identity work is, according to Snow and McAdam (2000: 53), facilitated by framing, collective action or a combination of the two. As concluded by Benford and Snow (2000: 612), 'framing processes have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements'. Framing is a processual phenomenon entailing mobilizing ideas and meanings, with an important role for agency and the generation of interpretative frames for identity (and reality) construction (Benford and Snow, 2000: 614).

The identity work concept has been applied to union transnationalism by Greer and Hauptmeier (2012), who emphasize its role in sustaining cooperation between unions in different production sites at General Motors (GM) Europe. They point out that transnational coalitions between unions lack institutional support and, following Cooke (2005), note that because of this, local unions face a prisoners' dilemma when acting collectively. In order not to be undermined by management whipsawing, GM unions needed to change the rules of the game. Through identity work over time GM unions have constructed a common interest and purpose, countering management efforts to confound their cooperation. This was accomplished through a framing and trust building process involving face-to-face interactions, formal and informal socializing and educating and mobilizing workers (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2012). Identity work allowed the unionists to overcome the limitations of existing institutional infrastructure and embedded identities, permitting adaptation to changing productive structures and management strategies.

The double barrier

Transnational organizing involves overcoming a double barrier, to change into organizing unions and to organize workers in another country. In the current case, identity work enabled the unions not only to build cooperation by reframing their interests, but also shifted those unions' identities to prioritize organizing, which formerly had been considered in conflict with their principles. Both Finnish and Estonian unions hold to their own versions of 'social partnership', and some unionists regard the organizing model as threatening to this.

In some respects, the organizing and transnational cooperation frames overlap, in emphasizing trade union solidarity and mutual aid, as well as strategic innovation and adaptation to changing economic environments. Still, 'transnational cooperation' covers a wide variety of activities and perspectives (Lillie and Martinez Lucio, 2004) while organizing is focused. In the Finland–Estonia case previous cooperation was built on a transnational social partnership paradigm. Overcoming the double barrier required constructing the organizing model frame on top of an earlier process of transnational identity work, out of which a cadre of union officials and activists emerged committed to organizing and rebuilding union strength in a joined labour market.

Methodology

The literature suggests that there are many barriers to implementing the organizing model in different national contexts and especially transnationally. The main question guiding the current research was: how have the Estonian and Finnish unions surmounted these barriers? Answering this question involved analysing the process of identity work and union strategic decision making, through triangulating three types of data sources: interview testimony; (participant) observations; and documentary material over several years. Although Estonian unions were to some extent also supported by the Swedish and Danish unions, the article concentrates on the Finnish–Estonian cooperation as the most extensive one. It is acknowledged that one limitation of the study is that no detailed research was conducted on actors from other Nordic and Baltic countries, which would have provided more generalizability to the arguments.

The case study draws on 16 in-depth interviews (conducted in 2014–2016) with trade union officials and organizers in Estonia and Finland, participant observation during organizer training and organizing visits to companies (in 2016), 26 interviews conducted with Baltic area trade unionists in 2004–2005, cooperation workshops involving Finnish and Estonian unions (in 2004–2005) and documents such as BOA meeting minutes, progress reports and union newsletters. The 2014–2016 data were collected with the aim of understanding the decision-making process and strategy behind the implementation of the organizing model, and the development of Finnish–Estonian union cooperation. The 2004–2005 data were collected during an EU-funded Nordic–Baltic project, 'Promoting Information, Consultation and Participation in the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Industry and Construction Sectors', with the goal of tracking industrial relations developments in the Baltic States. The data were thematically coded and analysed to trace the development of trans-Baltic cooperation over more than a decade, to see changes in strategy, structures and collective action frames.

Exporting the Finnish model to Estonia

Since the early 1990s, Finnish unionists have tried to guide the Estonians towards the Finnish model of coordinated industry-level bargaining and social dialogue. Finnish unions tended to regard their system as a superior model for weaker labour movements to follow. This attitude fuelled a 'big brother mentality', assuming Estonians could follow the same path, minimizing cultural differences and local particularities (Skulason and Jääskelainen, 2000). One official from the Finnish Metalworkers' Union (Metalliliitto) critically explained this attitude:

> Look, [we told them] we are strong, we have high organization rates and the funniest part was that we insisted that they should have a dialogue with the employers, when the employers didn't want to have a dialogue with them. But we insisted that you should find a way to have a dialogue with the employers. (Metalliliitto official #1, January 2015)

Finnish–Estonian union cooperation developed in the context of many EU initiatives, as well as multilateral cooperation between Nordic and Baltic State unions, under the Baltic Sea Trade Union Network (BASTUN), formed in 1999 (Schymik, 2013: 75). Finnish–Estonian cooperation was much deeper than these, having been developed through numerous bilateral initiatives as well. These include, for example, the Finnish unions establishing an information office in Estonia for Estonians considering working in Finland, and the Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Service Employees (ETKA) and Finnish private service sector union PAM concluding an agreement in the late 2000s making it easier for ETKA members to join PAM when they move to Finland (ETKA official, September 2014). Notably, the Finnish Seamen's Union (SMU) and the Estonian Seamen's Independent Union (EMSA) have had a longstanding cooperation in representing seafarers on Baltic ships, which extended into shore-based hotels. Ships on Baltic Sea routes have frequently been crewed by both Estonians and Finns, and their shop-floor representation has been a cooperative endeavour (EMSA's president, April 2010).

Prior to the turn to organizing there were scattered efforts to recruit Estonians with help from Finnish unions. For example, the Finnish Chemical Workers' and Estonian Light Industry Trade Union shared the costs of a recruiter (Estonian Light Industry Trade Union (EKTAL) official, November 2005). The Finnish Metalliliitto and the Federation of Estonian Metal Workers' Unions (EMAF) cooperated by using the Finnish union's leverage in headquarters to help organize Estonian subsidiaries. This strategy brought some growth in membership, but was later undermined by the dismissal of many Estonian union members (EMAF official, March 2005). Furthermore, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) and the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) organized joint events in 2005 on recruiting and a seminar on strike strategy (EAKL official #1, August 2006). These efforts demonstrated the recognition of the problem of low organization rates in Estonia, pointing towards a need for more systematic organizing (Häkkinen, 2013).

Although Finnish–Estonian cooperation failed to turn around union decline in Estonia, by 2010, when the organizing model began to be considered, Estonian and Finnish unions had established a cooperation culture and personal contacts through joint activities spanning two decades. Although the interdependence of labour markets was an

underlying motivation, the routines of cooperation made joint introduction of the organizing model possible: 'The Nordics' motivation in the beginning was to protect their labour market, this is clear. From this initial motivation, friendships developed and a kind of routine that they support' (Association of Estonian Energy Workers' Trade Unions' (AEEWTU) official, March 2015).

Constructing an organizing identity: The importance of framing

The BOA began as a multinational effort involving several Nordic industrial, service and transport union federations. These met in 2010 and decided to invite Baltic unions into organizing cooperation efforts with Nordic union counterparts. Inspiration to follow the organizing model came from the American Change to Win (CtW) initiative. CtW European office staff also provided initial training. In 2011 11 Finnish, two Swedish, four Danish, six Estonian and two Lithuanian unions, the Association of Estonian Industrial Trade Unions, EAKL, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Council of Nordic Trade Unions joined BOA (Häkkinen, 2013: 6).

The poor record of previous Nordic–Baltic union projects meant that Baltic unions needed to be persuaded to become involved in yet another one. Compared to the Finnish–Estonian relationship, cooperation between the Scandinavian unions and Latvian and Lithuanian ones was not as substantial. The Swedes proved reluctant to invest too much personnel-time (Metalliliitto official #1, January 2015) and the Latvian and Lithuanian unions were also hesitant. Two Lithuanian industrial unions showed interest, however (Häkkinen, 2013: 6). The Latvians were least willing to take part, one reason being that they were concerned about being controlled by the Nordic unions. A former Estonian BOA coordinator related (December 2014) that the Latvians unequivocally stated 'give us money and we will see ourselves what we will do, you are not coming to teach us'. In the end, the Finns, Swedes, Danes and Estonians moved forward with practical cooperation, and initial operations were therefore conducted in Estonia. The Lithuanians also undertook some less extensive activity, while the other participants decided mostly to wait and observe.

The Academy was based on the principle that all participating organizations should provide resources: either finances, personnel or both. For Estonian unionists who backed the plan, personal contacts and the history of cooperation overcame their initial scepticism:

> In the beginning … I did not totally agree and I was not interested in taking part [in the BOA]. But from the Finnish side … I cannot say that they pressured me, but they said 'How come you are not taking part?' We were old friends, right? (AEEWTU official, March 2015)

In addition to personal relations, Estonian unionists cited low and declining membership, difficulty concluding collective agreements, financial hardship and trends towards subcontracting threatening their future membership, as motives for joining. Even after BOA was initiated, its advocates had to 'sell' it to other staff in their unions. Organizing was alien to many Estonian unionists and it needed to be framed in a way which would

overcome the resistance of those sceptical about aggressive social movement tactics and symbolic protest. One unionist relates how some unionists reacted to these tactics:

> I remember in 2000 I suggested that we should start thinking about that kind of thing [organizing] … I was laughed at: 'You are talking madness, what is organizing? What the hell? We already have *so* many members. Members should come to us, we shouldn't go to the members.' We did those [militant] campaigns in the central federation. I remember there was a campaign by the nurses' union in which we used a stretcher and put ketchup on it and the girls were lying on it. Ligi [an Estonian right-wing politician] had to jump over the stretcher and he was swearing 'nasty, nasty, nasty'. The conservatives on the board of central federation asked: What are you doing!? You are going there with a coffin and you cannot do that! (Former Estonian BOA coordinator, December 2014)

For the Estonians, introducing the BOA meant organizational transformation. Although some unionists were directly involved in the transnational cooperation, to succeed the organizing model needed domesticization into wider union circles, involving unionists who had not previously been involved. More dramatically, they had to be willing to try different ways of approaching workers and employers. For the Finnish unions, the decision was perhaps easier, since their initial commitment was primarily financial.

Benford and Snow (2000) relate that framing can involve diagnostic, prognostic and motivational aspects, which Finnish and Estonian organizing model advocates undertook together. The organizing model was first promoted in Estonia as a way to prevent Estonia becoming a union-free zone; Finnish adoption began later. One Estonian and one Finnish trade unionist who had studied the model and initiated the project became its main advocates. They diagnosed low union density and passive social partnership/servicing unionism as problems, framing the organizing approach as the only way to 'save' Estonian unions. They publicized successful examples from other countries. This signalled a move away from the previous 'big brother mentality', as the Finnish model was no longer exemplary.

The next aspect was prognostic framing or 'the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan' (Benford and Snow, 2000: 616). The main BOA initiators laid out detailed plans for the 'Organizing Academy' which was introduced during numerous formal and informal meetings with union officials. They prepared training materials, so those who took part had a ready-made package to follow. Finally, motivational framing provided a 'rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action' (Benford and Snow, 2000: 617), like emphasizing the need to end the downward membership spiral, the interdependency of labour markets, mutual obligations and 'being in the same boat'.

Finnish unions were motivated by the competitive threat of a largely union free zone in the Baltic States. This was related both to capital moving to Estonia, and labour to Finland. For example, a PAM official pointed out that a two-euro-an-hour salary in Tallinn is typical for a cleaner, while in Finland the minimum salary is 8.87 euros per hour (as per the collective agreement for commercial cleaning, 2013–2017). Estonian migrants are a major group in low-paid service jobs in Finland (PAM, 2009). A PAM official (November 2014) related:

> If you think about the whole picture, course it would be to everyone's advantage if there were functional labour movements in nearby countries, because there is freedom of movement of labour [within the EU] … so that the workers learn that they have rights in every country /…/ at the moment, some [migrants] know their rights here [in Finland] but don't know that they have a labour movement in their own country, and they might not trust it there.

The Finnish Metalliliitto also emphasized the failure of the scattered campaigns and initiatives initiated by the Finnish unions in Estonia in the past, admitting that despite long-standing cooperation between Metalliliitto and EMAF they had gained few new members: 'We can keep them alive in that sense, the EMAF, but it doesn't lead us anywhere. We should do something differently' (Metalliliitto official #1, January 2015). The well-planned BOA initiative rationalized various union efforts and brought them under one strategic vision. A cadre of committed individuals initiated BOA through personal contacts built from past cooperation, and then set about domesticating the strategy through diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. This was solidified and sustained through collective action, described in the following section.

Engaging in collective action: BOA's organizing in Estonia

Campaign work started in Estonia in May 2012. The idea was that the Finnish (and to a lesser extent also Danish and Swedish) unions support the Estonians financially, through strategic information, and sometimes solidarity. The Estonians set up a campaign office, and planned and executed campaigns. Training was supported by all the partners. All participants committed to re-investing at least 35 per cent of campaign-generated membership fees into organizing (Häkkinen, 2013: 7). Finnish unions made bilateral agreements with partner organizations: for example, PAM financed one Estonian organizer's salary, and contributed 10 per cent of a Finnish official's work time in Finland. They promised also to support ETKA in negotiations by providing strategic information (PAM official, November 2014).

The approach followed the organizing model archetype closely. By the end of 2014 Estonia had seven BOA organizers in services, transportation and manufacturing. Organizers, in collaboration with Nordic colleagues, strategically targeted companies with few or no union members, but which they believed to be 'winnable'. Nordic companies were sometimes preferred because of the potential to pressure the Nordic management. They did not usually solicit Nordic union support openly, but the Nordic ownership may have accounted for the Estonians' success at obtaining 'organizing neutrality agreements', in which management agreed not to actively oppose unionization. The reason for Finnish unions' low profile was that in this way the Estonians could achieve and take credit for their own victories. Pressuring and picketing in Finland was available as a back-up strategy (PAM official, November 2014). Picketing by Estonian workers in Finland played a role in winning neutrality from a Finnish hotel company in 2015, and then a collective agreement in 2016.

As is typical in the organizing model, the most important element was one-on-one conversations with workers, to determine the most important bargaining issues, to explain what a union is and to build workers' confidence in collective solutions. Organizing in a

post-soviet context has its challenges: the younger generation generally had no knowledge of trade unions, while older employees still associated unions with their soviet-era function of distributing goods given by the state. These one-on-one conversations also promoted a collectivist worker mentality versus the employer:

> [During organizing conversations the organizer explains to the workers that] you basically have no other options [than the union] to improve your working life. You cannot stand and wait for the employer to come and pat you on the shoulder, say 'good job, next month I will give you 100 Euros more'. Those kinds of things do not happen. They are making profit, why should they change anything? (BOA organizer #2, October 2014)

Worker passivity and fear of employer retaliation made organizing difficult. As is common elsewhere, Estonian employers used ideological manipulation, such as labelling unions as communists and more direct opposition, such as inviting workers to one-on-one talks to pressure them not to join.

A high priority was recruiting 'natural leaders', who organize other workers and eventually maintain union structures that can survive and grow after the organizer has left. Legally only five members are required to set up a union. In practice, however, campaigns aimed to build high-density on-site organizations, with elected shop stewards and board members, committed members, the ability to use industrial action when necessary and to sign a company-specific collective agreement (Häkkinen, 2013: 11). Organizers started by organizing enough workers to have leverage over the employer, and only then contacted the employer. Campaigns also had other elements, depending on the specific vulnerabilities of employers, including employee petitions, wearing signs to express union support, picketing and media pressure to draw attention to aggressive employer conduct.

Organizing successes in Estonia

The BOA's annual report shows that by November 2014, in the third year of operations, 1234 new members had joined, 48 new shop stewards were recruited and 15 new self-sustaining branches were set up in Estonia (BOA, 2014). The aggregate numbers may seem small, but it is important to remember the total population of Estonia is only 1.3 million, and the labour movement is starting from a very low baseline.

During this initial period, most successes were in manufacturing and transportation, while services saw less success. Partly, this was because the starting situation in that sector was so bad. Despite this, PAM continued to underwrite ETKA's campaigns, because of what they saw as positive signs at targeted firms. Officials from PAM also emphasized that 2012 to 2014 was a learning period, during which the Estonian organizers' professionalism increased (PAM official, November 2014). Preliminary numbers from 2016 now suggested that this patience paid off; ETKA, which had two organizers, organized 160 new members in that period (Mölder, 2016).

The best example of BOA strategy's success is actually its spillover effect – or frame diffusion (Benford and Snow, 2000: 627) – and comes from EMSA, outside the formal BOA programme (although EMSA has since joined BOA). A former Estonian BOA

country coordinator started working for EMSA – a union with close links to the Finnish Seamen's Union – with the task of unionizing the Tallink Group hotels. Tallink is an Estonian ferry company. Using BOA tactics, he successfully organized the hotel staff and recruited a chief shop steward. EMSA won a collective agreement including a wage increase and other benefits (former Estonian BOA country coordinator, December 2014). When Tallink fired a newly elected shop steward in spring 2014, EMSA mobilized support: BOA's Estonian activists organized a picket, and requested solidarity from Finnish unions. The Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions SAK threatened to end its service contracts with Tallink's hotels and the Finnish Seamen's Union threatened a secondary strike on its vessels. Tallink reinstated the shop steward.

Participation in the BOA has also shifted the mentality of unionists not directly involved in organizing as such, as this quote – emphasizing both external and internal aspects of organizing – from an ETKA official (September 2014) illustrates:

> in previous years … communication with workers was a bit superficial meaning that, well, let's say a person came and wanted to join the union, we were really glad that he/she joined and we did talk a bit about unions, but we did not have so-called long and comprehensive conversations with workers. Moreover workers should realize that they *are* the union.

Organizing also gained ground within Estonian trade unions outside the BOA. The main Estonian trade union confederation EAKL incorporated organizing elements into their general shop stewards' training module. These were introduced in the trainings by BOA organizers (EAKL official #2, December 2014).

There were detractors as well. Organizers reported that some officials continued to not support organizing, although in some cases this has lessened with organizing successes:

> in the beginning older coordinators were quite sceptical towards it [organizing]. Like what do you mean? … we have done things here a certain way for decades and now some young guy comes and tells you you have done everything the wrong way. /…/ now … it seems they are starting to understand why and how it works so that they have started even to use certain methods in their work. But I have not been able to change them 100 per cent. Those younger ones who joined later, they have come along with this thing [the organizing approach]. Older unionists are watching … how it goes for me and then well, they see that there are results and this probably increases their belief. (BOA organizer #3, May 2015)

Still, part of the opposition was not related to effectiveness, but rather approach and ideology. For example, two Estonian manufacturing unions quit the Academy at the end of 2014. One reason they gave was discomfort with the confrontational approach, including keeping organizing secret from employers (AEEWTU official, March 2015).

The spread to Finland

The BOA has been a mutual learning process for the Finnish and Estonian unions, influencing the strategies of Finnish unions as well. Finnish and Estonian industrial relations contexts and organizing challenges are different. While Estonian workplaces are usually poorly organized, in Finland poorly organized workplaces are rare. Nonetheless, Finnish unions

have been concerned about a lack of member engagement (i.e. the need for internal organizing), and many family firms and entrepreneurs remain staunchly non-union (Laurokari, 2016). Arnholtz et al. (2016) describe the Danish case, which is in many ways similar to the Finnish one. In that context, rank and file mobilization to establish union representation in previously unorganized workplaces has been virtually unknown in recent decades. The main issues which inspire mobilization in low-density contexts are usually already addressed in Denmark. Contracts are agreed at the industry level and workers have access to union representation if they want it. While unions see worker mobilization as necessary to build power resources to maintain and improve conditions, guaranteed representation promotes a passive mentality in the workers (Arnholtz et al., 2016).

Finnish unions also benefit from a high-density passive recruitment environment, where members come to the union for unemployment benefits and representation services, rather than the union coming to them. This promotes membership, but discourages engagement. As with the Danish organizing advocates (Arnholtz et al., 2016), Finnish organizing model advocates pointed out that organizing is not alien to Finland, but rather invokes methods and ideologies of the labour movement's formative years (Pietarinen, 2014), drawing on this older tradition to legitimate organizing. One of the BOA initiators, Mika Häkkinen (2016: 12) stated in the metalworkers' union newsletter: 'It is not a question of something new. For example, Finnish unions before the Second World War had organizers whose job was to found new union structures.'

Metalliliitto was the first to adopt organizing model tactics. Their local officials were at first hesitant, but opinions became more positive when the results of the Estonian campaigns emerged (Metalliliitto official #3, March 2015). During the first year in the Metalliliitto's campaign, the number of shop stewards increased by 100 and the number of new members in targeted firms was 200 (Pietarinen, 2014). Although the outcome has been modest in terms of increased membership levels (i.e. external organizing), internal organizing has had promising results. The BOA-inspired campaign has made union people change their attitudes towards recruitment (Metalliliitto official #3, March 2015). In 2016 PAM also trained its staff in basic organizing model principles and around 20 people who use organizing in their work also received advanced training. They were widening the scope of organizer training and organizing activities in 2017 (PAM official, December 2016).

Conclusions

This article seeks to explain how Finnish and Estonian unions have overcome the double barrier to transnational organizing cooperation through identity work. The study concludes that the underlying need to increase union leverage has provided motivation to try the organizing model, but it could only be successfully implemented through an extended process of identity work, in which old ideas about national jurisdictions and social partnership have been contested by new ideas of international cooperation and aggressive campaigning. Finnish unions' motives first and foremost have been related to the competitive threat posed by competition from non-union Estonians. For Estonian unions, the BOA has been a reaction to declining membership. Despite the bargaining logic, the change of strategy has been neither automatic nor inevitable, but has required extensive identity work on both sides of the Gulf of Finland.

Furthermore, the organizing model ideas have been tested in action, as successful identity work to (re-)construct identities presumes simultaneous processes of framing and engagement in collective action (Snow and McAdam, 2000). Personal contacts and long-established cooperation have played a central role in beginning and sustaining the BOA. The Finnish unions have given the Estonian unions resources, but also taken a step back and let the Estonians run the campaigns, so that it has been a mutual learning process, rather than being dominated by the stronger union movement. The Estonian unions had to justify the trust put in them by assuming the organizing model agenda. This trust and commitment was only possible because of the years of identity work preceding the BOA. The Scandinavians lack such a strong bond with Latvia and Lithuania, explaining why the Academy has not enjoyed similar success there.

The need for a new, dynamic strategy had been advocated by a few 'old-school' Finnish and Estonian trade unionists who had studied the model elsewhere in Europe, and believed it could work in Baltic and Nordic countries as well. This underlines the importance of agents in promoting ideas of change (Hauptmeier and Heery, 2014), the need for constant identity work to (re-)create common understandings and objectives (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2012) and the socialization of old and new union members into accepting these. As the approach is considerably different from how unionists have seen their and their organizations' roles this far, it takes skilful framing (e.g. referring to organizing as a return to the origins for Finnish unions, or as an only way to save Estonian unions) by the main advocates of the approach to legitimize the more confrontational strategy and ensure its continuity.

Identity work is a contested process and some changes are easier to achieve than others, depending on the fit with the past frames and narratives of those whose views are to be changed. Older generation partnership-servicing oriented unionists might see the need to organize, but confronting and pressuring employers is another and more difficult step. This generates tensions between those favouring more aggressive organizing and those who cling to existing union identities. The latter group opposes aggressive tactics, even when these clearly bring gains for workers. To a certain extent the BOA has resolved this by being organizationally separate from other parts of the union movement, allowing freedom of action and limiting opposition, at the cost of making the number of 'identity work subjects' smaller. If the model is to become general it is necessary to reconnect it to the rest of the union movement. This is probably the BOA's most crucial future challenge.

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Kairit Kall is a PhD candidate at Tallinn University (Estonia) and at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland), where she is pursuing a double degree in Sociology and Social and Public Policy. Currently she is also involved in the EU-funded project 'Protecting Mobility through Improving Labour Rights Enforcement in Europe', coordinated by the University of Jyväskylä. Her research interests include trade union strategies and power resources in Central and Eastern Europe, transnational cooperation among trade unions and intra-EU labour migration.

Nathan Lillie is Professor of Social and Public Policy at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. He has published on collective bargaining in maritime shipping, international union cooperation, posted work and union strategies to organize migrant workers. His current projects are on the protection of labour rights for posted workers in the EU, and on the labour market integration of refugees in Finland.

Markku Sippola is University Lecturer in the Degree Programme of Social Sciences, University of Tampere, Finland. His research interests revolve around industrial relations, migration, social policy as well as societal and labour processes in the Baltic, Nordic and Russian contexts. His articles have been published in *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, *Employee Relations*, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Journal of Baltic Studies* and *Work, Employment and Society*.

Laura Mankki is a PhD candidate at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä. She has been a guest researcher at the REMESO migration institute in Sweden. Her PhD project, to be finished in 2018, concentrates on lifestories of labour migrants and strategies of unions in the context of migration to Finland. She has co-authored in the Finnish labour issues journal *Työelämäntutkimus*, as well as in anthologies dealing with gender and labour market issues. Before her graduate studies, she worked as an assistant to a member of the Finnish parliament for two years.

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IV

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7

Union Campaigns against Precarious Work in the Retail Sector of Estonia, Poland, and Slovenia

Adam Mrozowicki, Branko Bembič, Kairit Kall, Małgorzata Maciejewska, and Miroslav Stanojević

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the problem of trade union responses to the precarization of work in the retail sector in Estonia, Poland, and Slovenia. The retail sector is an example of a low-paid sector, in which trade unions face similar challenges associated with high levels of non-standard employment (Carré et al. 2010). The global economic crisis of 2007–8 and the subsequent downturn led to increased competitive pressure on wages and working conditions (Mrozowicki et al. 2013). As a result, unions in all three countries have become increasingly active in organizing and representing precarious workers (Trif et al. 2016). At the same time, their strategies and success have been shaped by each country's distinctive industrial relations system (Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Kohl 2009).

In this chapter we ask two questions. First, what impact have sectoral characteristics, institutional factors, and trade union strategies had on patterns of precarious work in retail workplaces across Estonia, Poland, and Slovenia? Second, are new patterns of solidarity emerging in the retail sectors of these three countries following the economic downturn? We consider precarious employment as a relational category defined, on the one hand, by the expansion of non-standard employment contracts and, on the other hand, by the expansion of low-paid jobs and growing insecurity in pay, job security, social status, and career progression (Arnold and Bongiovi 2012; Heery and Salmon 2000; Vosko 2010). It is often assumed that precarization increased in Western capitalist countries 'with the erosion of the "Fordist bargain" and the "standard employment relationship" roughly since the 1970s' (Mosoetsa et al. 2016; Standing 2011), in addition to the crisis of collectivist and solidaristic trade unionism. However, even if precarity can be seen as a norm for all capitalist societies, it takes different forms and varies in intensity across time periods and regions. Precarious employment patterns that developed in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) following the return of capitalism can be seen as partially driven by similar factors as in the Western

capitalist countries (Heery and Salmon 2000; Standing 2011). Yet its forms also reflect a specific institutional context marked by the legacies of variegated state socialist regimes and their pathways of capitalist transformation. This chapter is centrally concerned with the impact of different types of CEE political-economic regimes, including the 'neoliberal' regime in Estonia, the 'neocorporatist' regime in Slovenia, and the 'embedded neoliberal' regime in Poland (Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Crowley and Stanojević 2011), on the forms of the precarization of work and union attempts to counteract it.

We can distinguish between several theses in the literature regarding the effects of institutional and sectoral factors and trade union power resources on trade union strategies towards precarious employment (Benassi and Dorigatti 2015; Benassi and Vlandas 2016; Pulignano and Signoretti 2016; Mrozowicki 2014; Trif et al. 2016). One argument holds that encompassing institutions increase unions' institutional power, understood as the ability of unions to regulate employment conditions through collective bargaining and political/legal leverage (Doerre et al. 2009; Doellgast et al. 2016: 575). However, unions' institutional power is not reducible to favourable institutions, but is dependent on unions' structural and especially associational power resources as well.[1] Our earlier studies on the retail and automotive sectors demonstrated that Slovenian trade unions' higher institutional power tended to support collective bargaining solutions to the problems of precarization that followed the 2007 global economic crisis. By contrast, unilateral responses predominated in Estonia and Poland, where the institutional power of unions was weaker (Mrozowicki 2014; Mrozowicki et al. 2013).

Second, sectoral characteristics are often argued to influence the types and levels of workers' organization in trade union responses towards precarious work (Carré et al. 2010; Geppert et al. 2014; Jany-Catrice and Lehndorff 2002). Following Wright (2000) and Silver (2003), we distinguish between structural power that results from workers' location and role within the economic system, particular sector, or workplace, and associational power, reflecting the formation of workers' collective organization and its internal features. In sectors such as retail, in which the structural power of workers is limited, trade unions have to rely more on various forms of associational power (Silver 2003). Research on precarious worker organizing provides evidence that the types of associational power that are crucial to success are those linked to union capacities to build links with workers' communities beyond workplaces, utilize their discursive power to address new targets of claims (states, customers, MNCs), and build new, solidaristic identities among the workers themselves (Chun and Agarwala 2016; Sarmiento et al. 2016). Framed in the language of power resources theory, unions both need new kinds of network embeddedness (solidarities manifested into horizontal and vertical links with other unions and civil society organizations) and narrative resources (i.e. 'the existing stock of stories that frame understandings and union actions and inform a sense of efficacy and legitimacy') (Lévesque and Murray 2010: 339).

[1] In this chapter we distinguish between 'formal institutions' and 'unions' institutional power'. Although the two often overlap, we follow here Doerre et al. (2009) in that institutional power is past 'structural and organisational power . . . incorporated into societal institutions'. Also, we posit that this power that is built into institutional structure needs to be constantly supported and defended if it is to function as a power resource.

In this chapter, we examine how institutional differences in industrial relations, sectoral characteristics, and union resources interact to influence the paths available to unions, as well as their degree of success in limiting precarious employment and establishing ties of solidarity across workforce segments. Our main argument is twofold. On the one hand, labour's responses to precarization have differed due to the variegated industrial relations systems, which influence both sectoral forms of precarity and union resources. These differences reflected opportunities and constraints embedded in distinct institutional contexts. Because of their institutional resources, Slovenian unions can be seen as most successful in counteracting precarization out of three cases studied. On the other hand, we observe innovative approaches emerging in all three countries, some of which transcend institutional opportunities and constraints. These innovations reflect the strategic choices of sectoral- and company-level trade union leaders (Turner 2009) as well as the dynamics of workers' collective mobilization as union members and citizens capable of building up new ties of solidarity within and across the sector. Thus, rather than seeing union responses as determined by institutional context, we interpret them in terms of strategic utilization of various context-bound options in the course of ongoing social struggles in the countries studied.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. First, we discuss our research methods and rationale for selecting the empirical cases of companies and countries. Next, we present background to the analysis of precarious work in retail. This includes a discussion of the meanings and mechanisms of precarization and the role played by employment characteristics and industrial relations. In the body of the chapter, we present our empirical analysis in a country-by-country fashion, which enables us to explain differences in patterns of solidarity (and the lack of thereof) by referring to interactions among institutions, sectoral characteristics, and actors' strategies at three levels (national level, sectoral level, and company level). Finally, we engage in a comparative discussion aimed at a more systematic analysis of conditions, forms, and limits of new solidarities emerging in the retail sector in Estonia, Poland, and Slovenia.

7.2. METHODS AND CASE SELECTION

This chapter examines the responses to the precarization of work by organized labour in a sector (retail) with an overall high incidence of precarious work and differentiated power resources of unions to counteract precarity. Empirical data are drawn from interviews with unionists from six multinational food retailers and expert interviews with sectoral and national-level union officials and employer representatives conducted between 2011 and 2016. We also analysed secondary data, including press reports and sectoral employment statistics taken from corporate reports. In total, we conducted nine interviews in Estonia, sixteen interviews in Poland (plus twenty-one background interviews carried out in 2002–11), and ten interviews in Slovenia.

The three countries selected for this study represent three different types of capitalist regimes that evolved in Central and Eastern Europe after the end of state socialism. Bohle and Greskovits (2012: 3) distinguish between the neoliberal type

(Estonia) marked by the 'combination of market radicalism with meagre compensation for transformation costs', the embedded neoliberal type (Poland) characterized by a 'permanent search for compromises between market transformation and social cohesion', and the neocorporatist type (Slovenia) manifested by 'negotiated multilevel relationships among business, labour, and the state'. Regional varieties of industrial relations systems developed in parallel to changes in political economies. Slovenia, with its legacy of strong working-class mobilization, stood out as an exception in which encompassing institutions of tripartite economic coordination and multi-employer collective bargaining emerged (Crowley and Stanojević 2011). In Estonia and Poland, neocorporatism never really developed or took a more 'illusory' form (Ost 2000) and single-employer collective bargaining is dominant. Nevertheless, due to the legacy of independent unionism (NSZZ Solidarność) in the 1980s, overall Polish unions possess stronger power resources than their counterparts in Estonia, which was marked by a general weakness of bottom-up workers' movements both before and after the system change.

Research has also shown that the characteristics of employment at the sectoral and company levels mediate institutional effects on the incidence and forms of precarious work in CEE countries (Trif et al. 2016; Mrozowicki et al. 2013). The retail sector is characterized by sharp, cost-based competition and strong downward pressure on wages and other employment conditions throughout the Western world, with non-standard forms of employment becoming more common (e.g. Carré et al. 2010; Jany-Catrice and Lehndorff 2002). Our earlier work indicates that the economic crisis following 2007 offered retail employers further leeway to justify and accelerate the expansion of low-paid and unstable employment (Mrozowicki et al. 2013). Therefore, the main time frame for our analysis is the years 2008–15, although we also acknowledge that earlier developments are relevant for the precarization of retail work.

The multinational companies analysed in the case studies have different countries of origin but share some common characteristics. They all are among the five largest food retailers in each country, making them influential for the overall picture of employment conditions in the sector as a whole (Table 7.1). They have adopted similar business models and strategies, which, in all but one (EE1) case, were based on the diversification of shop formats as well as the spread of low-wage, insecure, and precarious jobs. In all of the companies, wages were rather low (compared to the nationwide average), companies made use of functional flexibility and multi-skilling, and employees experienced work intensification (particularly after the crisis).

7.3. PRECARIOUS WORK AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

The case study companies have broadly similar working conditions, typically with low pay and high insecurity. However, we found differences in patterns of precarious work at both company and national level, and we show that these differences can be explained by two sets of factors. First, institutions at national and sectoral level affected overall patterns of precarity as well as unions'

Table 7.1. Overview of companies

	Estonia		Poland		Slovenia	
	EE1	EE2	PL1	PL2	SI1	SI2
1. Market share in food retail (country level)	9% (5th largest, 2013)	17% (2nd largest, 2013)	3.3% (5th largest, 2014)	4.8% (4th largest, 2014)	33% (largest, 2016)	23% (2nd largest, 2016)
2. Home country	Finland	Sweden	France	UK	Croatia	Austria
3. Number and structure of shops	8 HM (2016)	14 HM, 24 SM, and 46 hard discount shops (2016)	96 HM, 138 SM, and 468 convenience stores (2014)	70 HM, 88 compact HM, and 296 SM (2014)	22 HM, 390 convenience stores, 62 SM and smaller formats (2014)	47 HM, 34 SM, 13 mega-markets, two city stores
4. Number of employees in the country	1,000 (2016)	2,700 (2016)	16,000 (2014)	29,934 (2014)	11,000 (2014)	4,300 (2014)
5. Trade union presence	Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (ETKA)	Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (ETKA)	NSZZ Solidarność	NSZZ Solidarność; August '80, NSZZ Solidarność '80, the Confederation of Labour OPZZ, and Trade Union of Retail Employees	Trade Union of Worker's in Trade Sector in Slovenia (SDTS affiliated to ZSSS); Trade Union of Commerce of Slovenia (STS affiliated to KS-90)	KNSS (Confederation of New Trade Unions of Slovenia); SDTS (affiliated to ZSSS); STS (affiliated to KS-90)
6. Collective agreement	Company level	No	No	No	Sectoral and company level	Sectoral level

Notes: HM = hypermarkets; SM = supermarkets. The names of companies were made anonymous.

Sources: (1) Eesti Konjunktuuriinstituut (2015) for Estonia, Dlahandlu.pl for Poland, Delo (2014) for Slovenia; (2–4) company home pages for Estonia, annual reports and CSR reports for Poland, annual reports (AJPES) for Slovenia.

institutional resources to combat precarization through collective bargaining. These include industrial relations structures, collective bargaining coverage, and the role of the state in regulating employment conditions. Second, unions relied on associational power derived from union membership structure, density, and solidarity links with other unions and civil society organizations to supplement these institutional resources or overcome their relative weakness.

In Estonia, industrial relations institutions are the least encompassing of the three countries, despite formal institutional support for national tripartite dialogue and sectoral- and company-level collective bargaining. This makes the situation of retail workers particularly vulnerable, regardless of their employment status and forms. There are two sectoral-level unions that retail workers can join: the Estonian Trade Union of Commercial and Servicing Employees (ETKA) is active in several retail chains (including in the companies studied here), while the Estonian Communication and Service Workers' Trade Union (ESTAL) is only present in one. Most big retail employers are joined under the employers' federation Kaupmeeste Liit, but they are not interested in sectoral collective agreements. While the situation of overall precariousness and limited segmentation could potentially help to organize workers, trade unions lack both institutional as well as associational power, industrial relations are fragmented, and collective bargaining takes place mainly at the company level. There is no sectoral-level collective agreement, and union density has remained at around 1 per cent in the sector and 6.5 per cent nationwide, while collective bargaining coverage is 23 per cent (Visser 2016). The tripartite institutions at the national level are weak and virtually ignored by government, while the sectoral level constitutes 'the absent middle' between the two levels (Glassner 2013; Kallaste and Woolfson 2013).

Non-standard contracts are usually not considered as a necessary cost-saving alternative for Estonian employers, because employment protections associated with standard employment contracts are rather weak (Turk and Nurmela 2012), the national minimum wage is fairly low (employers usually have to pay above minimum wage to attract and keep employees), and inspection of working conditions is limited. A representative of the sectoral-level retail union observed that the new Employment Contracts Act of 2009 increased labour market flexibility and made the employment conditions even less secure and more employer-dominated than before:

> Well . . . let's say the new Employment Contracts Act [of 2009] is like . . . you can interpret it very differently. Secondly, it gives a lot of freedom to negotiate. They say we have a FLEXIBLE law. But what does it mean for service workers? For service workers it means that they work until 10.00 pm, until 11.00 pm. Well, actually until 11:30 [pm], because the work does not end when you close the shop. There is no more extra pay for evening work . . . In a lot of cases extra pay for night work is written into the employment contract that means that basic salary already contains night extras.
> (Interview, ETKA official, 2014)

Company-level data from the Estonian companies EE1 and EE2 confirm the prevalence of standard contracts. In both MNCs, open-ended full-time contracts were the dominant form of employment, although part-time work was also used and services like cleaning and security were outsourced. EE1 used temporary

agency workers (TAWs) and temporary contracts during periods of increased workload, like holidays, but the share was low.

Poland's formal institutions are more or less comparable to those in Estonia; however, its industrial relations structure is somewhat more favourable for unions. The most important trade unions in the sector include the National Section of Commerce of NSZZ Solidarność, the Federation of Trade Unions of Employees in Co-operatives, Production, Commerce and Services in Poland (affiliated to the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)), the radical Free Trade Union August '80, and the Confederation of Labour OPZZ. The only relevant employer organization is the Polish Organisation of Trade and Distribution (POHiD), representing thirteen large (mostly transnational) retail chains. However, it refuses to join sectoral-level collective bargaining. As a result, similar to their Estonian counterparts, Polish unions operating in the retail sector find themselves in an environment of decentralized, company-level bargaining, with no sectoral-level collective agreement. Union density is very low (some 2 per cent in the sector, 12 per cent nationwide in 2015) and nationwide collective bargaining coverage is limited (35 per cent in 2012, cf. Visser 2016). Yet, different from Estonia, NSZZ Solidarność benefitted from early international contacts, resource transfer from foreign trade unions, including the Service Employees International Union, and strategic leadership decisions to pool union resources from various sectors. The union used these resources to start organizing campaigns in the late 1990s, enabling it to unionize a proportion of workers in large, multinational retail chains.

As compared to Estonia, the precarization of employment in Polish retail was more closely linked to segmentation in the sector, which reduced unions associational power. First, trade unions are not present in small family-owned shops, convenience stores and franchise systems, as well as temporary work agencies. The majority of their members have open-ended contracts in the largest, multinational stores. Second, employers easily make use of strong inter-union rivalry, which is much more present in Poland than in Estonia and Slovenia, to counteract workers' associational power. In addition, in the mid-2000s, non-standard employment began to expand, creating additional lines of division among the workforce. This was due in part to the flexibilization of the Labour Code in the wake of Poland's accession to the European Union (2002–4) and cost-cutting employer strategies. Polish employers began to employ workers on temporary, civil law contracts and encouraged self-employment, in which case the minimum wage does not apply. Precarization took different forms in two segments of the sector. In the largest retail chains, stores increased their use of temporary work agencies and part-time jobs. In the small and medium-sized enterprises, precarity was related to the use of franchises and the spread of self-employment. As observed by an employer representative:

> If you create a system which has more than 4,000 shops, with 70–80 m^2 of sale area on average per shop, in which 3–4 people work, usually a family, you influence it by a certain standard. From the perspective of HR management in a corporation, it is precariat. And from a perspective that they are entrepreneurs bounded by a contract, it is self-employment, a provision of service called 'management and running a shop'.
>
> (Interview, representative of POHiD, 2015)

Accordingly, both Polish companies studied made extensive use of non-standard employment contracts. In addition, cleaning and security services were outsourced, similar to the Estonian cases. In PL1 the share of TAWs and workers with temporary employment contracts was very high (fluctuating between 30 and 70 per cent), but the share of part-timers was limited. By contrast, PL2 employed workers directly with employment contracts, and the share of temporary workers was lower. Yet (forced) part-time employment was more common than in PL1.

Compared to Estonia and Poland, in Slovenia industrial relations structures can be seen as the most encompassing. During the first decade of transition, Slovenia developed into a sort of coordinated market economy (Hall and Soskice 2001) with relatively good macroeconomic performance, a centralized collective bargaining system with an almost 100 per cent coverage, and a relatively generous welfare state. This system proved quite resilient in the face of shocks that started to occur in the mid-2000s, when Slovenia joined the European Union and basically fulfilled all required conditions to adopt the euro. Social and political conflicts escalated after 2008. Successive attempts by various governments to enforce unilateral decisions were opposed and quite frequently brought down by the massive demonstrations and referendums organized by unions. Union density that was relatively high (around 40 per cent nationwide) until 2003 (Stanojević 2015) dropped thereafter (20–25 per cent nationwide and some 15 per cent the retail sector in 2014), but the trade union movement, nonetheless, retained its mobilizing strength, at least at the national level.

In the retail sector, the most important social partners in the sector are the Trade Union of Workers in the Trade Sector (SDTS), which is a member of the Slovenian Association of Free Trade Unions (ZSSS), and KS 90—the Trade Union of Commerce of Slovenia. SDTS is the only union representative at the sector level and thus the only signatory to the sectoral collective agreement on the part of organized labour. At the company level in SI1, where both unions are representative, they cooperate and negotiate collective agreements with the employer together. On the employer side, the crucial actors are the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Employers of Slovenia, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. There is a collective agreement in the sector and there are also some collective agreements at the company level. As the extension mechanism is applied, the sectoral collective agreement covers all companies in the trade sector and employees (excluding student workers, but including temporary agency workers).

Despite the presence of strong and encompassing institutions, precarious employment in Slovenia began to expand in the 1990s and further increased in the mid-2000s. Firms were under growing pressure to improve their international competitiveness during the process of EU accession. As a result, wage levels in many companies could be maintained only by resorting to labour intensification and flexibilization of work, which increased the penetration of atypical forms of employment (Stanojević 2010). However, following the 2007 crisis the labour market situation worsened and some traditional retailers sought to replace the regular workers that left the sector with atypical, mostly precarious jobs. Discounters significantly expanded their operations, and mostly relied on part-time (Labour Code-regulated) jobs. Developments in Slovenia thus started to resemble Poland; however, the stronger institutional and associational power of

trade unions made it more difficult for employers to adopt fully 'the' segmentation strategies.

In both Slovenian case study stores, SI1 and SI2, non-standard forms of employment were quite widespread. Most of the unionists we interviewed reported that traditional retailers, as well as SI1 and SI2, offered almost exclusively fixed-term contracts to new employees. Both retailers also used student work, which is an extremely flexible labour arrangement performed mostly on a part-time basis. Also, although TAWs did not represent a high share of total number of employees on the company level, they represented a very large share of warehouse workers.

It can be argued that crisis solidified the differences across the three countries that had emerged in the pre-crisis period. The outcomes in terms of the diversified employment precarization patterns are demonstrated in Table 7.2.

The share of part-time employees oscillates between 10 and 12 per cent in all three countries (see Table 7.2), and in Estonia and Slovenia the share has increased since 2008 by three percentage points, indicating a common cost-cutting strategy of retailers (cf. Carré et al. 2010; Grugulis and Bozkurt 2011). Still, part-time work is less common than in many European countries due to the generally low wages associated with it. In Poland, self-employment plays a greater role than in Estonia and Slovenia, due to the large number of small family shops and franchises. In Slovenia and Poland, the share of employees with temporary contracts is quite high—respectively 17.8 per cent and 36.7 per cent—with the higher Polish figure reflecting strong employer-driven segmentation. In both countries, in an attempt to bypass the costs related to standard employment, employers also use service

Table 7.2. Basic employment dimensions in the sector (2014)

	Estonia	Poland	Slovenia
1. Employment share (section G47) in total employment	8.0%	9.1%	7.9%
2. Employment change (2008–14)	−5.3%	−3.8%	−9.9%
3. Temporary employment share in total employees (section G)	3.0%	36.7%	17.8%
(change 2008–14)	(1.0%)	(2.7%)	(−2.4%)
4. Part-time employment share in total employees (section G)	11.4%	10.2%	12.7%
(change 2008–14)	(3.0%)	(−0.1%)	(3.1%)
5. Self-employment share in total employment (section G)	9.8%	21.3%	8.0%
(change 2008–14)	(−1.5%)	(1.3%)	(4.0%)
6. Number of employed persons per enterprise (average) (G47.110) (2013)	39.3	6.7	38.6
7. National-level minimum wage (2014)	€355	€394	€789.15
8. Gross monthly wage (section G47)	€735	€603.23	€1,184.77
(% of the average wage)	(69.5%)		
(% of the national minimum wage)	(207%)	(153%)	(151%)
9. Estimated union density	1.2%	2%	15%
10. Sectoral-level collective agreement	No	No	Yes

Notes: Temporary employment category (3) is ambiguous as it includes both Labour Code employment and non-Labour Code employment forms. G: wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles. G47: retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles. G47.110: retail sale in non-specialized stores with food, beverages, or tobacco predominating.

Source: (1–5) Eurostat LFS; (6) Structural Business Statistics Eurostat; (7–8) national statistical offices; (9–10) Mrozowicki et al. 2013.

contracts extensively, excluding workers from some rights guaranteed in the Labour Code. These include civil law contracts in Poland and, in Slovenia, extensive utilization of country-specific student work, which is used mainly due to its flexibility and not lower wages.[2] In Estonia, on the other hand, a rather low level of employment flexibilization in terms of contractual arrangements can be observed. Seen from a different angle, in Estonia even *regular employment is almost completely flexibilized*. The sector can be seen as low wage in all three countries, based on the proportion of sectoral gross monthly wages relative to national averages. However, there are also significant differences between wage levels. Gross monthly wages in 2014 were €603.23 in Poland (i.e. 66.8 per cent of the national average, 153 per cent of minimum wage), €735 in Estonia (69.5 per cent of the national average, 207 per cent of minimum wage) and €1,184.77 in Slovenia (76.9 per cent of the national average, 151 per cent of minimum wage). Although the 2007 global financial crisis depressed economic activity in retail, average wages increased relatively fast in the Slovenian retail sector due to a sharp increase in the minimum wage, indicating the important role of articulation of union struggles above the sectoral level.

7.4. UNION STRATEGIES TOWARDS PRECARIOUS WORK

Different patterns of precarization and sectoral characteristics pose specific challenges for unions in the retail sector.. At the same time, union approaches to regulating precarity are influenced by confrontations between capital and labour at the national and sectoral level. Institutional factors and power resources delimit the range of approaches at unions' disposal, but are also, at least to some extent, a condensed result of their past struggles. In this section, we first summarize the unions' approaches and their successes (or failures) in a country-by-country fashion. We then explain these outcomes in terms of the factors listed in Section 7.1: in particular, union power resources and institutional embeddedness. We conclude with a very brief discussion of some common limitations and challenges of the approaches observed.

7.4.1. Strategies and Outcomes

The strategies that Estonian retail unions apply at different levels are interrelated and mostly initiated by the sectoral union ETKA, to which most company-level retail unions are also affiliated. First, Estonian unions, including those in the retail sector, are trying to secure better labour legislation by lobbying the government and striving for increases in the minimum wage through negotiations at the national level. This has a direct influence on the remuneration of retail workers, as retail is a low-wage sector. Although the institutional framework for tripartism

[2] It has to be noted that Eurostat figures on temporary employment (Table 7.2) also partially include non-Labour Code employment (such as civil law contracts).

at the national level exists, the unions lack the power to back it up and social dialogue usually brings them meagre results. Unions have succeeded in gaining slow minimum wage increases and stopping further flexibilization of the Labour Code (initiated by employers and the government). Unions were not able to stop government's unilateral changes to the new Employment Contracts Act in 2008, which increased flexibility in the labour market for all workers. They did manage to stop, but not improve, planned changes in the collective labour law in 2012, including more restrictive rights to strike, by lobbying the government, organizing small-scale protest action, and also getting help from the International Labour Organization (Kall 2017). Importantly, unlike in Poland and Slovenia, Estonian trade unions did not build any significant coalitions with other civil society organizations or political parties in their efforts to counteract precarious work.

Social dialogue in Estonian retail has been further impeded by the fact that the employers' federation in retail is not willing to engage with sectoral-level collective bargaining. In order to overcome this critical weakness and strengthen associational power, the Baltic Organising Academy co-sponsored by Nordic trade unions was established in 2010. Thanks to strategic decisions of its leadership, the main retail sector federation ETKA joined the academy and has undertaken US-inspired, centrally planned organizing campaigns financed with the support of the Finnish private service sector union PAM since 2012.[3] The Estonian members of BOA are committed to investing 'at least 35 per cent of the campaign-generated membership fees into organising work' (Häkkinen 2013: 7). Some resource redistribution is needed to organize and represent precarious workers in retail, due to low membership in this sector. The important problem was overcome by international solidarity, followed by internal redistribution. The organizing campaign produced some tangible results, most notably a company-level collective agreement in EE1 that improved wages and other employment conditions (see Table 7.3).

In both Estonian case study companies, organizing has raised union density and enhanced the monitoring and fulfilment of labour standards. Unionized employees who have the support of ETKA have become more aware of their rights and less afraid of demanding better conditions. Further, in both companies trade union campaigns contributed to raising wage levels and employment standards—as employers sought to demonstrate that they could improve conditions without a collective agreement—hence helping to counteract wage-based precarization. Notwithstanding these results, the unions' approach suffers from certain limitations. The scale of organizing campaigns is relatively small and they targeted only two retailers, thus most of the sector stays uncovered. Also, temporary workers are generally not union members in both EE1 and EE2 (although their share is very small). In addition to organizing, ETKA also employs media-oriented instruments and engages with the dissemination of benchmarks on employment standards (informing workers about safety and health issues) as well as limited mobilization, such as gathering signatures against wage cuts in some shops during the crisis. Servicing in the retail sector is not very extensive, as

[3] PAM is Palvelualojen ammattiliitto PAM (in Finnish) or Service Union United PAM (in English).

Table 7.3. Trade union instruments addressing the problems of precarious work and outcomes

	Estonia	Poland	Slovenia
Instruments			
Organizing	**US-styled organizing in large MNCs (since 2012 in EE1, 2014 in EE2)—BOA, sector level**	The legacy of US-styled organizing in MNCs—sector and national level, no TAWs, routine and protest-based recruitment in PL1 and PL2	Recruiting with elements of organizing—company level (some TAWs in SI1, no TAWs in SI2)
Servicing	Rather limited, mostly sectoral level	Rather limited, company and sector	**Extensive, at the sector and national level**
Collective bargaining	Company level, limited, no sectoral-level CB	Company level, limited, no sectoral-level CB	**Extensive, collective agreement at the sector level**
Mobilization	Limited protests, company and national level, union-dominated	**Cyclic protests, all levels, social campaigns involving political parties and NGOs**	National level, broad coalitions and social campaigns
Outcomes			
General outcomes	*Extensive precarization* across the sector and islands of good practices in EE1 and EE2 (*limited segmentation*)	The early stage of nationwide legal changes aimed at reducing precarious work (*moderate precarization*) and *extensive segmentation*	Sectoral-level and national-level regulation—*reduced precarization* via collective bargaining and legal changes and *moderate segmentation*
Detailed outcomes	Increasing union density in some MNCs, monitoring/benchmarking labour standards, some wage increases at the company level, CA in EE1	Increasing union density in some MNCs and legal changes thanks to social campaigns at national and sectoral level aimed at reducing wage-based precarity and insecurity	Increases of wages at the sectoral level, counteracting precarization at the sectoral and national level, greater inclusion/coverage of non-standard employees
Shortcomings	Wage increases still small, no sectoral-level CAs, limited density, limited coverage of non-standard employment, limited coverage of employees beyond certain stores	No sectoral-level CAs and company-level CAs in MNCs, limited inclusion and coverage of non-standard employees, and limited access to workers in micro-companies	No provisions in sectoral-level CAs for precarious (equal treatment of TAWs and Labour Code-regulated fixed-term and part-time workers enshrined in the law)/non-standard employees, limited union organizing at the company level

Notes: Grey-shaded areas are dominant instruments. CA = collective agreement, CB = collective bargaining, TAW = temporary agency workers, MNC = multinational company, BOA = Baltic Organising Academy.

Source: Authors' research.

resources are limited, but ETKA's members are given legal support, counselling, and different courses. As non-standard workers rarely become union members, their access to these services is restricted. The most general result is continuous precarization across the sector, which is countered neither by the emergence of the

islands of good practices in two unionized retail chains nor by significant legal changes triggered by union actions.

Similar to the Estonian case, in Poland a national tripartite institutional structure exists, but has not been used for vigorous social dialogue. For some observers, far from constituting the mainstay of unions' institutional power, the national-level tripartite institutions seem to be an empty institutional shell in Poland (Ost 2000). Being short on institutional power, Polish trade unions began to address the problems of non-standard and low-paid employment at the national level in the late 2000s through some novel, mostly mobilization-based instruments. They managed to frame precarious work as a social problem through mass media campaigns, cyclic street protests, as well as national and international pressure for legislative reform. Union demands included strengthening the Trade Union Act to improve union representation of precarious workers, raising the minimum wage, and creating a minimum hourly wage for civil law contracts, as well as measures counteracting the expansion of civil law and fixed-term employment contracts (cf. Maciejewska and Mrozowicki 2016). The retail sector unions were at the forefront of these activities, including the National Section of Commerce of NSZZ Solidarność, which was involved in nationwide campaigns to raise the minimum wage to 50 per cent of the national average wage and in the 'Sisyphus' campaign against the expansion of 'junk contracts', involving spots on the Internet and in national media. In some campaigns, non-union actors were also involved. These included political parties, such as the right-wing Law and Justice Party and the small left-wing party Together; and social movements, such as the coalition of the anarchist movement and trade union Workers' Initiative that organized Amazon distribution centres. The legal reforms aimed at reducing temporary and civil law employment were implemented in the course of electoral campaigns of the Civic Platform (in 2014–15), as well as following the victory of the Law and Justice Party in the 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections.[4]

Trade union density in the retail sector is as low in Poland as in Estonia. However, Solidarność was able to overcome this obstacle by combining international support and the advantages of being a general union, which allowed it to tap union resources from other sectors for organizing campaigns. The efforts of trade unions did not result in a sectoral collective agreement, nor did they bring collective agreements to a successful conclusion in any of the major retail chains. But the outcomes of retail unions' actions are not negligible and some even reach non-standard workers. The accomplishments in PL1 include, *inter alia*, the transformation of 5,000 fixed-term contracts to open-ended contracts in 2011 and a new policy guaranteeing open-ended contracts for the employees with seniority longer than fifteen months, as well as salary increases secured by a company–union agreement.[5] In PL2, in the course of company-level consultations

[4] Even though the reforms could indicate the increase in union institutional power, it has to be noted that the most of them were unilaterally implemented by the government rather than negotiated with the trade unions who initially inspired them.

[5] The company agreements (in Polish, *porozumienie*) in PL1 and PL2 have no status of collective agreements—they are not registered as collective agreements and concern only specific problems at work. Yet, they were seen as binding as they resulted from the company–union consultations of company policies.

and company-union agreements, the unions achieved a reduction in the scope of collective redundancies and an increase in redundancy payments. They also began to represent the interests of merchandizers (employed by external companies), and successfully opposed the project to monitor cashiers' scanning time. Finally, they managed to remove a temporary work agency infamous for bypassing some of the Labour Code and health and safety regulations. Still, in none of the companies were TAWs and self-employed (in the PL1 convenience stores) recruited, as union leaders consider them either non-eligible due to legal regulations or too unstable to invest in their organization. As explained by one of the trade union leaders, 'We have nothing to offer them' (interview, sectoral representative of NSZZ Solidarność, April 2015). Another unionist (from PL2) observed: 'We don't accept people without open-ended contracts as we know they would be fired by the employer' (interview, representative of NSZZ Solidarność in PL2, October 2015).

Following trade union organizing campaigns at the turn of the 1990s and 2000s, working conditions began to improve in large supermarkets and hypermarkets, as well as discounters belonging to MNCs in Poland—in particular as compared to the disorganized segment of small shops. However, trade unions still lack the strength to bring the sectoral employers' organization to the bargaining table, negotiate a sectoral-level agreement, and reduce workforce segmentation. As a result, unions have focused on increasing their associational and institutional power through social and political campaigns combined with company, sector, and nationwide protests aimed at building solidarity within the sector and across other sectors. Initial tangible results can already be observed.

Similar to Estonia and Poland, Slovenia has established national tripartite institutions. The Slovenian government also tried to bypass tripartite institutions and unilaterally pass neoliberal reforms (including the introduction of mini-jobs in 2011) in more or less the same manner as the Estonian government did. This is, however, where the similarities end—the unions in Slovenia effectively deflected reforms and brought down the government in a series of referendums. Furthermore, only 'neocorporatist' Slovenia has a sectoral collective agreement covering the whole trade sector, with both social partners claiming that social dialogue in the sector is good. Greater institutional and associational power, with approximately 15 per cent union density in retail, makes the need for organizing less acutely felt in comparison with the other two countries. The general outcome of these encompassing institutions is less precarious conditions for workers in both standard and non-standard employment. The situation is changing, however, due to increasing difficulties with recruiting and organizing workers in the hostile environment of discounters and smaller employers.

At the national level, the dominant union strategy is to influence labour and social legislation through tripartite negotiations. For example, the labour market reform in 2013 lowered the level of employment protection for regular workers (with rather negative outcomes for retail employees) while at the same time introducing a host of measures aiming at halting the expansion of precarious work. While a similar outcome was present in Poland, it was unilaterally introduced by the government rather than collectively bargained with employers and unions. In addition, similar to Poland but with more substantial results in terms of legislative outcomes, Slovene trade union confederations were involved in broad,

nationwide, class-based campaigns. These involved coalitions with other civil society organizations (e.g. the 2011 ZSSS campaign against mini-jobs, together with a student organization) or with a political party (e.g. the 2015 parallel campaigns for the redefinition of the minimum wage, including trade union confederations and a political party positioned to the left of the social democrats). Both campaigns disproportionally affected the situation of retail workers.

At the sector level, the dominant tactics differ according to the workforce segment that is targeted. As regards the part-time, fixed term, TAW,[6] and regular workers (all within Labour Code employment), the main instrument of regulation is the sectoral collective agreement. Equal treatment of TAWs and Labour Code-regulated fixed-term and part-time workers, are enshrined in the law, which means that the provisions in collective agreements apply to them, too. However due to the perceived trade-off between interests of regular and atypical workers, there are no provisions specifically regulating the latter's working conditions. In fact, when asked about the reasons for not including issues concerning atypical workers in the collective agreement, union representatives often referred to a trade-off between the interests of regular and atypical workers:

> UNION REPRESENTATIVE: We could do it, certainly, we could do it. Now, the question is how much we could actually achieve, what would we have to forgo in order to get it.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Would you have to give up certain rights of regular workers?
>
> UNION REPRESENTATIVE: Yes, yes, probably so.
>
> (Interview, union representative, March 2016)

Hence, unions apply a separate strategy towards atypical precarious workers and try to attract them with servicing (legal support, tourist capacities, and loan guarantees). This is, however, not to say that non-standard workers are ignored at the company level. For instance, one of the unions in SI1 managed to organize some agency workers that were treated unequally in respect to regular workers performing the same job. Also, the SI1 company-level union systematically engages in inter-firm solidarity practice as it regulates the working conditions of employees in convenience stores operating as franchises via its relations with the management of the franchisor. This practice was also found in another large state-owned petrol retailer in Slovenia, where the union was strong enough to demand the cancellation of the franchise agreement in cases where the franchisee commits serious breaches of labour laws or if the wages paid are lower than in franchisor-operated petrol stations covered by a company-level collective agreement.

7.4.2. Explanations

Comparatively, the retail sector in all three countries can be considered as precarious, but the concrete forms and extent of precarization differ between

[6] In Slovenia the law stipulates that TAWs have to be treated equally as workers employed directly by the company. Hence, the provisions of collective agreements apply to them as well. A similar law is also present in Poland. However, it only applies to hired employees, while the majority of the retail sector TAWs are civil-law workers.

the countries and companies studied. In this respect, the main dividing line seems to run between Estonia, where the share of non-standard work is relatively low, and Poland and Slovenia, which both feature a more segmented workforce. In Estonia, precariousness is virtually a universal feature of retail sector work, and so unions pursue a relatively undifferentiated approach, seeking to build *internal solidarity* and through this to increase *associational power*. In Poland, one segmentation line runs between workers in large retail MNCs, on the one hand, and small and medium-sized enterprises with self-employed workers and franchises, on the other. A second segmentation line cuts into the workforce of the MNCs themselves, dividing those in regular jobs from temporary employees, including those on fixed-term contracts of employment (Labour Code), TAWs, and civil-contract workers (non-Labour Code). In this context, considerable resources would be needed to unionize the segment of temporary workers marked by high turnover, promising only short-term results at best. The segment of small enterprises and the self-employed appears almost totally impenetrable for traditional organizing instruments. Under these conditions, the most promising venue for building solidarity across segmentation divides seems to be radicalization and mobilization by *framing the discourse*. This is the first step to increasing associational power through protest actions that go beyond the workplace level. In Slovenia segmentation is also a problem, but the difficulties with unionization of temporary workers seem less severe. Much larger financial resources allow sectoral unions to apply a somewhat differentiated approach, with certain services attracting many non-standard and low-paid workers.

Turning to institutional variables, tripartite institutions are established in all three countries, but only in Slovenia are unions in a position to pose a credible threat in case the tripartite dialogue is bypassed. This indicates that unions' associational power may be crucial for them to access institutional power through formal institutional structures—or for these structures to even function. Features of institutional regulation at the sectoral level are in place in all the countries studied, such as extension mechanisms, the favourability principle, or the presence of representative employer organizations. However, union density rates of 1–2 per cent in Estonia and Poland (as compared to 15 per cent in Slovenia) are hardly conductive to sectoral multi-employer collective bargaining. This higher density underpins Slovenia's firmly established collective bargaining institutions in retail, which also regulate many aspects of the working conditions of atypical workers. Hence, the major difference between Slovenia and the other two countries does not concern institutional structure but rather union power. The weak enforcement of formal protective labour market institutions that do exist in Estonia provides further support for the argument that union power is more critical than formal institutions.

Indeed, unions' most important power resources enabling them to build ties of solidarity in Poland and Estonia derive from union *network embeddedness*. This involves the articulation between unions operating in the sector and union structures at different levels: at the national (confederation) level in Poland; and at the international level in both countries, through Estonian unions' cooperation in the Baltic Organising Academy (currently) and through the cooperation between the SEIU and Solidarność in Poland. Slovenian unions have also relied on

network embeddedness to support their campaigns. For example, the surge in the national minimum wage in 2010, which benefitted retail workers, was to a large extent a generalized outcome stemming from the wage increase in a major exporter of home appliances. Mini-jobs legislation that was successfully resisted at the national level threatened workers in retail (and some other parts of the low-paid and precarized service sector) more than workers in other industries. In addition, the fact that in Slovenia the collective agreement in the retail sector covers TAWs (with no derogations allowed), though clearly an institutional feature, is owed to national-level negotiations in which unions exchanged statutory guarantees of equality of treatment against concessions to capital in other areas. In sum, institutions may well constitute tools at unions' disposal when it comes to constructing inclusive union strategies. Nonetheless, they are but a solidified outcome of past organized labour's struggles and, if they are to be preserved, they have to be constantly backed up by unions' power resources and capacities of making use of them by union leaders (and members) at various levels within trade union structures.

The importance of union power resources is further underscored if we look at patterns of mobilization and relations with the government. The stronger the unions are, the more prominent is the role of mobilization. In Estonia, where unions' associational power is very low and where they lack narrative resources legitimizing social protests,[7] the unions are merely *lobbying* the government. Though unions in Poland are considerable stronger at the national level than in Estonia, those in the retail sector lack the resources necessary to unionize non-standard workers and those employed in the small and medium-sized enterprises segment. They thus find it difficult to apply traditional instruments. However, in the post-2007 crisis period, Polish unions changed tack and began organizing large-scale mobilization actions, which are more demanding in terms of resources than mere lobbying and where the *addressee* of actions are both 'the people' and the government. The legacy of social movement unionism, present in Poland (as the legacy of Solidarność) and missing in post-Soviet Estonia, seems to be crucial in explaining this difference. Finally, Slovene unions' power may be institutionalized, but when these institutions are under threat, the unions are still able to bring 'the people' to the streets and voting polls. At the same time, they are much less able to persuade workers to strike today than in the early 1990s when the industrial relations structure was formed—which makes mobilization a *fall-back option* even when unions are engaged in 'peaceful' negotiations. The militancy of Slovene unions can also be explained by their much stronger power at the national level than at company level. They thus rely on national mobilization and coalitions to sustain institutional power, and to try to compensate for their virtual invisibility and cooperativeness in a growing share of companies (Stanojević and Kanjuo-Mrčela 2016).

[7] In Estonia, discourse on class and inequality issues has been generally marginalized and instead national/ethnic and 'transition culture' discourses have dominated that have legitimized the existing inequalities and created ethnic divisions (Helemäe and Saar 2015). This has made it difficult for the representatives of labour to legitimately counteract market-oriented policies (and the expansion of precarious employment) by bringing 'the people' to the streets.

7.4.3. Common Limitations and Challenges

Looking at the explanations in this section, it appears as if the past actions of organized labour in the three countries could be almost *in toto* explained in terms of structural forces and resources inherited from past struggles. This is, however, an illusion of perspective—we have to bear in mind the fact that if structural forces in a capitalist society are constantly exerting pressures for reshaping the society according to the needs of capital, not least by segmenting and atomizing the workforce, virtually every collective act of defiance on the part of working-class organizations palpably points to the importance of *agency*. The various forms of strategic union responses to the problems of precarious work would be difficult to uphold without the innovativeness of trade union leaders and members at various levels of trade union structures. What then are the challenges that lie ahead for organized labour with respect to rebuilding the unity of the working class in the face of pressures for further segmentation and atomization?

Our conclusion at this stage is that the challenge all three labour movements face if they are to rebuild their power resources and counter precarization is to relink political and economic struggles, although each from a different angle. In other words, the political aspects of workers' solidarity, which are often lost in the technical aspects of organizing and collective bargaining (Simms et al. 2012), are the *sine qua non* condition to counteract precarization. Notably, the efforts to build links with workers' communities beyond workplaces, which was said to be crucial in precarious workers' organizing in other contexts (Chun and Agarwala 2016; Sarmiento et al. 2016), are still relatively weak in all three countries studied. In Estonia, where organizing campaigns of precarious retail workers have already borne some fruit, the challenge seems to be linking these clear, though limited, economic achievements at the company level to a more politically oriented approach that could reach beyond the workplace level. The need for such a reorientation towards a more political, class-based movement appears even more pressing among Poland's highly segmented workforce and internally conflicted unionism. This change of course might just be starting to get under way if the recent turn towards protest actions is complemented with some innovative form of organizing atypical workers. In Slovenia, the political momentum of the unions at the national level proved crucial in warding off even more intensive precarization and segmentation. If these institutional protections are not to recede, they need to be reinforced with a stronger union presence in economic struggles at the company level. The way to address these challenges is not defined by initial conditions in any of the three cases—it is only the collective agency comprising both organizational as well as political efforts that can provide a solution.

7.5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter examined how sectoral characteristics, institutional factors, and trade union strategies towards precarious work have shaped patterns of new solidarities in the retail sector following an economic downturn, based on a comparison of three CEE countries with variegated political-economic and

industrial relations systems. Our analysis suggests that institutional differences influenced the forms and extent of precarious work. In Estonia, precariousness is nearly a universal feature of retail sector work and standard employment dominates, while in Poland and (to a lesser extent) Slovenia, the retail workforce is more differentiated between and within shops, and atypical employment is rather widespread. While Estonia represents a case of the most extensive precarization of all workers in the sector regardless of the types of their contracts, the situation in Poland is marked by greater precarization of those in non-standard contracts as compared to those with standard contracts, which reflects very limited organization and representation of the latter. The attempts to advance workforce precarization in Slovenia have been most seriously constrained thanks to union power resources and mobilization capacities at the national level.

More generally, the chapter has demonstrated how opportunities and constraints embedded in the institutional context have influenced union resources and responses to precarization. Our analysis supports the role of encompassing institutions, including high coverage of collective agreements, as a tool to combat precarious work (Doellgast et al. 2016; Mrozowicki 2014). However, we conclude that unions' associational power (Lévesque and Murray 2010; Silver 2003) and institutional power (Doerre et al. 2009: 37) are crucial for the institutions to function and bring gains for labour. Only Slovenian retail unions—with their higher union density rate and occasional support from other unions, political parties, and social movements—are in a position to guarantee the continuation of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue and to regulate the conditions of atypical workers. Poland and Estonia both have favourable regulatory frameworks, which could potentially be used to improve the situation of precarious workers through tripartite social dialogue and multi-employer collective bargaining. However, as suggested by Ost (2000, 2009), these institutions remain illusory as long as they are not backed by strong unions who are able to bring employers—by their mobilizing capacities—to the bargaining table. In such a context, in order to combat precarious work more effectively, both Polish and Estonian unions have also tried to increase their associational power by making use of their network embeddedness, cooperating with national and international unions. The Polish unions have also made use of narrative resources and conducted different mobilization actions directed to a wider audience, including social campaigns in mass media and the Internet. In order to succeed in reducing precarious work, the successful construction and use of narrative resources to mobilize the people and to conduct more politically oriented actions might be crucial.

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Innovative trade union project-based organizations in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Slovenia and Estonia

Barbara Samaluk and Kairit Kall

Abstract

Trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe have used various externally funded projects to foster innovation, but these endeavours have not been analysed in detail. To fill this gap, the article studies the development of such innovation in the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia and aims to identifying the interplay of power resources that drew and sustained innovative 'project-based organizations' defined as distinct organizations with their own identity, knowledge and capabilities that are built up through the execution of a portfolio of externally funded projects. Findings show that national contexts inform the focus of innovation, the forms of evolving trade union project-based organizations and novel, yet distinct, ways in which activists utilize power resources and new opportunity structures arising from the EU integration. While Slovenian unions utilized a more diverse set of power resources in novel ways, which proved to be more successful regarding the outcomes for workers, organisations in both countries faced problems due to their reliance on temporary project funds. Nevertheless, activists' capabilities for innovative utilisation of organizational power resources in both countries, as well as of societal, structural and institutional power resources in Slovenia ensured their survival and stimulated traditional unions' gradual transformation into more committed project-supported organizations indicating a move towards securing their future sustainability.

Keywords

Central and Eastern Europe; Estonia; Slovenia; trade union innovation, project-based organization, project-supporting organization, projectification, trade union power resources

Introduction

The broader trends of liberalization, marketization and welfare state restructuring have been accompanied by a shift towards project governance, work and its temporary organization with predetermined project funding, timeframes, team, workers' roles and tasks, broadly defined as projectification (Greer et al., 2018; Samaluk, 2017a; Godenhjelm et al., 2014; Lundin et al. 2015). Projectification is spreading beyond traditional project-organized sectors to most parts of society, including public sector organizations and trade unions (Greer et al. 2108; Lundin et al., 2015, Samaluk, 2017a). In this article we utilise Lundin et al. (2015) organizational typology to explore this organizational shift within trade unions that could act as 'project-supported organizations', 'project networks' or 'project-based organizations'. The latter being characterized by distinct identity, knowledge and capabilities built up through the execution of a portfolio of externally funded projects. Various projects funded by external grants have been used by trade unions in CEE to foster innovation (Bernaciak and Kahancová 2017), but trade union project-based organizations emerging from these have not been analysed in detail. To fill this gap, the article studies the development of emerging trade union project-based organizations in CEE to identify the interplay of power resources, which drew and sustained these organisations and the impact these had on traditional project-supported organisations and the wider trade union movement. The analysis focuses on two countries that share a novice status within the EU, yet are characterized by different industrial relations systems and existing union power resources, namely the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia (Feldmann, 2017, Trif et al., Forthcoming).

The above differences notwithstanding, the novice status in the EU and the economic crisis of 2008 have produced some converging effects in these two countries that include further market liberalization, austerity measures, and the weakening of organisational, structural and societal resources (Feldmann, 2017, Trif et al.), as well as increased trends of projectification advanced by the EU governing (including financial) mechanisms (Greer et al., 2018, Samaluk, 2017a). Both Slovenian and Estonian innovative trade union projects have evolved into project-based organizations funded from various external sources, such as the European Social Fund, the Norway Grants, other grants not traditionally available to social partnership institutions, and resources of Western European trade unions. This article thus compares the development of

these innovative trade union project-based organisations in the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia and asks what power resources and actor capabilities drive and sustain them and what are their effects on trade union organizations within which they have emerged, and/or the countries' trade union movements more generally.

Our findings show that national contexts inform the focus of innovation, the forms of evolving trade union project-based organizations and novel, yet distinct, ways in which activists utilize power resources and new opportunity structures arising from the EU integration. While Slovenian unions utilized a more diverse set of power resources in novel ways, which proved to be more successful regarding the outcomes for workers, organisations in both countries faced problems due to their reliance on temporary project funds. Nevertheless, activists' capabilities for novel utilisation of organizational power resources in both countries, as well as societal, structural and institutional power resources in Slovenia ensured their survival and stimulated traditional unions' gradual transformation into more committed project-supported organizations indicating a move towards securing their future sustainability.

Innovative trade union project organizations in Central and Eastern Europe

Trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe have used various externally funded projects to foster innovation and this article compares the emergence of such innovation in the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia. Trade union innovation is here conceptualised as novel ways of deploying existing or new power resources in order to strengthen the capacity of unions to further workers' interest by improving terms and conditions of employment and/or providing (re)new(ed) ways of representing and organizing workers (Trif et al., Forthcoming). The nature and extent of innovation thus vary, depending on wider and country/sectoral context, unions' power resources, and union agency (Bernaciak and Kahancová, 2017; Levesque and Murray, 2010; Turner, 2007).

Union power resources are defined 'as fixed or path-dependent assets that an actor can normally access and mobilize' (Levesque and Murray 2010: 335) and can be differentiated into institutional, organizational, structural and societal resources (Trif et al., Forthcoming). Institutional power resources refer to statutory (labour laws) and non-statutory support for unions' activities in the form of and social compromises agreed upon in the past, which is most commonly measured in collective bargaining coverage (Ibid.). There is a considerable difference in institutional power resources between Slovenian and Estonian unions. While the Slovenian neo-corporatist model came under pressure with the country's entry into the EU in 2004 and the European Monetary Union in 2007, and the subsequent economic crisis, its collective bargaining coverage remained relatively high (around 70% in 2010 and 68 percent in 2015) compared with the rest of the CEE region (Visser, 2019) and unions played an important role in easing the effects of the economic crisis and austerity through tripartite social dialogue (Stanojević and Klarič, 2013). In Estonia, in contrast, the coverage of collective agreements has remained low (33% in 2009 and 19% in 2015) and collective bargaining is relatively decentralized (Visser, 2019).

Nevertheless, EU integration and the post-crisis environment affected organisational, structural and societal resources of unions in both countries. Structural resources relate to workers' position within the economy and are dependent on the demand for workers (Silver, 2003). Societal resources refer to the support of wider public for trade union demands as well as union coalitions and alliances beyond the trade union movement and organisational resources comprise of union density as well as proactive leadership and the structure and functioning of union organisation (Wright, 2000, Trif et al., Forthcoming). External pressures that came with EU and Eurozone membership and the 2008 economic crisis intensified pressures on the labour force, leading to the rise of precarious work in Slovenia and unemployment in both countries.

In this context the Slovenian trade union movement faced rapid de-unionization affecting structural and organizational power resources through gradual drop in trade union density, changing membership structure and increasing levels of interest fragmentation between and within union confederations (Stanojević and Broder, 2012). Also, public trust in trade unions considerably dropped with the economic crisis (Trif et al.). While unions were subsequently able to utilise still strong institutional power to institute protective mechanisms for growing workforce on non-standard employment, they lacked power to reach and organise a growing number of unemployed, precarious and non-unionised young and migrant workers most affected by the crisis (Samaluk, 2017b).

In Estonia, power resources of unions have been relatively low already before the economic crisis, which weakened them further. Dissimilar to Slovenia, unions could not rely on their institutional power. For example, tripartism has never become fully institutionalized and especially during the economic crisis of 2008, when the government unilaterally – despite small-scale union protests – implemented austerity measures and flexibilised labour law (Woolfson and Kallaste, 2011), it became clear that unions are rather powerless and largely incapable of pushing forward their agendas and mobilizing their constituencies and a wider public (Kall, 2017). Despite relatively high levels of trust in unions (as measured with opinion surveys, see Trif et al, Forthcoming), Estonian unions have not been capable of utilizing this societal resource. This also relates to Estonian union culture where union movement has mostly strived for peaceful partnership with employers and focused on routine servicing of their existing members and levels of industrial action have remained very low (Carley, 2013).

Regarding organisational power, Estonia stands out with the lowest union density rate in Europe that further decreased after the crisis and was in 2015 only at five per cent (Visser, 2019). Nevertheless, in contrast to Slovenia, non-standard employment contracts are still not very widespread in Estonia (ILO, 2015) and 'non-traditional' groups of workers have also not been high on the agenda for unions. Rather, unions have mainly targeted workers on standard contracts, which can also be explained by the generally low levels of unionization and lack of resources to even address the concerns of 'traditional' target groups of unions (Kall, 2017).

However, the utilisation and expansion of power resources depends also on opportunity structures at specific time and actors' capabilities to use them (Levesque and Murray, 2010). While in both countries external pressures weakened union power resources, they also opened up new opportunities to use them in novel ways. While CEE integration into the EU initially caused tensions and competition within the European trade union movement, it also enhanced East-West cross-border solidarity and project cooperation financially supported by Western trade unions (Bernaciak, 2011; Gajewska, 2009; Meardi, 2012), increasing the network embeddedness of cooperating unions. This was especially pronounced in Estonia, where increasing labour market interdependencies with bordering Nordic countries and consequent long-standing cooperation with Nordic unions opened new opportunities to utilise existing organisational resources in novel ways. Secondly, integration into the EU gave CEE trade unions access to EU governing mechanisms - including funding - that encourage social partners to shape (trans)national policies, boost their capacities and foster partnerships between various actors (Verschraegen et al., 2011; Heyes, 2013), which also stimulated novel use of union power resources. For instance, trade unions in various CEE countries, including Slovenia, have utilised EU funding to boost their human resource capacities, reach wider social groups, reverse the trend of membership decline, introduce innovative organizing tactics and instruments or forge (trans)national partnerships (Bernaciak and Kahancová, 2017; Samaluk, 2017b). All these new opportunities nevertheless came in the form of temporary project funding that can also have transforming effects on trade union organisations.

In organizational terms traditional trade unions are permanent organizations, financed through their membership base. However, with the lowering of union membership across the CEE unions look for external sources of funding. Therefore, when utilising external project funds, unions can also operate as *'project-supported organizations'* where externally funded projects are utilised for one-off tasks or institutionalized as an additional temporal activity (Lundin et al., 2015). These projects might be done in partnerships with other domestic or international trade unions or wider actors, which can result in innovative ways of using organisational and societal resources. Furthermore, unions reliance on external project funds can also result in changes to its organisational structure. While projects might be initiated through traditional project-supported organizations, these projects can evolve into *'project-based organizations'*, where portfolio of projects enables their activity and contributes to their distinct organizational form and identity that might supplement, but also be in tension with permanent project-supported organization (Lundin et al., 2015). This article focuses on innovative trade union projects, which evolved into such project-based organisations.

Both project-supported and project-based organizations can also be part of *'project networks'* activated for a particular task (Lundin et al., 2015). For instance, regional and wider cross-border East-West trade union networks have been strenghtened through innovative projects and addressed challengess related to increasing labour market interdependences on the EU level (Hammer, 2010; Karmowska et al., 2017; Samaluk 2017b;

Greer et al., 2013). These project networks have the potential to strengthen unions' organisational power by increasing network embeddedness with other unions (Levesque and Murray 2010; Trif et al.). Although the above mentioned union projects and cooperation have rarely been studied as organizations with specific characteristics, studies do point to problems related to projects' temporary nature and unsuccessful attempts of unions to sustain them, either due to their experimental-only nature, the lack of available funds and/or the absence of support from partners in other countries (Greer et al., 2013; Karmowska et al., 2017; Samaluk, 2017b).

The question of sustainability is particularly pressing for CEE trade union movement characterized by scarce resources. While financial grants gained through projects could on the one hand increase structural or organisational power resources of unions by opening new funding opportunities that target vulnerable groups and by covering unions' human and material resources for a particular project task, they have limited timeframes. The temporal nature of projects can thus have negative implications for project-based organisations' sustainability and outcomes. For instance, the dependence on portfolio of different project funds can result in 'precarious organizational temporariness' associated with ambiguity and tensions over the goals and tasks that are shaped by contextual contingencies, such as dispersed leadership; detachment from permanent trade union organization; uncertain resourcing and setting goals upon resources available rather than needs (Karmowska et al., 2017), possibly diminishing organizational power, especially internal solidarity within a union. Exploring resilient innovative trade union project-based organizations, whose knowledge and capabilities are built up through the execution of a portfolio of projects (Lundin et al. 2015), can thus provide important insights on capabilities and power resources used to sustain them.

Although the research on the impact of different union power resources on fostering innovations is mixed, the evidence suggests that the implementation of innovation depends upon activists' agency (Turner, 2007; Bernaciak and Kahancova, 2017) and their strategic capabilities defined as 'sets of aptitudes, competencies, abilities, social skills or know-how that can be developed, transmitted and learned' (Levesque and Murray, 2010: 336). This suggests that union power resources are constantly developing according to wider structural changes, including projectification trends. For instance, the utilization of project funds requires specific capabilities, such as intermediation to engage in partnership projects and know-how to re-frame trade union agenda to gain, coordinate and manage externally funded projects. As Levesque and Murray (2010) argue, central to union capacity building are also network embeddedness with other actors, narrative resources that frame understandings and union actions and infrastructural resources, i.e. personnel and material resources. These organisational resources and capabilities are especially crucial for project-based organizations, whose functioning is dependent upon a portfolio of projects. In these types of organizations project leaders and proactive activists can have direct responsibility for the functioning of organization, including their own and other project workers' employment (Lundin et al., 2015, Karmowska et al., 2017; Samaluk, 2017b).

This article compares such innovative project-based organisations that emerged post-2008 economic crisis in neo-corporatist Slovenian and neoliberal Estonia characterised by different industrial relations systems and existing union power resources, yet shared novel membership into the EU market and governance characterised by common trends of liberalization, marketization and projectification. In doing so it addresses the following questions: (1) What power resources drive innovative trade union project-based organizations in the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia? (2) What power resources and actors' capabilities contribute in sustaining project-based organizations? (3) What effects do these innovative project-based organizations have on project-supported trade union organizations within which they have emerged, and/or the countries' trade union movements more generally?

Research design and methods used

A comparative case study research design has been applied in order to compare innovative trade union project-based organizations that emerged in post-crisis Estonia and Slovenia. The selection of cases was guided by similarities regarding post-crisis developments, in particular the emergence of resilient innovative project-based trade union organizations, and by contextual divergence manifested though diverse institutional setup and sets of union power resources making it possible to compare and contrast similar union developments within very different national contexts in the region, namely the neo-liberal Estonia and the neo-corporatist Slovenia.

While in both countries' unions engaged in several other innovative projects, our case study focuses on the only identified innovative and resilient project-based organisations that emerged out of crisis and after nearly a decade still advance workers interests and widen the trade union agenda. These are the Counselling Office for Migrants (COM) and the trade union Young Plus (TUYP) that emerged in Slovenia within the largest trade union confederation in 2010 and 2011 to organise precarious workers and wider social groups and the Baltic Organising Academy (BOA) operating since 2011 in Estonia through several project-supported trade union organisations with the aim to organise workers on standard contracts.

We base our study on eight in-depth interviews with seven activists and one official from Slovenia and on 16 interviews with eight organizers/activists and six officials from Estonia within the selected project-based organizations. Initial interviews in Slovenia were carried out in 2015 and during 2014-2016 in Estonia, followed by several follow-up conversations until the end of 2019 in both countries. Interviews were transcribed, coded and comparatively analysed. The analysis of interviews was complemented with thematic analysis of organizations' documents, reports and other information available on organizations' webpages and social media groups. This enabled us to track the evolution of these organizations, their project portfolios, activities and tactics used to organize workers and wider social groups and advance trade union agenda. Findings are presented below.

Innovative trade union project-based organizations in Slovenia

Both innovative trade union project-based organizations in Slovenia emerged within the biggest union confederation, the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (AFTUS). The Counselling Office for Migrants (COM) was initiated in 2010 as a project within the confederation's project-supported organisation, by a newly employed activist who used proactive tactics and broader network embeddedness to reach and organize migrant workers in construction sector - the first targeted for dismissal during the crisis. New opportunity structures that opened up with the 2007-2013 EU financial perspective, in which the European Social Fund (ESF) covered social inclusion of all categories of migrants, allowed COM to turn informal cooperation with a non-governmental organization (NGO) into project-based partnership and boost its human resource capacities: *'In September 2010 a tender for social inclusion came out and we networked with [an NGO] and applied for it….Through this project we employed two persons' (COM activist, 2015)*. To use the ESF resources, it was necessary to broaden union narrative resources and reframe their activities within a broader social inclusion framework. These novel ways of using structural, organisational and societal resources allowed COM's service-oriented instruments to move beyond the labour market to a wider social area linked to migrant workers' complex legal and social statuses. This project lasted until 2013 and focused mainly on migrants from former Yugoslavia, who used to work in the construction sector. The crisis-led collapse of the Slovenian construction market later turned many of these workers into posted workers, sent mainly to Germany or to the neighbouring Austria[i]. This transition and the changing workers' needs led to further (trans)national partnerships supported by the ESF and other funds.

Since 2013 the Office continued to be financed by the ESF, this time indirectly, as it was contracted by the Employment Office's Info Point for Foreigners to provide services related to migrants' empowerment and advocacy, which involved informing migrants of their rights, decent working standards, possible violations and assisting them in fighting these. This has shifted the Office's focus towards posted workers, undocumented migrants, migrant workers within transnational transport, female migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. The same year Migration Office also launched transnational cooperation with the German trade union confederation, the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) through the Fair Mobility Network project that was co-funded by the European Commission, Hans Böckler Foundation and the DGB. Apart from their advocacy work COM utilized established institutional power in the form of traditional social dialogue institutions and extended it by becoming also part of other national consultative institutions to influence legislative changes of the Aliens Act and Act of Employment, Self-employment and the Work of Aliens, which ultimately led to the better legal protection of migrants (COM, 2015a).

The increasing portfolio of projects increased COM's organisational resources and turned it into a project-based organization with a distinct identity, permanent leadership and growing project-based infrastructural resources, enabling them to professionalize their activities and launch innovative organizing on a

transnational scale. Capacity-building included the employment of migrants themselves, who brought unique skills and know-how to effectively reach and organize migrants. Some of these project workers later also got employed within the confederation or its member unions. They also recruited hundreds of new members to some of confederation's branch unions, but this boost of confederation's organisational resources was still insufficient for self-financing. Therefore, COM's dependence on confederation's project-supported organization and its core reliance on the ESF, compromised its work in 2015, when the previous European financial cycle and its funding priorities were coming to an end. The new ESF perspective did not cover social integration of migrants anymore, making it impossible for COM to reapply without compromising its core mission. At that time the confederation's leadership has also not yet fully embraced its role as a project-supported organization and therefore stopped funding COM's activities after it became apparent that they cannot secure external funds.

To continue its work and broaden its options for external funding, COM transformed into a civil society project-based organization independent from confederation's project-supporting organisation. This change in legal form increased its structural resources to access funds available also to NGO's to further the interests of vulnerable groups. Renamed into the Workers' Counselling Office (WCO), it broadened its focus to all vulnerable workers and wider social groups. This resilience at the time of funding crisis can mainly be attributed to the agency of its founder and leader, who was prepared to leave his secure position at the confederation to 'start anew upon an "enthusiastic" drive' (COM activist, 2016), and a kick-starting donation from one of Slovenian's biggest public trade unions. While COM/WCO's organisational resources initially shrunk, they latter increased through subsequent projects. In 2011 WCO opened an office in the city of Koper, where they successfully pressed for the outsourcing business model adopted by the Port of Koper to be declared unlawful and for its agency (migrant) workers to be employed directly (WCO 2017). In 2018 WCO initiated a government-funded Advocacy Project for Potential Victims of Forced Labour and Exploitation at Work, which, apart from assisting the victims, also targets social partners and wider public through awareness raising.

The same activist, who initiated COM also acted as an insider support for the establishment of Trade Union Young Plus (TUYP) in 2011. TUYP has a status of an independent union within the confederation, but owing to low and transient membership, it operates as a project-based organization. It addresses youth and transitional precarity that goes beyond specific age cohorts and focuses also on wider social groups cycling between various work and non-work statuses. It is utilising its independent and unique organizational form to set its own agenda and attract various diverse external funds to increase its organisational resources. TUYP has been recognized as a youth organization eligible for small scale youth-targeted projects tendered by the Municipality and the National Bureau for Youth. These small-scale projects enable the TUYP to finance and independently set its agenda, yet they are insufficient for increasing human resource capacities. As a result, TUYP activists do most of their trade union work on a voluntary basis and then support themselves through various precarious jobs:

> *'There is administration within the union... there are expert issues… that would need to be paid…This is why we are everywhere…One is currently in Brussels, I work on the radio …another one is self-employed…I am in crisis over that…I can only work like this for another year'. (TUYP activist, 2017)*

Various (un)paid and time-consuming jobs drain activists and cause frustration and fluctuation. Some temporary relief to their precarious status is provided by larger EU funded projects that can be used to cover human resources expenditure. However, a lot of these resources are then used to deal with the demanding bureaucracy accompanying these projects. Moreover, most of these project funds need to be matched with own resources that TUYP often lacks, which implies the participation of internal or external project-supported organizations or partners who can secure matched funding and must potentially also act as official carriers of projects. This can evoke tensions and internal competition within trade union project-supported organisation and can compromise project-based organizations' autonomy: *'We worked on two tenders. In both we were first carriers, then we became partners and then we fell out of the projects, because somebody else was bigger, more powerful.' (TUYP activist, 2015).*

Nevertheless, TUYP has over the years developed knowledge and experience, both for trade union work and project management that gradually brought to greater autonomy. The first project was implemented through

confederation's project-supported organization done in partnership with the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions and funded through Norway Grants. The subsequent projects were run independently of the confederation, covered with European funds and implemented in partnership with NGOs, increasing TUYP's organisational resources in the form of network embeddedness, infrastructural and narrative resources. All projects aimed at raising awareness about decent work amongst the young and empowering them. These projects also increased the involvement of social partners in the (supra)national politics of youth employment and accompanied active labour market policies (ALMPs) that are to a growing degree supported by various EU funded schemes (such as Youth Guarantee) thus increasing unions' institutional resources.

TUYP attracts these schemes largely thanks to its know-how on how to re-fame traditional trade union activities to suit external tenders' requirements: '*You quickly learn this project language and frame activities to fit in…we are big critics of the Youth Guarantee, but we still applied on that tender in a way to provide information across Slovenia about Youth Guarantee and ran workshops on decent work beside' (TUYP activist, 2017).* While tailoring trade union activities according to project funds could affect union's ability to maintain its core mission, TUYP's increasing capabilities to utilise narrative resources to frame union action in novel ways not only allows novel utilisation of structural resources, but also societal and organisational resources, which improved the public image of trade unions and attracted new members:

> *[Over the years] things changed radically in the sense of positioning in the public, attracting new members, setting the agenda and communicating with institutions…this does not necessarily mean new membership, but is a precondition for it […] TUYP is not an end station for the young, but a transit zone for the young to enter branch unions. (COM leader, who assisted in establishing TUYP, year 2015)*

TUYP's tactics involved proactive advocacy work, mobilization and innovative use of social media to employ political instruments and reach those in precarious (school-to-)work transitions, thus creating a novel entry route into trade unionism, especially for the next generation.

Both presented project-based organizations broadened institutional, organisational, structural and societal resources of the wider trade union movement, despite experiencing its considerable inertia. Nevertheless, a recent confederation's leadership change has started transforming its internal organization to better support existing and emerging project-based organizations and utilise its activists' unique capabilities to use union power resources in novel ways. In 2017 one of the founding activists of TUYP joined confederation's new leadership team responsible for confederations' education, communication and project activities. A project office was set up also 'with the aim to employ…from the pool of [TUYP]' (Official of a branch union, 2019); the confederation's website now features special section on projects and the list has been expanding. This indicates a move towards a more committed role of confederation as a project-supported organization, that could ensure the sustainability of existing project-based organizations and the retention of its precarious activists and their capabilities.

Innovative trade union project-based organization in Estonia

In 2011 BOA was established owing to a small group of Nordic and Baltic unionists with transnational cooperation experience dating back to 1990s. On both sides these activists played a key role in facilitating face-to-face communication with potential project-supported organizations, preparing an action plan and framing it in a way to convince unions to try out (and, in case of Nordic unions, to fund) something different in terms of existing union strategies and identities. While the earlier cooperation in the region involved efforts to export the Nordic industrial relation systems to Estonia, the new approach aimed to implement strategies more suitable for the low-density systems by staging union campaigns typical for the Anglo-Saxon organizing model (Kall et al., 2019). The main target group of BOA activities has been workers on standard contracts. In Estonian context this represented innovation as the campaigns have focused on companies where union structures were either weak or entirely absent. The activists also concluded that previous small-scale, one-off projects were inadequate, and that new approach is needed to prevent Baltic countries becoming a union-free zone. Owing to labour market interdependencies this was framed disastrous also for Nordic unions (Häkkinen, 2013).

Initially 32 organizations joined BOA's project network. This included 11 Finnish, two Swedish and four Danish unions, who assisted the Academy by providing financial and/or human resources to their Baltic counterparts, and six Estonian private sector unions operating in industrial, service and transportation sectors. Industrial unions formed a separate project-supported organization, the Association of Estonian Industrial Trade Unions, to better coordinate organizing activities. In addition, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation took part and, to some extent, integrated elements of the organizing model into their general shop stewards training module. Consequently, also some unions not belonging to BOA have become acquainted with organizing model's principles.

BOA operated under the leadership of a steering group consisting of Baltic and Nordic unionists from project-supported organizations, so that no single union has dominated the project and all parties involved have shared the responsibility for setting and implementing project goals. The steering group was responsible for fundraising, planning and implementing the project (Häkkinen, 2013). Each person involved in the project was assigned a task/responsibility area, and the practical organizing work was coordinated by BOA coordinators designated for each country and sector. Unionists from participating organizations were devoting part of their time for BOA activities, but project funds also enabled participating project-supported organizations to hire previously non-existent organizers on temporary contracts. These project workers were generally young people, bringing to some extent a generation change in the union movement.

BOA project activities were based upon annual fundraising. Each year the programme was evaluated by participating organizations and the Nordic ones then decided how many resources they are willing to provide for the next year. Although participating Estonian unions enjoyed rather high levels of autonomy in organizing project work, they also needed to show clear results (or justify the lack of them) to secure further funding. Estonian project-supported organizations were required to invest 35 per cent of the organizing campaigns-generated membership fees back into further organizing (Häkkinen, 2013). New Estonian organizations were able to join the Academy if they found a Nordic counterpart who is willing to support them, making the participation easier for unions with prior cross-border connections and project portfolios. Initial project network thus gradually evolved into a project-based organization with a portfolio of successive project funding decisions, project workers dependent on them and a share of permanent funding from project-supported organizations.

In their organizing campaigns BOA activists employed a variety of tactics and instruments that Estonian unions have not traditionally used on such scale for achieving their goals, including joint social campaigns and industrial action of different sectoral level unions. The organizing model also assumed a more confrontational approach towards employers and more aggressive tactics when necessary, thus introducing considerable union innovation regarding strategies in Estonia (Kall, 2017). Finally, the organizing approach required a change in union leaders' attitudes towards their own role and their new and existing members; it also meant putting more emphasis on empowering and activating workers and less on top-down servicing.

This 'organizing turn' has changed the attitudes of some older generation union members/officials towards the role of unions and some BOA activists have been recruited into non-participating unions and are advocating organizing principles in their new organizations. In addition, the Estonian campaigns have motivated Finnish unions to try organizing principles also in Finland (Kall et al., 2019) and an Estonian organizer is currently working as an organizing coordinator in all three Baltic countries related to BOAs continuation project BOA 2.0. The 'organizing turn' has also created a distinct identity of activists within BOA's project-based organization, who believe in the organizing principles and try to find financial support for further organizing work. BOA's organizing campaigns have raised union membership, but the increase is relatively slow given that campaigns were also launched at a rather small-scale and staff turnover in some companies was quite high. In 2016 there were nine organizers in Estonia (the number has stayed under 10 throughout the years) and during that year BOA campaigns generated 544 new union members (Mölder, 2016) Furthermore, in several organized companies, unions have managed to sign company-level collective agreements.

Participating project-supported organizations still lack sufficient resources to employ organizers themselves, and even if they could self-finance organizing activities, it is doubtful that they would allocate considerable resources without external support. Although Estonian trade unions have had rather easy access to Nordic unions' funds without needing to possess extensive know-how and capabilities required to compete for and

manage EU-funded projects, BOA's annual fundraising introduced precarity for activists employed on projects similar to the one observed in the case of the Slovenian organizations discussed above. Since the organizers have been employed a year at a time, they have been struggling with constant insecurity about their future employment. Moreover, organizers' salaries have remained below national average, although the job is rather difficult, demanding and often frustrating, with frequent setbacks. Several organizers' health has deteriorated during their employment and some have also complained about extreme work-related stress: *'...let's be honest, the job that we do is not a healthy job. First was XXX* [an organizer] *who had that cancer…I'm sure the work contributed to it. It is a stressful job. And then all those troubles with...* [discusses other health issues that organizers have had]' (BOA organizer, 2016).

Nevertheless, BOA's project-based organization consists of a network of people sharing distinct organizational identity, thus closely communicating with and supporting each other across sectors and cross-border. These increased network embeddedness and narrative resources have been crucial as organizers' project-supported unions had not had organizing competence and often organizers have found themselves in a situation where their work methods and professional identity differ considerably from that of their co-unionists in traditional, now project-supported unions. Not all union officials in the latter approve of organizing: for some it is too militant a strategy that requires too much effort and/or is not in accordance with Estonian trade union identity. As a result, some unions have stepped out of BOA and do not have organizers any more. For example, two industrial unions decided not to continue with the organizing after three years of trying. Nevertheless, there are unions that have stayed in the Academy from the beginning and some new ones, such as that representing finance workers, have joined at a later stage.

While BOA project ended in 2017, a new agreement for the Baltic Organizing Alliance, the so-called BOA 2.0, was signed in December the same year, to build a more sustainable project-based organization that aims at developing strong organizing unions in the Baltic countries. For BOA 2.0 a separate association of Baltic unions was formed, initially consisting of three Estonian (two of them have participated in BOA since the beginning), one Latvian and two Lithuanian sectoral level unions. The association operates as an independent project-based organization with its own assets, bank account, budget and it was founded with unlimited term, indicating a move towards a more permanent organizational form. It does not include any Nordic unions as members, only as supporters with whom a separate cooperation agreement should be signed; in contrast to BOA, Nordic unions do not have voting rights regarding the direction/ strategy of the organization.

While BOA 2.0's financing model is to a large extent still based on annual fundraising by Nordic unions, it has one salaried employee coordinating organizing activities in all Baltic countries and the participating Baltic unions are required to direct at least 20 per cent of their annual income into organizing activities, to build necessary infrastructure for organizing (electronic membership register, financial management system) and to centralize membership fee collection system. While this indicates a move towards a more sustainable project-based organization, its existence is still fundamentally dependent on project-supported organizations and Nordic trade unions.

Discussion and conclusions

This article compared innovative trade union project-based organizations in Slovenia and Estonia and aimed at identifying the interplay of power resources, which drew and sustained these organisations and the impact these had on traditional project-supported organisations and the wider trade union movement. The findings suggest that in both settings innovative trade union project-based organizations have been driven by proactive activists with specific capabilities needed to utilise available power resources and new opportunity structures that opened with EU integration as well as in a specific post-crisis country contexts and industrial relations systems.

In Estonia, generally weak power resources of unions, combined with cross-border labour market interdependencies and long-established transnational networks with Nordic unions created distinctive opportunity structures for Estonian unions to gain Nordic unions' financial and strategic support for innovative projects. These existing organisational resources were utilised in novel ways by proactive activists who considered old cooperation strategies ineffective in addressing Baltic unions' critically low density. They also utilized their narrative framing capabilities to convince Nordic unions to support and

Estonian unions to join the initial project network in order to implement the Anglo-Saxon organizing model union campaigns in Estonian workplaces. Thus, in the Estonian context, the key innovative action was recourse from top-down servicing to organizing, which, in the context of BOA also included restructuring the union organizations.

Slovenian trade union project-based organizations, leaning on comparatively stronger institutional and organizational power resources, emerged through confederations' project-supported organization as a response to external pressures upon the Slovenian neo-corporatist model. Rise in unemployment and precarious work required new responses from trade unions to organize precarious workers and wider social groups remaining outside traditional union structures. This called for more proactive tactics, re-framing of trade union activities and forging (trans)national partnerships with civil society, public organizations and trade unions in other countries. Just like in the Estonian case, the proactive tactics and cooperation with various actors were initiated by activists, who subsequently seized new opportunities provided by the EU and other funding streams to assist vulnerable groups by establishing innovative trade union project-based organizations that either operated under confederations' frame or acted as independent trade unions.

Activists' agency, their increasing identification with emerging project-based organizations and their unique capabilities also proved key in sustaining the established organizations. In Estonia activists remained key players in BOA's gradual evolution from initial project network into a more resilient project-based organization, characterized by a portfolio of successive projects and a share of permanent funding from participating project-supported organizations, project workers dependent on them and distinct organizational identity. In other words, Estonian activists engaged in innovative use of unions' organisational power resources. Also, in Slovenia the activists' know-how and ability to reframe traditional trade union activities to apply for and manage projects through various innovative, changing and complementing project-based organizational forms ensured sustainability. In contrast to the Estonian case, this also provided access to exclusive financial resources to improve working conditions of non-unionised workers and wider social groups, thus increasing unions' structural power resources. At the same time, Slovenian's diverse project-based organizational forms allowed activists to expand unions' institutional power resources beyond traditional social dialogue into other consultative institutions present within the Slovenian neo-corporatist context to benchmark employment and social standards for workers and wider social groups. Moreover, their proactive tactics, alliances with non-union social groups and novel use of media and political instruments also increase unions' societal resources. This indicates that stronger union movements able to skilfully combine multiple power resources can achieve better outcomes for workers (and wider social groups) through innovative project-based organizations.

However, in both countries activists' efforts to maintain established project-based organizations came with high personal costs linked to uncertain funding and consequent precarity. In Estonia project funds enabled only one-yearly employment contracts. In Slovenia some forms of funding could not at all be used to finance employment of activists, and only larger EU projects secured employment contracts for longer periods. These findings are in line with existent research that points to problems related to projects' temporary nature and consequent precarity experienced by activists working on them (Karmowska et al., 2017; Samaluk, 2017b). Nevertheless, the focus on power resources also shows that activists' efforts and capabilities considerably expanded organizations' network embeddedness, narrative and infrastructural resources needed to sustain innovative project-based organisations and their core missions, which also stimulated transformation of traditional unions into more committed project-supported organisations.

The article thus contributes to existing literature on trade union innovation by providing additional evidence that innovation is context specific and dependent on activists' agency and their capabilities to utilize available and emerging power resources and opportunity structures to foster innovation (Turner, 2009; Bernaciak and Kahancova, 2017; Levesque and Murray, 2010). However, the article also offers original insights that within broader trends of projectification innovative trade union projects emerge through activists' capabilities to use existent and emerging power resources in novel ways also to sustain established organisations and mobilise traditional unions' emerging role as project-supported organizations. It demonstrates that innovative project-based organizations can advance organizational, societal, structural and/or institutional power resources of the wider trade union movement and as a consequence also stimulate traditional trade unions' gradual transformation into more committed project-supported organizations. In Slovenia this is visible in ways innovative project-based organizations went beyond embedded networks and social dialogue institutions to benchmark employment and social standards, promoted trade union agenda

amongst wider social groups and acted as a pool for recruiting new members and activists into confederations' unions. These novel ways of utilising organizational, societal, structural and institutional power resources, in turn, stimulated confederation's internal reorganization to better support and incorporate existing and emerging trade union project-based organizations.

In Estonia BOA enabled unions to increase their organisational resources, by strengthening network embeddedness with Nordic unions, restructuring the union organisation, organizing new members and generating new stock of stories legitimizing union action. A new generation of union activists with distinct organizational identity and diverse set of strategies had transforming effects on permanent union structures and on some older-generation unionists. Transforming effects were also visible in participating unions' increased role as project-supported organizations that came in the form of financial commitments for BOA 2.0. While in both countries there is ground for optimism that innovative project-based organisations are becoming better embedded and supported by trade union project-supported organisations, tensions still exist and we are yet to see, whether these moves will ensure their sustainability. By focusing on the development of diverse innovative trade union project-based organizations this article also provides fresh insights on how growing projectification trends affect trade unions as organizations and thus contributes original knowledge to organisational scholarship looking at impact of projectification on various other private and public organizations (Lundin et al., 2015; Godenhjelm et al., 2014; Greer et al., 2108).

Overall, the article's perspective from the European periphery demonstrates that CEE trade unions, although struggling with limited power resources and insecurity related to temporary funding, are far from passive and powerless, but offer innovative strategies how to advance trade union agenda in the post-crisis EU context. These findings thus also have implications for a wider European trade union movement that operates under the shared market and governance. Findings show that there are various possibilities for traditional trade unions, in the East and the West, to become more committed project-supported organizations able to support, utilise and embed innovative project-based organizations and enhance (trans)national cooperation and partnerships.

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Endnotes

[i]Between 2012 and 2014 the number of workers posted from Slovenia almost doubled. In 2014 103.000 workers were officially declared as posted, amongst them 53.000 in the construction sector (http://www.sdgd.si/naslovnica/347/informacije_za_napotene_delavce.html)

KOKKUVÕTE

Innovatsiooniga marginaliseerituse vastu: hargmaise organiseerimismudeli kasutuselevõtt 2008. aasta majanduskriisijärgse Eesti erasektori ametiühingutes

Globaliseerumine ning Euroopa integratsioon on oluliselt mõjutanud ka ametiühinguid, seda isegi riikides, kus nende roll tööturu ja -suhete reguleerimises on traditsiooniliselt tugev olnud (Baccaro & Howell, 2011), rääkimata nõrgema positsiooniga ametiühingutest postsotsialistlikes riikides (nt Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Ost, 2009). Kuna keskkond, kus ametiühingud tegutsevad, on oluliselt muutunud, siis on soov oma positsiooni hoida või tugevdada tekitanud vajaduse uute (hargmaiste ehk transnatsionaalsete) strateegiate järele. Radikaalne innovatsioon ametiühingutes, eriti transnatsionaalsel koostööl põhinev, on aga haruldane ja selle saavutamiseks peavad ametiühingud ületama mitmeid barjääre (nt Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010; Meardi, 2012). Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärk on mõista, kuidas suuresti teenindusmudelile[3] ja partnerlusele orienteeritud Balti riikide ja Põhjamaade ametiühingute koostöös sündis ning arenes radikaalselt innovaatiline projektipõhine, kuid kauakestev hargmaisel organiseerimismudelil põhinev algatus, Balti Organiseerimise Akadeemia (BOA). Tegemist on esimese akadeemilise uuringuga, mis Balti Organiseerimise Akadeemiale keskendub ning mis uurib Eesti kollektiivseid töösuhteid hargmaisest perspektiivist lähtuvalt. Töö panustab ametiühingute transnatsonalismialastesse uuringutesse, näidates kuidas hargmaiseid identiteete, eesmärke ja norme on võimalik luua ning millised on ulatusliku ja pikaajalise riikideülese koostöö eeldused.

Doktoritöö edendab institutsionalismi, ametiühingute võimuressursse (*power resources*) ja sotsiaalseid liikumisi käsitlevat kirjandust, integreerides neid ning luues analüütilise mudeli, mis võimaldab kirjeldada ja seletada protsesse, mille kaudu on ametiühingutel võimalik saavutada (radikaalne) suunamuutus. Empiiriliselt rakendatakse loodud mudelit BOA Eesti juhtumi puhul. Peale üldise mudeli loomise on töö üks peamine panus see, et näidatakse kahe raamistamise elemendi, nimelt kollektiivse tegevuse raamide (*collective action frames*) loomise ja identiteeditöö protsessi toimimist ja tähtsust. Just need võimaldavad ametiühingutes radikaalset innovatsiooni, muutes selle ka legitiimseks ja püsivaks, seda isegi Eesti kontekstis, kus ametiühingute võimuressursid on äärmiselt piiratud. Seeläbi panustab doktoritöö arusaamisesse sellest, kuidas nüüdisaegses globaalses majanduses on ametiühingutel

[3] Ametiühingualases kirjanduses eristatakse erinevaid ametiühingute tegevusloogikaid käsitlevaid mudeleid. Teenindusmudel viitab ühingute tegevusele, kus peamine eesmärk on pakkuda liikmetele erinevaid teenuseid ja liikmete jõustamine, mobiliseerimine ja kaasamine ühingu tegevusse, eesmärkide seadmisesse, on kas teisejärguline või olematu (Banks & Metzgar, 1989). Ideaaltüübina vastandub teenindusmudelile organiseerimismudelil põhinev ametiühing, kus eesmärk on nii liikmeskonna kasvatamine kui ka juba olemasoleva liikmeskonna jõustamine ja mobiliseerimine (Heery *et al.*, 2000; Hurd, 2004).

võimalik üle saada probleemidest, mis seostuvad nende ühe riigi kesksusega, organisatsiooni säilitamise tendentsidega ja kahanevate võimuressurssidega.

Analüüs panustab ka postsotsialismi uuringutesse, näidates, kuidas minevikupärand ja innovatsioon koos toimivad ja milliste mehhanismide kaudu on võimalik radikaalselt rajasõltuvusest (*path dependency*) eemalduda, aga ka seda, millised takistused seejuures ilmneda võivad. Taasiseseisvumise järel ei ole Eesti ametiühingud ei ettevõtte, sektori ega riigi tasandil üldjuhul tugevad tegutsejad olnud. Sellest annab tunnistust pidevalt kahanev ametiühingu liikmesuse määr, mis on kukkunud 94%-lt aastal 1992 15%-le aastal 2000 ja umbes 4%-le aastal 2017, mis teeb selle määra Euroopa madalaimaks (Visser, 2019). Samuti on üsna piiratud sotsiaaldialoog ning töötajate mobiliseerimine paremate töötingimuste saavutamiseks ja ametiühingu aktsioonide toetuseks (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Feldmann, 2006; Vandaele, 2014, 2019). Ametiühingute liikmesuse madala määra, legitiimsuse ja tööturu vähese reguleeritusega seotult on Eesti tööturg üsna paindlik, töösuhted pigem tööandjate kontrollitud ja paljud töötajad, kelle läbirääkimispositsioon suhteliselt nõrk ja töötingimused ebarahuldavad, on ka otsustanud emigreeruda, peamiseks sihtkohaks Soome (Meardi, 2013; Saar & Jakobson, 2015; Tammaru & Eamets, 2015), kus töötajad leiavad ühelt poolt paremad töötingimused, kuid kohalikud ametiühingud peavad nägema vaeva, et töötingimusi säilitada oludes, kus ametiühingutesse mitte kuuluva töötajaskonna osakaal suureneb.

Nõrgeneva positsiooni taustal ei ole Eesti ametiühingud taasiseseisvumise perioodil teinud suuri muudatusi strateegiates. *Status quo* on olnud (järjest kahaneva) liikmeskonna teenindamine ning koostööl põhinev sotsiaalpartnerlus nii tööandjate kui ka riigiesindajatega, isegi kui see ei ole olulisi võite töötajatele toonud (Kall, 2016; Woolfson & Kallaste, 2011). Alates 1990ndatest on Eesti ametiühingud teinud ulatuslikku koostööd Põhjamaade, eriti Soome ametiühingutega ning see on põhinenud peamiselt Põhjamaade mudelil, kus ametiühingute roll on tugevalt institutsionaliseeritud, liikmesuse määr kõrge ning nii tööandjad kui ka riigiesindajad kaasavad ametiühinguid (ettevõtete, riigi) poliitika kujundamisse (Häkkinen, 2013; Skulason & Jääskeläinen, 2000). Aastal 2010 toimus selles koostöös aga oluline muutus: loodi Balti Organiseerimise Akadeemia, mille eesmärk on Põhjamaade finants- ja strateegiliste ressursside toel rakendada organiseerimismudelil põhinevaid kampaaniaid Eesti (ja hiljem ka Läti ning Leedu) töökohtades. See algatus erineb oluliselt nii Balti- kui Põjamaade ametiühingute varasematest strateegiatest ja identiteedist, või on nendega isegi vastuolus, ning seda BOA eestvedajad ka rõhutasid (Häkkinen, 2013, lk 1). Innovatsiooni ametiühingute tegevuses ei saa võtta enesestmõistetavana. Teaduskirjandus viitab pigem erinevatele barjääridele, mis uuendusi pärsivad, sealjuures tuuakse esile nii organiseerimismudeli rakendamisega (nt Carter & Cooper, 2002; Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010) kui ka ametiühingute transnatsionaalse koostöö praktiseerimisega (nt Cooke, 2005; Hancké, 2000; Meardi, 2012) seotud probleeme. Seega on käesolevas töös vaatluse all innovatsioon, kus on üle saadud n-ö topeltbarjäärist: ametiühingud on nihutanud

strateegia ja identiteedi partnerlus- ja teenindusmudelilt organiseerimisele ning loobunud ühe riigi kesksest lähenemisest, mis üldiselt on ametiühingutele omane.

Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärk ongi mõista ja seletada, kuidas selline pretsedenditu innovatsioon nagu BOA sai alguse ning arenes. Innovatsioon on töös defineeritud kui ametiühingu tegevussuund, mis erineb varasemast ja kus ametiühing tegeleb uute või juba eksisteerivate probleemidega efektiivsemalt (Bernaciak's and Kahancová's, 2017, lk 12). Töös eristatakse järkjärgulist (*incremental*) ning radikaalset tüüpi innovatsiooni. Kui esimene sisaldab vaid väiksemaid muutusi, siis radikaalne tähendab selget eemaldumist varasemast praktikast (Dewar & Dutton, 1986). Tegemist on artiklipõhise väitekirjaga, mis integreerib kahe teemakohase teadusartikli ning kolme raamatupeatüki tulemused tervikuks, loob innovatsiooni seletava mudeli ja võimaldab vastata järgmistele uurimisküsimustele.

1. Millised põhjused ja protsessid on viinud BOA loomiseni?
2. Milliste protsesside kaudu on BOAd ja BOA organiseerimiskampaaniaid jätkatud?
3. Millised takistused on ilmnenud organiseerimismudeli praktiseerimisel Eestis?
4. Milliseid muutusi on BOA ja selle organiseerimiskampaaniad Eesti ametiühinguliikumisele ja BOAga kokku puutunud ettevõtetele ning sektoritele kaasa toonud?

Analüüs lähtub kriitilisel realismil põhinevast juhtumiuuringu disainist ning hõlmab Eesti BOA terviklikku uurimist, kasutades erinevaid kvalitatiivseid andmeallikaid ja meetodeid, sh dokumendi-, intervjuude ja vaatluste analüüsi. Töö tulemused näitavad, kuidas BOA ning selle organiseerimismudel on Eesti kontekstis radikaalselt innovaatilised, kuna Eesti ametiühinguliikumine on üldiselt eelistanud koostööl põhinevaid sotsiaalpartnerluse strateegiaid. Organiseerimismudel, mille sünnikoht on USA, aga eeldab, et vajaduse korral peaksid ametiühingud olema valmis ka jõulisemaks ning vastanduvamaks lähenemiseks. Samuti rõhutab mudel, et ametiühingu liikmeid tuleks rohujuuretasandil mobiliseerida ning jõustada, et nad sooviksid ametiühingu tegevustest osa võtta ja aidata ühingu prioriteete seada. Seega ei piisa selle lähenemise järgi vaid ametiühingu juhtkonnast, kes siis ülejäänuid esindaks ja teenindaks, nagu on olnud pigem tavaks Eesti ametiühingutes.

Lisaks hõlmavad kaks doktoritöö aluseks olevat uuringut lisaks Eestile ka Poola ja/või Sloveenia ametiühingute uurimist, mis võimaldab järeldada, et kuigi ametiühingute tegevust suunavad sotsiaal-majanduslik ja ajalooline keskkond ja välja kujunenud mustrid, ei ole need määravad ning ka radikaalne ja üsna kiire innovatsioon on siiski võimalik. Selle algatamiseks peavad ametiühingute liidrid ja aktivistid esmalt olema võimelised olemasolevaid ressursse kasutama (või neid kõigepealt suurendama). Oluline on seejuures raamistamine kui keskne mehhanism, mis muutuse võimalikuks ja legitiimseks muudab. Töös näitan kahe keskse raamistamise elemendi, nimelt kollektiivsete tegevusraamide loomise ja identiteeditöö toimimist ning olulisust. Need raamistamise elemendid on tähtsad

ühiste (innovaatiliste) arusaamade, eesmärkide ja kollektiivse identiteedi loomiseks. See on aga oluline eeltingimus, et radikaalne innovatsioon saaks toimuda, olla legitiimne ja tuua kaasa kestvaid muutusi. Väidan, et innovatsiooni, eriti radikaalset, ei saa vaadelda kui vaid pelka reaktsiooni keskkonnamuutustele, kus tajutakse, et traditsioonilised toimimisviisid ei ole enam efektiivsed, ja otsustatakse seetõttu midagi uut praktiseerida. Sellisel juhul oleksid Eesti ametiühingud pidanud end juba aastaid tagasi radikaalselt uuendama. Pigem peavad tegutsejad innovaatilise strateegia veenvalt raamistama, näiteks kui midagi, mis aitab eesseisvaid probleeme edukalt lahendada, ning neil tuleb seda edaspidi ka sihikindlalt propageerida, et innovatsioon kanda kinnitaks ja püsima jääks. Nagu BOA keerukas hargmaise organiseerimise näide demonstreeris, siis sellises kontekstis nagu Eesti, kus ametiühingute vahendid on väga piiratud, võivad just oskuslike ja motiveeritud aktivistide juhitud raamistamise protsessid olla võimalus, kuidas radikaalset suunamuutust saavutada.

BOA ja selle organiseerimiskampaaniate rakendamine ei ole olnud sujuv ning takistusteta protsess. Innovatsiooni takistavad tegurid saab laias laastus jagada kaheks. Esimesed tulenevad ametiühingute välisest keskkonnast. Nendeks on muu hulgas neoliberaalsed ideed, mis on ühiskonnas üsna laialt levinud, ja sotsialistlikud ja postsotsialistlikud pärandid, sh tööandjate (kellest mõned püüavad ametiühinguid varasema ühiskonnakorraga seostada) vaenulikkus ametiühingute vastu, ametiühingute vähene legitiimsus ja töötajate passiivsus. Teine rühm barjääre tuleneb aga ametiühingusisestest aspektidest. Mitte kõik ametiühingute liikmed ja juhid ei soovi muutust ja/või ei aktsepteeri organiseerimismudeli põhimõtteid. On ka neid, kes leiavad, et see strateegia on Eesti kontekstis liiga võõras ja sobimatu. Vaidlused Eestile sobivate ametiühingu strateegiate ja identiteedi üle on endiselt käimas. Kuna organiseerimismudeli praktiseerimiseks kulub ka märgatavalt raha, siis on Põhjamaade toetus olnud siin määrav. Kuigi organiseerimiskampaaniad on kestnud juba aastaid, ei ole ametiühingud, kes neid praktiseerinud, ikka suutnud saavutada piisavalt tugevat majanduslikku positsiooni, mis võimaldaks kampaaniaid ilma välise toeta käigus hoida. Seega, kui kaob ära Põhjamaade ametiühingute rahaline tugi, võivad lõppeda ka kampaaniad.

BOA organiseerimiskampaaniad on Eesti ametiühinguliikumises ja ettevõtetes ning sektorites, kus neid on praktiseeritud, toonud kaasa mitmeid muutusi. Nende hulka kuuluvad ametiühingute liikmesuse kasv, sõlmitud kollektiivlepingud, paranenud töötingimused, töötajate suurenenud enesekindlus ning ametiühingute suurenenud nähtavus meedias. BOA on võimaldanud Eesti ametiühingutel kasvatada ka erinevaid vahendeid, eelkõige riigisisest ja hargmaist võrgustikesse kaasatust, aga ka infrastruktuuri- ja narratiivseid ressursse (Levesque & Murray, 2010). Üliolulised muutused, mille BOA ja tema organiseerimiskampaaniad on kaasa toonud, on aga strateegiaalased ja teataval määral ka identiteedinihkega seotud. Need on aset leidnud mitmel tasandil ja jõudnud isegi väljapoole BOAga liitunud ühinguid.

BOA hargmaisel organiseerimisprojektil on ka olulised piirangud, eriti just selle projektipõhisus[4], väiksemahulisus ja ettevõttekesksus. Seega on organiseeritud ettevõtetes küll töötingimused ja ametiühingute positsioon paranenud, kuid sektor ja majandus tervikuna jäävad endiselt ametiühingutega katmata. Sealhulgas on jätkanud langustrendi Eesti üldine ametiühingute liikmesuse määr (Vandaele, 2019). Kuna BOA organiseerimisloogika on peamiselt keskendunud organiseerimise pragmaatikale ja tehnilistele aspektidele, võivad tulemused jääda ka seetõttu lühiajaliseks, et ei ole suudetud ühendada ettevõttetasandi organiseerimistegevust laiema võitlusega töötajate õiguste eest sektori ja kogu ühiskonna tasandil (sarnastele probleemidele on juhtinud tähelepanu ka Simms (2012) ning Simms ja Holgate (2010)). Tulevikus võiksid ametiühingud kaaluda ka suuremat koostööd teiste sotsiaalsete liikumistega.

Käesoleva töö peamine piirang on see, et tegemist on vaid ühe juhtumi (Eesti BOA) uuringuga. Kuigi lähenemine võimaldas BOA tegevust Eestis põhjalikult uurida, ei ole töö põhjal võimalik laiapõhjalisemaid järeldusi ja üldistusi teha. Edaspidi võiks töös esitatud argumente ja loodud mudelit rakendada erinevates kontekstides, eriti just võrdlemist võimaldavate juhtumite ning ka kvantitatiivsete andmete puhul. Üheks uurimise suunaks võiks olla teiste riikide BOAga seotud isikute uurimine, näiteks Läti ametiühingu-aktivistide, sest nemad keeldusid alguses BOAga liitumisest, kuid hiljem siiski otsustasid liituda. See võimaldaks paremini mõista ametiühingute hargmaise koostöö luhtumise põhjuseid. Põhjalikum BOA 2.0 uuring võimaldaks aga pikemas perspektiivis hinnata organiseerimismudeli praktiseerimise edukust ja otstarbekust Eesti kontekstis. Lisaks loodi 2016. aastal Central European Organising Center (Centrum Organizowania Związków Zawodowych – COZZ), mille võrdlemine BOAga võiks samuti olla viljakas uurimissuund. Samuti tasuks (nii kvantitatiivsete kui ka kvalitatiivsete indikaatorite põhjal) võrrelda erinevaid sektoreid ja kõrvutada organiseerimismudelit teiste innovaatiliste strateegiatega nägemaks, kuivõrd sektori dünaamika mõjutab organiseerimismudeli rakendusvõimalusi ja millised võiksid olla alternatiivsed strateegiad, mis ühes või teises kontekstis toimivad.

[4] BOA tegutses perioodil 2010–2017, organiseerimiskampaaniad algasid Eestis aastal 2012. 2018 alustas tegevust BOA 2.0, teatavas mõttes BOA jätk, kuigi pisut muutunud vormis. See algatus on ka aastal 2020 tegev.

YHTEENVETO

Innovaatiolla syrjäytymistä vastaan: ylikansallisen järjestämismallin käyttöönotto v. 2008 talouskriisin jälkeen Viron yksityisen sektorin ammattiyhdistyksissä

Globalisaatio ja Euroopan integraatio ovat vaikuttaneet merkittävästi myös ammattiyhdistyksiin (AY) jopa sellaisissa maissa, joissa niiden rooli työmarkkinoiden ja -suhteiden sääntelyssä on perinteisesti ollut vahva (Baccaro & Howell, 2011), puhumattakaan heikommassa asemassa olevista ammattiyhdistyksistä jälkisosialistisissa maissa (esim. Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Ost, 2009). Koska ammattiyhdistysten toimintaympäristö on muuttunut huomattavasti, halu säilyttää tai vahvistaa omaa asemaa on synnyttänyt tarpeen uusille (ylikansallisille, eng. transnational) strategioille. Erityisesti ylikansalliseen yhteistyöhön perustuvat radikaalit innovaatiot ammattiliitoissa ovat kuitenkin harvinaisia, ja sen saavuttamiseksi ammattiliittojen on ylitettävä monia esteitä (esim. Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010; Meardi, 2012). Tämä väitöskirja lisää ymmärrystä siitä, miten pitkälti palvelumallille[5] ja yhteistyölle omistautuneiden Baltian ja Pohjoismaiden ammattiyhdistysten yhteistyöstä syntyi ja kehittyi radikaalisti innovatiivinen, projektipohjainen ja pitkäkestoinen ylikansalliseen organisointimalliin perustuva aloite, Baltian järjestämisakatemia (BOA). Kyseessä on ensimmäinen akateeminen tutkimus, joka keskittyy Baltian järjestämisakatemiaan ja tarkastelee Viron kollektiivisia työsuhteita ylikansallisesta näkökulmasta.

Väitöskirja edistää institutionalismia, valtaresursseja (*power resources*) ja yhteiskunnallisia liikkeitä koskevaa kirjallisuutta yhdistämällä niitä ja luomalla analyyttisen mallin, jonka avulla voidaan selittää prosesseja, joiden kautta ammattiyhdistykset voivat saavuttaa radikaalin suunnanmuutoksen. Luotua mallia sovelletaan empiirisesti BOA:n Viron tapauksessa. Yleisen mallin luomisen lisäksi yksi työn tärkeimmistä kontribuutioista on kahden kehystämiselementin, nimittäin kollektiivisen toimintakehyksen (*collective action frames*) luomisen sekä identiteettityön prosessin, toiminnan ja tärkeyden osoittaminen. Juuri nämä mahdollistavat radikaalin innovaation ammattiliitoissa tehden siitä myös legitiiminen ja kestävän jopa Viron kontekstissa, jossa ammattiliittojen valtaresurssit ovat erittäin rajalliset. Näin väitöskirja auttaa ymmärtämään, miten ammattiliitot voivat nykyaikaisessa globaalissa taloudessa selviytyä ongelmista, jotka liittyvät niiden

[5] Ammattiyhdistyksiä koskeva kirjallisuus erottelee erilaisia ammattiyhdistysten toimintalogiikkoja käsitteleviä malleja. Palvelumalli viittaa yhdistysten toimintaan, jonka ensisijaisena tavoitteena on erilaisten palvelujen tarjoaminen jäsenille, ja jäsenten aktivointi ja osallistuminen yhdistyksen toimintaan ja tavoitteiden asettamiseen on toissijaista tai olematonta (Banks & Metzgar, 1989). Ihannetapauksessa palvelumallin vastakohtana on järjestämismalliin perustuva ammattiyhdistys, jonka tavoitteena on sekä jäsenkunnan kasvattaminen että jo olemassa olevien jäsenten aktivointi ja osallistuminen (Heery et al., 2000; Hurd, 2004).

maakeskeisyyteen, organisaation säilyttämistendenssiin (*organizational inertia*) ja heikentyviin valtaresursseihin.

Analyysi tuo uutta näkökulmaa jälkisosialismin tutkimukseen osoittaen, miten menneisyyden perintö ja innovaatio toimivat yhdessä, ja millaisten mekanismien kautta on mahdollista päästä irti polkuriippuvuudesta (*path dependency*), mutta myös miten mahdollisia esteitä saattaa ilmetä. Viron uudelleenitsenäistymisen jälkeen Viron ammattiliitot eivät ole yleensä olleet vahvoja toimijoita yrityksen, sektorin eikä valtion tasolla. Tämä käy ilmi jatkuvasti alenevasta ammattiliittojen jäsenmäärästä, joka on laskenut 94 prosentista vuonna 1992 15 prosenttiin vuonna 2000 ja noin 4 prosenttiin vuonna 2017, mikä tekee siitä alhaisimman Euroopassa (Visser, 2019). Sosiaalinen vuoropuhelu ja työntekijöiden aktivointi parempien työehtojen saavuttamiseksi ja ammattiyhdistystoimien tukemiseksi ovat myös melko rajallisia (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; Feldmann, 2006; Vandaele, 2014, 2019). Ammattiyhdistysten matalaan järjestäytymisasteeseen ja työmarkkinoiden heikkoon sääntelyyn liittyen Viron työmarkkinat ovat melko joustavat ja työsuhteet enemmänkin työnantajan kontrollissa. Monet työntekijät, joilla on suhteellisen heikko neuvotteluasema ja epätyydyttävät työolot, ovat myös päättäneet muuttaa ulkomaille, lähinnä Suomeen (Meardi, 2013; Saar & Jakobson, 2015; Tammaru & Eamets, 2015), jossa työntekijöillä on toisaalta paremmat työolot, mutta jossa myös ammattiliittojen on nähtävä vaivaa pitääkseen yllä säädyllisiä työehtoja ammattiliittoihin kuulumattomien työntekijöiden määrän kasvaessa.

Heikentyneen aseman vuoksi Viron ammattiliitot eivät ole tehneet suuria strategisia muutoksia Viron uudelleenitsenäistymisen aikana. *Status quo* on ollut yhä vähenevän jäsenkunnan palveleminen sekä yhteistyöhön perustuvan sosiaalisen kumppanuuden harjoittaminen sekä työnantajien että valtion edustajien kanssa jopa silloin, kun se ei ole tuonut työntekijöille merkittäviä voittoja (Kall, 2016; Woolfson & Kallaste, 2011). 1990-luvulta lähtien Viron ammattiliitot ovat tehneet laajaa yhteistyötä pohjoismaisten, erityisesti suomalaisten, ammattiliittojen kanssa. Yhteistyö on perustunut lähinnä pohjoismaiseen malliin, jossa ammattiliittojen rooli on hyvin institutionalisoitua, järjestäytymisaste korkea ja sekä työntekijät että valtion edustajat ottavat ammattiliittoja mukaan käytäntöjen muodostamiseen (Häkkinen, 2013; Skulason & Jääskeläinen, 2000). Vuonna 2010 yhteistyössä tapahtui kuitenkin merkittävä muutos: luotiin Baltian järjestämisakatemia, jonka tavoitteena on toteuttaa järjestämismalliin perustuvia kampanjoita pohjoismaisten ammattiliittojen rahoitus- ja strategisten resurssien tuella virolaisilla (ja myöhemmin myös latvialaisilla ja liettualaisilla) työpaikoilla. Tämä aloite poikkeaa huomattavasti ja on jopa ristiriidassa sekä Baltian että Pohjoismaiden ammattiliittojen aikaisempien strategioiden ja identiteettien kanssa, mitä BOA:n johtajat myös korostivat (Häkkinen, 2013, k. 1). Innovaatiot ammattiliittojen toiminnassa eivät ole itsestäänselvyys. Tieteellisessä kirjallisuudessa viitataan pikemminkin innovaatioiden esteisiin ja korostetaan ongelmia sekä järjestämismallin soveltamisessa (esim. Carter & Cooper, 2002; Heery & Simms, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010) että ammattiliittojen ylikansallisen yhteistyön harjoittamisessa (esim. Cooke,

2005; Hancké, 2000; Meardi, 2012). Tässä tutkielmassa siis tarkastellaan innovaatiota, joka on ylittänyt ns. kaksinkertaisen esteen: ammattiliitot ovat muuttaneet strategiaa ja identiteettiä kumppanuus- ja palvelumallista järjestämiseen ja luopuneet ammattiliitoille ominaisesta kansallisesta lähestymistavasta.

Tämän väitöskirjan tarkoituksena on ymmärtää ja selittää, kuinka BOA:n kaltainen ennennäkemätön innovaatio sai alkunsa ja kehittyi. Innovaatio määritellään tutkimuksessa ammattiyhdistyksen toimintalinjana, joka poikkeaa aiemmasta ja jolla ammattiyhdistys käsittelee uusia tai jo olemassa olevia ongelmia tehokkaammin (Bernaciak & Kahancová, 2017, s. 12). Tutkimuksessa erotellaan asteittainen (*incremental*) sekä radikaali innovaatio. Asteittainen innovaatio sisältää vain pienempiä muutoksia, kun taas radikaali innovaatio tarkoittaa selkeää irrottautumista aiemmista käytännöistä (Dewar & Dutton, 1986). Kyseessä on artikkeliväitöskirja, joka yhdistää kahden tutkimusartikkelin ja kolmen kirjanluvun tulokset kokonaisuudeksi, luo radikaalia innovaatiota selittävän mallin ja vastaa seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin:

1. Millaiset syyt ja prosessit johtivat BOA:n perustamiseen?
2. Millaisten prosessien kautta BOA:aa ja BOA:n järjestämiskampanjoita on jatkettu?
3. Millaisia esteitä organisointimallin harjoittamisessa Virossa on esiintynyt?
4. Millaisia muutoksia BOA ja sen järjestämiskampanjat ovat tuoneet Viron ammattiliittoliikkeeseen ja BOA:n kanssa tekemisissä olleisiin yrityksiin ja sektoreihin?

Analyysi perustuu kriittiseen realismiin perustuvan tapaustutkimukseen. Se käsittää Viron BOA:n kattavan tutkimuksen käyttämällä erilaisia kvalitatiivisia tietolähteitä ja menetelmiä. Työn tulokset osoittavat, että BOA ja sen järjestämismalli ovat radikaalisti innovatiivisia Viron kontekstissa, koska Viron ammattiliittoliike on yleensä suosinut yhteistyöhön perustuvia sosiaalisen kumppanuuden strategioita. Yhdysvalloissa syntynyt järjestämismalli kuitenkin edellyttää, että ammattiliittojen tulisi tarvittaessa olla valmiita myös voimakkaampiin ja antagonistisempiin lähestymistapoihin. Malli painottaa myös sitä, että ammattiliittojen jäseniä olisi aktivoitava ja innostettava ruohonjuuritasolla, jotta he motivoituisivat osallistumaan ammattiyhdistystoimintaan ja tulisivat mukaan vaikuttamaan yhdistyksen prioriteetteihin. Pelkkä jäseniään edustava ja palveleva yhdistyksen johtokunta, kuten Viron ammattiyhdistyksissä on ollut tapana, ei siksi kyseisen lähestymistavan mukaan ole riittävä.

Analyysin perusteella voidaan päätellä, että vaikka ammattiliittojen toimintaa ohjaa sosiaalis-taloudellinen ja historiallinen ympäristö sekä vakiintunet mallit, radikaali ja melko nopea innovaatio on silti mahdollinen. Innovaation mahdollistamiseksi ammattiliittojen johtajien/aktivistien on ensin kyettävä käyttämään (tai lisäämään) olemassa olevia resursseja. Kehystäminen toimii keskeisenä mekanismina, joka tekee muutoksesta mahdollisen ja legitiimisen. Osoitan työssäni kahden keskeisen kehystyselementin, nimittäin kollektiivisten toimintakehysten luomisen sekä

identiteettityön, toimivuuden ja merkityksen. Kyseiset kehystyselementit ovat tärkeitä yhteisten (innovatiivisten) käsitysten, tavoitteiden ja kollektiivisen identiteetin luomisen kannalta. Ne ovat tärkeitä edellytyksiä sille, että radikaali innovaatio voisi tapahtua, olla legitiiminen ja tuoda mukanaan pysyviä muutoksia. Väitän, että innovaatiota, erityisesti radikaalia, ei voida tarkastella pelkkänä reaktiona ympäristön muutoksiin, kun ymmärretään, että perinteiset toimintatavat eivät ole enää tehokkaita ja päätetään siksi harjoittaa jotain uutta. Siinä tapauksessa Viron ammattiliittojen olisi pitänyt uudistua radikaalisti jo vuosia sitten. Toimijoiden on ennemminkin kehystettävä innovatiivinen strategia uskottavaksi esimerkiksi jollain, joka auttaa ratkaisemaan tulevia ongelmia onnistuneesti, ja heidän on myös mainostettava sitä sinnikkäästi, jotta innovaatio vakiintuisi ja jäisi pysymään. BOA:n monimutkainen ylikansallisen järjestämisen esimerkki osoitti, että Viron kaltaisissa konteksteissa, joissa ammattiliittojen resurssit ovat hyvin rajalliset, juuri taitavien ja motivoituneiden aktivistien suorittamat kehystysprosessit voivat tuoda mahdollisuuden saavuttaa radikaali suunnanmuutos.

BOA:n ja sen järjestämiskampanjoiden toteuttaminen ei ole ollut sujuva ja vaivaton prosessi. Innovaatiota estävät tekijät voidaan jakaa yleisesti kahteen osaan. Ensimmäiset johtuvat ammattiliittojen ulkoisesta ympäristöstä. Niitä ovat muun muassa yhteiskunnassa vallalla olevat uusliberalistiset ideat sekä sosialistiset ja jälkisosialistiset perinteet, mm. työnantajien (joista jotkut pyrkivät yhdistämään ammattiliitot aiempaan yhteiskuntajärjestykseen) vihamielisyys ammattiliittoja kohtaan, ammattiliittojen heikko legitimaatio ja työntekijöiden passiivisuus. On myös toisentyyppisiä esteitä, jotka liittyvät ammattiliittojen sisäisiin näkemyseroihin. Kaikki ammattiliittojen jäsenet/johtajat eivät halua muutosta ja/tai eivät hyväksy järjestämismallin periaatteita. On myös niitä, joiden mielestä kyseinen strategia on Viron kontekstiin liian vieras ja sopimaton. Viron ammattiliitoille sopivia strategioita ja identiteettiä koskevat kiistat jatkuvat edelleen. Koska järjestämismallin käyttöön kuluu myös huomattavasti rahaa, Pohjoismaiden tuki sen suhteen on ollut ratkaisevaa. Vaikka järjestämiskampanjat ovat jatkuneet jo vuosia, niitä harjoittaneet ammattiliitot eivät ole silti pystyneet saavuttamaan riittävän vahvaa taloudellista asemaa, jonka avulla kampanjoita voitaisiin pyörittää ilman ulkoista tukea. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että jos pohjoismaisten ammattiliittojen raha-avustus loppuu, myös kampanjat voivat päättyä.

BOA:n järjestämiskampanjat ovat saaneet aikaan useita muutoksia Viron ammattiyhdistysliikkeessä sekä yrityksissä ja sektoreilla, joilla kampanjoita on järjestetty. Tuloksia ovat olleet muun muassa ammattiliittojen jäsenmäärän kasvu, solmitut työehtosopimukset, parantuneet työolot ja työntekijöiden lisääntynyt itseluottamus. BOA:n ansiosta Viron ammattiliitot ovat saaneet myös erilaisia resursseja, erityisesti kansallista ja ylikansallista verkostoihin osallistumista, mutta myös infrastruktuuriin liittyviä ja narratiivisia resursseja (Levesque & Murray, 2010). BOA:n ja sen järjestämiskampanjoiden suurimmat muutokset liittyvät kuitenkin strategiaan ja jossain määrin myös identiteettiin. Muutoksia on tapahtunut usealla tasolla ja ne ovat levinneet jopa BOA:an liittyneiden yhdistysten ulkopuolelle.

BOA:n ylikansallisella järjestämisprojektilla on myös merkittäviä puutteita, erityisesti juuri sen projektipohjaisuus[6], pienimuotoisuus ja yrityskeskeisyys. Työehdot ja ammattiliittojen asema ovat siis parantuneet järjestetyissä yrityksissä, mutta ammattiliittojen vaikutus ei edelleenkään yllä koko sektorille tai talouteen. Viron järjestäytymisaste on jatkanut laskuaan (Vandaele, 2019). Koska BOA:n järjestämislogiikka keskittyy pääasiassa järjestämiskäytäntöön ja teknisiin näkökohtiin, tulokset voivat olla lyhytaikaisia myös siksi, että yritystason järjestämistoimintaa ei ole pystytty yhdistämään laajempaan taisteluun työntekijöiden oikeuksista sektorin ja koko yhteiskunnan tasolla.

Tämän tutkielma suurin rajoite on se, että se keskittyy vain yhteen tapaukseen (Viron BOA). Siksi laajempien päätelmien ja yleistysten tekeminen ei ole mahdollista. Väitöskirjassa esitettyjä argumentteja ja luotua mallia voisi jatkossa soveltaa eri yhteyksissä, erityisesti juuri vertailutapauksissa ja myös kvantitatiivisella analyysillä täydennettynä. Esimerkiksi vuonna 2016 perustettiin Central European Organising Center (Centrum Organizowania Związków Zawodowych – COZZ), jonka vertaaminen BOA:an voisi olla hedelmällistä. Lisää tutkimustietoa kaivataan myös BOA 2.0:sta, jonka toimintaa käsiteltiin tässä työssä vain pinnallisesti. Perusteellisempi BOA 2.0:n tutkimus edesauttaisi pidemmällä aikavälillä järjestämismallin onnistumisen ja tarkoituksenmukaisuuden arvioinnin Viron kontekstissa. Myös eri sektoreita kannattaa vertailla ja asettaa eri järjestämismallit rinnakkain muiden innovatiivisten strategioiden kanssa, jotta voitaisiin nähdä, kuinka sektorin dynamiikka vaikuttaa järjestämismallin käyttömahdollisuuksiin. Samoin voitaisiin tarkastella vaihtoehtoisia strategioita, jotka toimivat samassa tai eri kontekstissa.

[6] BOA oli aktiivinen vuosina 2010–2017, ja organisointikampanjat alkoivat Virossa vuonna 2012. Vuonna 2018 toimintansa aloitti BOA 2.0, joka on tietyllä tapaa BOA:n jatko, vaikkakin hieman muuttuneessa muodossa. Kyseinen aloite on aktiivinen myös vuonna 2020.

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi	Kairit Kall
Sünniaeg ja -koht	03.12.1986, Võru, Eesti
Kodakondsus	Eesti

Hariduskäik

Alates 2014	Jyväskylä Ülikool, doktoriõpingud sotsiaal- ja avalikus poliitikas
Alates 2013	Tallinna Ülikool, doktoriõpingud sotsioloogias
2010–2013	Tallinna Ülikool, magistrikraad sotsioloogias
2006–2010	Tartu Ülikool, bakalaureusekraad sotsioloogias

Teenistuskäik

Alates 2019	Tallinna Ülikooli ühiskonnateaduste instituut, lektor ja nooremteadur
2019–2020	Jyväskylä Ülikooli sotsiaal- ja filosoofiateaduskond, projekti teadur
2017–2018	Jyväskylä Ülikooli sotsiaal- ja filosoofiateaduskond, projekti teadur
2015–2016	Tallinna Ülikooli ühiskonnateaduste instituut, nooremteadur
2014	SA Innove, Vanemspetsialist
2012–2014	OÜ Faktum & Ariko, andmetöötleja-analüütik

Uurimisvaldkonnad

Kollektiivsed töösuhted, ametiühingute strateegiad, platvormitöö, töömigratsioon

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name	Kairit Kall
Date and place of birth	03.12.1986, Võru, Estonia
Citizenship	Estonian

Education

Since 2014	University of Jyväskylä, PhD student in social and public policy
Since 2013	Tallinn University, PhD student in sociology
2010–2013	Tallinn University, MA in sociology
2006–2010	University of Tartu, BA in sociology

Professional experience

Since 2019	Tallinn University, School of Governance, Law and Society, lecturer and early-stage researcher
2019–2020	University of Jyväskylä, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, project researcher
2017–2018	University of Jyväskylä, project researcher
2015–2016	Tallinn University, School of Governance, Law and Society, early-stage researcher
2014	Foundation Innove, senior specialist
2012–2014	LLC Faktum & Ariko, data processing specialist-analyst

Scientific interests

Labour relation, trade union strategies, platform labour, labour migration

TALLINNA ÜLIKOOL
SOTSIAALTEADUSTE DISSERTATSIOONID

TALLINN UNIVERSITY
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