Moments of danger, moments of opportunity: the role of individuals in transforming organisations. *A qualitative and quantitative study of trade union officials in Brazil, South Africa, India, Sweden, the UK and Spain*

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Research Questions: *How are Trade Unions (TUs) in the global north and south responding to the structural challenges of globalisation that are threatening trade unions' traditional roles? In times of individualisation, what is the role of individuals in organisations like unions, where acting collectively is the central aim? Case is environmental policies of unions since these are new.*

Research Process:
- Recruited researchers (+ supervisors) in Sweden (1), Brazil (1+1), South Africa (1+1) and India (3+1); organised 2 workshops: a) Life history method [February 2013] with prof. Alessandro Portelli (University La Sapienza), b) narrative & discourse analysis (April 2013) with prof. Ann Phoenix (University of London) and prof. Simon Lindgren (Umeå university); Conducted and transcribed 101 life history interviews (1 - 3 hours long) with unionists (metal and agriculture) and environmentalists; launched a web page (www.momentsofdanger.org) and a research blog to co-ordinate the work of the researchers. Published articles, book, and working papers (see added list of publications).

Preliminary Results

1. Civil Society (CS) as a space
- Civil Society is usually defined through the character of organisations that are seen to constitute it (e.g. NGOs). This view is not tenable since CS organisations are constantly changing and can be linked to/become parties, governments, economic entities. We define CS as a "space" in which organisations of all kinds aim to create hegemony for their worldviews and goals. This allows to understand the dynamic nature of organisations over time.

2. Civil Society and Globalisation between harmonisation and conflict
- Globalisation creates common interests between CS actors across the world, but it simultaneously intensifies conflicts between them. Further analysis will aim to understand how these contradictions are negotiated.

3. The role of individuals in transforming organisations
For the time being we found different models of the 'individual – organisation' relationship which need to be understood through the countries' and unions' differing histories:

1. *European model,* UK and Sweden, (institutionalised, formalised) Individuals pass through different organisations, using them as a means to realise their worldviews and values. They have developed their capacities to act (identities) in state organised education, family and friendships.

2. *Brazilian model* (less institutionalised, formalised) Individuals come from poverty and receive education and capacity for action from organisation. TU used as a springboard to universities or politics.

3. *Indian models* (less institutionalised, less formalised) In traditional unions individuals see themselves as being absorbed by the organisation. In alternative contexts individuals create several organisations themselves, since they find the traditional ones bureaucratic and corrupt.

4. *South African model* (less institutionalised, formalised) TU as place of capacity learning, education, collectivity. Strong identification and thus remaining in TU even when disillusioned

General points
1. There is no society without civil society. Even in dictatorships alternative and resisting organisations develop.
2. Civil society is a Western concept. To understand its forms in different contexts the question has to be posed more generally: How do alternative perspectives become hegemonic?
3. Formalisation triggers deformalisation: new organisations develop when existing ones are deemed corrupted/bureaucratised.

4. Deformalisation develops into formalisation – alternative organisations become absorbed into the system or disappear
5. In less institutionalised societies civil society organisations serve as educators, shaping individuals' capacities to act
6. In more institutionalised societies capacities for action (identities) are acquired in state institutions. Organisations are a means for the realisation of individual's goals.
7. Transformative agents are marginal(ised) in their organisations.
8. Marginal(ised) individuals tend to become transformative when there is a time of crisis for the organisation or changes occur in society at large.