

This document is the Accepted Manuscript version of a Published Work that appeared in final form in **European Journal of Industrial Relations** 25(2) : 181-200 (2019), copyright © 2017 The Author(s) published by Sage. To access the final edited and published work see <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959680118782364>

## **To sign or not to Sign? Two Strategies towards Provincial Metal Sector Agreements in the Basque and Catalan Automotive Industries**

### **Introduction**

Global capitalism has thrust trade unions against multiple and difficult challenges in their effort to secure decent working and living conditions, labour and trade union rights, and economic as well as political democracy (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). That the consolidation of Global Value Chains (GVCs) has significantly changed the rules of the game across the European automotive is nothing new (e.g. Caprile, 2000; Doellgast and Greer, 2007; Flecker, 2009), but that trade unions *can* become relevant actors in the *effective* transformation of working conditions and collective bargaining structures in such industry has been argued less (e.g. Benarciak, 2013; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015; Dorigatti, 2016). Hitherto, the balance of class forces is clearly inclined in favour of capital, also in discursive terms (Urban, 2012), yet new historical experiences, union imaginaries and strategic templates can always be a source for reinvigorated trade union action (Hyman, 2007, 2015). This article paves the ground toward such direction – namely, that trade unions are important actors in the uneven transformation of collective bargaining structures and in the (fragmented) empowerment of the working class. To do so, the article reflects upon substantially two different trade union strategies in the Spanish automotive industry.

Accounts of trade unionism and union renewal in Spain have fundamentally focused on the experiences of the two main organisations: *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) and *Union General de Trabajadores* (UGT) (Köhler, 2008; Martinez-Lucio, 2008). Recent studies have presented these two as *hybrid* actors that have sought to secure their ‘institutional power’ via social dialogue practices at state level (Hamann, 2011; Martinez-Lucio, 2016;

Luque-Balbona and Gonzalez-Begega, 2016; Rigby and Calavia, 2017), and their 'associative power' and class identity via mobilising the rank-and-file through various general strikes against neoliberal labour reforms and by coordinating occasionally with emerging social movements like *Indignados* (Pérez-de-Guzmán et al., 2016; Molina and Barranco, 2016). Notwithstanding the questionable effectiveness of engaging simultaneously with both strategies to empower Spanish workers (e.g. Las Heras and Ribera-Almandoz, 2017; Roca and Diaz-Parra, 2017), Spanish trade union strategies at the sector and sub-national levels have been obviated. More specifically, the difficulties that trade unions are facing when improving (even securing) and homogenising working conditions across the manufacturing industry have been fundamentally explained in terms of capitalist superiority (Recio et al. 2008; Alaez et al. 2009; Banyuls and Lorente, 2010; CCOO, 2012), or as a result of the unilateral decisions to restructure the labour market and collective bargaining structures by the Spanish government (Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2016). Interestingly, Ortiz (1998; 2002) and Martín-Artiles (2002) explained how both CCOO and UGT delegates pursued micro-corporatist strategies in various car assembly plants during the 1990s and early 2000s, legitimising the introduction of lean-production techniques in exchange for capital investments and for letting them to control the processes of filtering new entrants. During the crisis, Spanish car assembly workers have shown little interest in confronting managerial prerogatives to cut-down labour costs further (Köhler and Calleja-Jimenez, 2012; Las Heras, 2016), yet the reasons behind such patterns need to be explored more, and even more so at sector level where the metal federations pursue overarching union strategies that establish guidelines at factory level negotiations (Martinez-Lucio, 1992).

To expand and complete such picture, this article explores the dynamics behind the Provincial Metal Sector Agreements (PMSA) in the autonomous communities of Catalonia and the Basque Country. These agreements establish both the content of working conditions, i.e. wages and working hours, as well as the guidelines for trade union action throughout the GVC. The study finds that whilst in Catalonia the signing of the PMSAs has been path-dependent to historically recurrent top-down bargaining practices across Spain (e.g. Martinez-Lucio, 1992; 2008); in the Basque Country, where the two largest independentist unions – *Euskal Langileen Alkartasuna* (ELA) and *Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak* (LAB) – hold the representative majority, the regulatory power of the PMSAs has been seriously questioned and challenged, to the extent that, since the early 2000s Basque unions have preferred to leave the PMSAs unsigned and mobilise the rank-and-file to struggle for better conditions at the

workplace. Nevertheless, simplistic readings ought to be obviated around the empowering potentiality of Basque union strategies, that is: despite that different collective bargaining patterns may occur in similar economic and legal environments, as the Catalan and Basque cases show below, one cannot derive too easily the conclusion that particular strategies are superior (at least in absolute terms) to others, but rather that different trade union strategies produce different sets of power relations and institutional configurations that embody their own particular contradictions and strategic dilemmas. These, in turn, become the foundation for new forms of strategic action in the future. An important question, however, gains force in the debates around trade union empowerment: what sort of contradictions do trade unions prefer to face in the process of their own renewal?

## **Global Value Chains and Sector Agreements in Spain**

The disempowering effect that GVCs have had on European trade unions since the mid-1980s is widely acknowledged (Doellgast and Greer, 2007; Erne, 2008; Stewart et al., 2008). According to Flecker, the 'reorganisation of the value chain weakens labour and destabilises industrial relations institutions' (2009: 252). As a result, a fragmented structure of collective bargaining has emerged in the European automotive industry, in which core workers have been active in securing their working conditions and bargaining power by signing different forms of competitiveness-pacts at company and sector level, but at the expense of an increasing number of precarious, temporary and non-unionised workers whose interests have been subsumed to securing corporate profitability. These precarious workers are mostly concentrated in medium and smaller suppliers and contractors where the size of the company determines workers' associative power, thus, the 'main objective [for trade unions] is to homogenise working conditions through collective action' (Caprile, 2000: 16-17). Not all workers have been exposed to the same pressures and neither have they responded to the same pressures equally. As various authors have shown (e.g. Bernaciak, 2010; Hertwig et al., 2011; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015; Dorigatti, 2016), the identity of union delegates and union representatives is crucial in determining the extent to which core workers want to incorporate precarious and structurally displaced workers within more confrontational bargaining dynamics. In Spain, as in other European countries, literature has argued that workers' wages and working hours, as well as unionisation and collective bargaining coverage rates correlate with the structural position that the

corporation holds within the GVC (Recio et al., 2008; Banyuls and Lorente, 2010). For example, according to Alaez et al. (2009), workers employed in the largest subcontractors and suppliers, who are structurally dependent on Just-in-Time and Just-in-Sequence processes coordinated by the assembly plant, earn on average at least 25% to 35% less than assembly workers. The conditions in medium and smaller companies are expected to decrease until reaching the bottom established by the PMSAs.

This brings the role of the PMSAs when homogenising workers' economic power along GVCs into the fore. Historically, a relatively centralized, hierarchical and passive system of collective bargaining has emerged in Spain, enabling major Spanish trade unions 'to regulate working conditions in different sectors without necessarily engaging the rank-and-file due to the *erga omnes* clause' (Las Heras and Ribera-Almandoz, 2017: 6). This legal provision, in line with other southern European countries (Bernaciak et al., 2014), allows most representative unions and employer associations to regulate the employment conditions of entire sectors within a specific territory, regardless the workforce is unionised or not. As a result, the provincial sector agreements have for long been the 'vital level for millions of workers in small and medium sized companies who have no company agreement or effective representation structures at the workplace' (Martinez-Lucio, 1992: 510). Overall, and at least until the 2012 labour reform, collective agreements negotiated at higher levels, fundamentally sector provincial agreements like the PMSA, have covered between 70% and 80% of the workers, cross-sector regional agreements covered between 5% to 10%, whilst company level agreements have regulated the conditions of 10% to 15% of the workforce (Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2016: 270). A free-rider logic has allowed CCOO and UGT to function with low union density rates (around 16% of all workers and 22% of industrial workers are unionised), as they have managed to secure their representativeness by both accumulating more than 70% of the electoral votes (60% of the workforce is called to union elections although only 35% participates), and by *formally* establishing the working conditions of millions of workers across Spain due to such electoral representativeness (Beneyto et al., 2016).

Broad and overarching collective agreements, however, require detailed empirical and comparative analyses to show whether if the former correspond to daily-life practices, and whether if similar dynamics occur in different spaces. In particular, after the 2012 labour reform opened the scope for company-scale bargaining practices that undermine the 'homogenising shield' that the sector agreements once provided,

understanding the effective regulatory power of PMSAs is crucial to understand trade union strategies in GVCs. Currently, in the absence of stronger workplace bargaining power, managers can push workers under certain conditions to legally accept and sign conditions below the sector agreement (for a more detailed analysis see Otaegui, 2014; Fernández-Rodríguez et al. 2016a). The following sections will problematise the negotiation of the PMSAs in more detail, and they will show how a much more complex picture of bargaining dynamics and institutional configuration exists in different regions of Spain despite been regulated by a unique legal system, or in other words, that trade union strategies *can make a difference* in the regulation of working conditions in GVCs.

## Case study selection and method

Spain became the third automotive manufacturer during the 1990s and 2000s by specialising in the production of low- and middle-value-added vehicles and car components, hence, an important node in the overall European automotive industry (for a detailed historical review cf. Charnock et al., 2016). Spain produces around 12% of European vehicles and employs directly around 80,000 workers in assembly companies, and other 300,000 workers are employed in logistics and component producer companies. Around 20% of component factories are located in the autonomous community of the Basque Country and 30% in Catalonia (CCOO, 2012: 52; the regions are circled in red in the figure below). These regions host most labour processes along the different nodes of the GVCs and export more than 80% of their output (Bilbao-Ubillos, 2010; Ortiz-Villajos, 2010). The Basque autonomous community is divided into three provinces – Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa – whose PMSAs regulate the working conditions of around 100,000 to 120,000 metal workers. In Catalonia, according to various trade union delegates, the province of Barcelona hosts 90% of Catalan metal workers; and the Barcelona-MSA regulates the conditions and salaries of more than 200,000 workers.

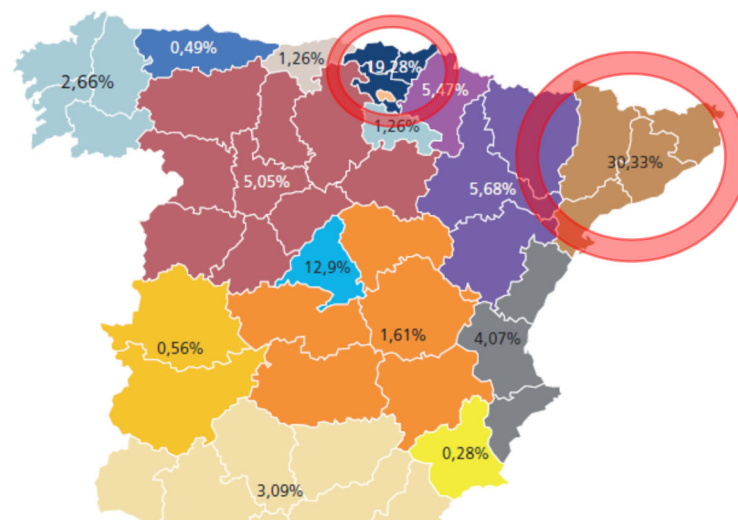


Figure 1. Car-component producer companies' distribution across Spain. Basque Country is the left-red-circle and Catalonia the right-red-circle.

In Catalonia, the two main Spanish trade unions – CCOO and UGT – are the two largest representative actors in the negotiation of PMSAs. Spanish labour law establishes that unions need to win at least 15% of the votes to be representative in the sub-national territory where the collective agreement is meant to be negotiated. According to public union election voting statistics, CCOO and UGT sum together around 70% of the total votes in Catalonia, which corresponds to the same numbers of other Spanish regions (Rua-Fernández, 2008). The third trade union, the anarchosindicalist CGT, has not yet reached the threshold, thus, CCOO and UGT have always been the two sole unions who had a saying in the negotiation of the Barcelona-MSA. Differently, in the various provinces of the Basque Country, ELA and LAB have won 40% and 19% of the votes respectively, CCOO 19% and UGT around 10% (see Table 1 below). In the Basque provinces, then, the landscape is much different because ELA and LAB have tended to form a confrontational alliance against the progressive hollowing-out of the PMSA. This appears in sharp contrast to CCOO and UGT which have been more inclined to come into terms with employer demands and sign the PMSAs both in majority and in minority, as an ‘act of responsibility’. In that sense, these two autonomous communities are representative cases of how different trade union strategies produce different institutional environments within similar economic and legal contexts.

	UGT (Basque Country)	CCOO (Basque Country)	ELA (Basque Country)	LAB (Basque Country)	Other Unions (Basque Country)
1980	29.27 (19.21)	30.86 (17.67)	2.44 (25.6)	0.48 (4.7)	36.95 (32.82)
1990	43.1 (19.78)	37.6 (17.14)	3.2 (39.96)	1.27 (12.41)	14.83 (10.71)
1995	35.51 (16.32)	37.74 (16.58)	2.97 (39.73)	1.22 (15.42)	22.56 (12.15)
2003	36.8 (13.93)	38.74 (19.30)	3.24 (41)	1.37 (15.24)	19.85 (9.26)
2007	37.15 (13)	39.09 (20.04)	3.13 (40.2)	1.39 (16.02)	19.24 (9.44)
2015	33.30 (10.88)	36.17 (19.04)	3.09 (40.06)	1.46 (18.98)	25.98 (11.04)

Table 1. Union Representativeness in Spain and Basque Country in percentages.

The case studies are constructed upon the qualitative research I developed during my doctoral studies in the autonomous communities of Basque Country and Catalonia between February and July 2015. Semi-structured interviews became a useful qualitative research technique to get an informed and nuanced picture of 'social actors' world-views', namely, in generating a synthetic understanding of their life-experiences and concrete historical processes they have engaged consciously with (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). More specifically, interviews were based on 'open-ended questions and informal probing to facilitate a discussion of issues' in a more or less structured manner, so that we 'allow the interviewee to talk at length on a topic' and facilitate the exploration of 'people's subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences' (Devine 2002: 198-199). By advancing theoretically informed questions to the interviewee (and to the epistemic community), a new analysis can emerge that challenges, *in dialogue*, the limits to contemporary knowledge; knowledge which necessarily derives from a particular reading of the past. It is possible then, that through the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, new objective forms of knowledge that reflect upon existing historical patterns and (trade union) discourses may be produced (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009: 35-39).

A total of 100 relevant actors were interviewed: eighty-eight union delegates and officials; complemented by six academics or experts on the topic, four employer representatives of the Basque and Catalan autonomous communities, and two regional government employment relations representatives. Qualitative research has been complemented with archive documentation and statistical analysis of various regional and national socio-economic databases.

## **The Politics of the Barcelona-Metal-Sector-Agreement**

During the democratic transition, the Barcelona-MSA was signed for the first time in winter 1976-1977, when various small regional collective agreements (*convenios comarcales*) merged after worker and employer organisations could negotiate within a liberal framework of industrial relations: UGT and CCOO representing the workforce and Unión Patronal Metalúrgica – UPM – the *patronal* or the employer association. The regulation of workers' conditions and salaries of the Catalan automotive industry became articulated through what was rapidly becoming the Spanish idiosyncratic structure of collective bargaining (Martínez-Lucio, 1992: 510-511). In spite the fact that

a relatively small number worker and employer representatives have been involved directly in the negotiation during 40 years, the Barcelona-MSA is:

Nothing invented, or nothing gratuitous or something imported from abroad. It is the result of the day by day [work], from the conflict between capital and labour, and the daily management of the Industrial Relations. [...] The Barcelona-MSA became a strong agreement: by 2007 it covered more than 200.000 workers and it may still be the sector agreement covering the largest number of workers from all Spain. [...] Up until the crisis nobody questioned it, not even the employers, due to the high levels of employment and economic activity. It was presumed to be so normal that it was paradoxical that nobody gave the importance that it *really* had: the major tool structuring the collective bargaining of the sector and its working conditions (CCOO1).

In those terms, the Barcelona-MSA can be understood as a political mechanism that 'institutionalises class struggle' (Hyman, 1989: 114-116) in a specific territory and economic sector 'from above', resulting from the interplay between trade union metal officials – whose working conditions and salaries are not directly regulated by such agreement –, and the *patronal* – who seeks to establish the average labour costs as minimum as possible so that most corporations remain profitable. The ultimate objective being that of securing 'social peace' so that capital accumulation continues.

Before the crisis, wages across the automotive industry did, at least, 'meet the minimum standards established by the collective agreement. Then those companies that performed well would provide higher wages through company-pacts<sup>1</sup>. This was a common thing before the crisis' (CCOO1). As a consequence, the Barcelona-MSA was conceived to be a 'healthy and referent collective agreement in the regulation of working conditions throughout the Catalan automotive industry' (UPM-Manager1). Company level collective bargaining was not encouraged by CCOO and UGT federations because it could undermine intra-sector solidarity and, if anything, it would only occur when a larger multinational company could provide higher salaries than the industry average.

Generally, union metal federations have predominantly centred their efforts in the negotiation and supervision of the Barcelona-MSA and, later, have supported particular

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that company-pacts do not necessarily have to be legally registered and can be informally agreed between workers and corporate managers. Company-agreements, instead, must be legally registered and need to comply with all the minimum legal provisions established by the labour law and other higher level collective agreements in the sector.



conflicts in medium-sized companies or attended to the demands of individual affiliates at the federation itself. Adopting a service-like union strategy without engaging the rank-and-file, nevertheless, discouraged building stronger associational and organisational ties between union officials and the rank-and-file. It was only once per year that both unions held informative meetings with small- and medium-size company delegates about the economic situation of the two major assembly plants in the province (Nissan-Zona-Franca and SEAT-Martorell), yet without seeking to build other inter-company information networks or establishing solidarity strategies when industrial conflict would occur in a company (UGT1; UGT2; CCOO1; CCOO2).

An important factor must be noted: for the Barcelona-MSA to be implemented, it has required from a positive economic landscape that allows most companies to meet the minimum standards – which existed before the crisis –, certain managerial good faith towards labour law, the supervision of state labour bureaucrats (*inspectores de trabajo*), or the *active* engagement by union delegates and rank-and-file at the workplace. Managerial discrimination and intimidation of combatant unionists has been common in Spain (Rodríguez-Ruiz, 2014), and the role of labour inspectors to ensuring the implementation of labour law has been questioned (e.g. XXX), thus, making clear that neither corporations may necessarily want to follow the regulations to which they have formally subscribed, and neither that the state is likely to deploy much effort and resources for the validation of such agreements. On the contrary, the daily practices of UGT and CCOO focused, instead, on negotiating the agreement and implement it *passively*; that is, ‘us [unions] we only reacted when workers directly complained to us’ rather than acting in advance and making sure that it was implemented everywhere ‘because there are too many companies to visit and supervise their conditions’ (CCOO1). As a well-known employment relations expert based in Barcelona argued during an interview, both UGT and CCOO have not made too much effort in ‘educating the workforce’

so that workers would protest and lose their fear to the employer. [...] For example, unions could go to the company and let the employer know that they will talk with the workers in private, and if workers tell them that [the company] is not complying with the collective agreement, then the unions would take the employer to court or engage in industrial action. In the absence of union presence, workers will continue to fear the employer. It is in that sense that there is a lack of syndicalist education.

(Interviewer: But why then do CCOO and UGT defend the *erga omnes* clause so enthusiastically?)

Because it has multiple tricks: they argue that thanks to such a strategy Spanish workers are those with the largest coverage of all Europe. And if you pay attention to the official statistics you may well agree with them<sup>2</sup>. But if you study the conditions within smaller companies, and check whether the conditions of the Barcelona-MSA *really* cover the small companies of fewer than 10, 15 or 20 workers, you may find very often that they don't. That is, there is even *no guarantee* that they may comply with the salary agreement. But definitely, the working time conditions, security or hygiene are not obeyed. They are not obeyed for the simple reason that unions do not have the instruments to make sure that employers comply with them. [...] Union delegates shouldn't be saying that "if the agreement is not obeyed workers should denounce it". Tis cannot be said, because in small companies they just simply fear for their job. Why? Because the prevailing culture in Spain is that if you don't get on with the employer, she may well beat you, bully you or fire you (Expert1).

Put it simply, both UGT and CCOO have tended to focus mainly on the negotiation of the Barcelona-MSA, attributing *real subjective* powers to the agreement but without problematising its emptiness if it is not *actually* implemented by the social actors who are subject to it. The weak political power of CCOO and UGT when protecting the interests of the Catalan automotive workers became explicit during the recent crisis. Rajoy's modification of the Workers' Statute (Articles 41 and 82.3) became an additional instrument for companies to modify salaries, working hours and increase functional mobility with or without the approval of the working force. Nowadays, companies do only have to record very short-term economic losses or, even, forecast future losses to 'opt-out' (*descolgar*) from sector agreements. Moreover, this reform reduced metal federations' political power to implement and defend the PMSAs because it allowed workers to sign company level collective agreements below the conditions regulated by superior agreements. Or put it simply, similar to other many European countries (e.g. Hermann, 2014), the 2012 labour reform has decentralised substantially the collective bargaining structure, giving companies more discretion to adequate labour costs with 'competitiveness requirements'.

---

<sup>2</sup> See for example Visser (2013: 84) or Bernaciak et al. (2014: 8).

In a period of economic crisis and stagnation, and in the absence of strong union presence at the workplace, the business cycle becomes a pervasive excuse to legitimise corporatism throughout the whole collective bargaining structure so that capital's profitability remains untouched. According to various CCOO union officials, most of the economic benefits or provisions regulated by the company-pacts prior to 2008 disappeared:

All the benefits [regulated by company-pacts] have virtually disappeared. [...] And I talk to you about the typical company outsourced to a large TIER1, a company of a medium- or small-size that may produce smaller or simpler car components. It is mainly in TIER2 and TIER3 where they have cut back most; and not as much in the largest ones. They have cut back so many rights that... [Silence] Starting with employment rotation and temporary contracts that make everyone forget how things used to be before, [because] the attack has not been on salaries only, it has also been on time flexibility, extra hours or other benefits... Basically, they have beaten us incredibly hard (CCOO3).

The slump created output shortages, shut down unprofitable factories and sky-rocketed unemployment rates (in 2013 one every four workers was in Spain unemployed) reducing Catalan workers' labour market power substantially. In this context, UGT and CCOO openly defended the PMSAs as 'the umbrella for all workers and employers' across Spain (Europa Press 22/07/16), because the sector agreement appears as the solely unifying and homogenising contract a part from the minimum-wage. The problem emerges when companies can systematically flexibilise wages, calendars and the intensity of work regardless of what the Barcelona-MSA stipulates. In the lack of strong company-level union presence, the Barcelona-MSA becomes increasingly ineffective, because when the union

develops an excessively institutional bargaining strategy, in which workers are not active in such negotiation in one or another form [...], the [sector] collective agreement weakens progressively. It will [continue to] be sector collective bargaining *but with weak regulation*. After the labour reform, one of the clearest experiences we have had is that sector agreements have not disappeared, but due to the pressures in the negotiation or the inertia of the bargaining itself, we have produced *weak* sector negotiations. Thus, the problem is not just whether an agreement exists or not, [...] but *what* are the contents and *what* rights do workers have. We have a big problem with that (CCOO3).

These problems, which are becoming widespread across the Spanish system of Industrial Relations (Martínez-Lucio, 2008; Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2016), have not been responded equally by all. As the next section shows, Basque unions have adopted a much more sceptical position towards the politics of the PMSAs already before the crisis and labour reforms: questioning their effectiveness, their legitimacy and leaving various of them unsigned, as is the case of the Araba-MSA which has not been renewed by the representative majority since 1999.

## **The Politics of the Araba-Metal-Sector-Agreement**

Following other Spanish provinces that established the sector agreement as the political and organisational referent for the regulation of working conditions across the metal and automotive industries, the three most representative unions in Araba and the Basque Country (ELA, CCOO and UGT) ratified the Araba-MSA for the first time in 1978, and continued to do so up until the 2000s without many drawbacks (SEA-Manager1). LAB remained marginalised from sector negotiations throughout the period until it won a sufficient 15% of representation in the mid-1990s (see Table 1 above). Of the total manufacturing workers employed in the region – 32,000 in 1978 and 50,000 during the 2000s approximately – the Araba-MSA was expected to regulate the conditions at least of 40% of them, fundamentally in metal companies employing up to fifty workers. However, and despite the increasingly fragmented nature of the industrial network that provided the Araba-MSA with a strong political significance in the establishing of working conditions, ELA representatives have always understood the Araba-MSA as a historically weak agreement. From the very beginning, the Araba-MSA was not too inclusive because it ‘did not define any character for future negotiations’; instead, workers used to negotiate in their workplace to improve, above all, wages and reduction of hours (Astekaria 04/04/81: 7). Hence, ‘the agreement became increasingly a sector agreement of non-implementation’ (ELA1).

By the late 1990s, ELA’s strategy to legally empower workers ‘from above’ changed, raising concerns from both trade unions (CCOO4; UGT3; LAB1) and employer representatives (SEA-Manager1). According to an employer representative, sector agreements ‘were always signed’ in spite of the fact that managers endured ‘much harder union pressure’, and that ‘better agreements than other Spanish territories were signed’ (SEA-Manager1). However, ELA officials were deeply concerned by the increasing fragmentation of the conditions of the workforce and opted to challenge the

hollowing-out of the collective bargaining structure along the lower nodes of the automotive industry *prior to* the crisis.

As a result of an extended internal debate that lasted from 1993 to 1999, ELA officials understood the historical period since the democratic transition up until the 2000s to be a historical process that systematically disempowered workers in the labour process, labour market and the capitalist state; whilst it also curtailed trade unions' political and ideological ability to counteract because they were actors legitimising the status-quo (Elorrieta, 2017). ELA's executive decided upon a radical switch away from the corporatist strategy they had embraced since the democratic transition to provide an effective response to global capitalist dynamics, namely, moving to a strategy of 'counter-power' (*contrapoder*) that sought to organise and radicalise workers 'from below':

By the early 1990s the situation was unmanageable, and we realised and recognised that we had made a mistake: that the formula we had gambled on hadn't worked at all. [The 1990s] was a period of cut-and-thrust in which we understood that we couldn't keep on the institutional path, that if we wanted to remain autonomous we had to do it from a position of 'counter-power' (*contrapoder*). Then you revise everything that has occurred under a new perspective, and you start grasping the coherence of the [new] analysis... For example, an ELA representative went once to a congress of the French CFDT and saw how they reasoned: "we moderate our strategies and we don't grow, we try to be reasonable and we have no results". *But it is because of that very fact that we are losing!* And that is why neoliberalism wins, because it has also an ideological, political and cultural hegemony, in the patterns of conduct, and if you are not capable breaking away from all those parameters, as institutionalised union strategies may do... and that is 'counter-power' (*contrapoder*).

(Interviewer: So what do you exactly mean by counter-power?)

Counter-power is... To be out in the open sky. [Silence] What do we have? We have people, and we have well-organised people. Nothing else (ELA2).

In these terms, ELA2 makes a strategic reading of the importance that union officials have, *qua* organic intellectuals, in the production of new discourses, organisational patterns and forms of collective action that may invert, or at least challenge, the

progressively disadvantageous balance of class forces. In the absence of an encompassing and critical reading of the past, stagnant trade unions may remain overwhelmed by renewed corporate strategies and governmental law that undermine previous power resources (Lambert, 2002). As a result, the most representative union in the Basque Country – with around 100,000 members – developed a strategy of ‘counter-power’ by re-structuring four major pillars (see e.g. Dufour and Hege, 2009): (I) By strengthening an already existing strike-box (25% of union membership quotas are currently destined to it), ELA sought to empower workers economically and reduce the individual costs of striking; (II) by increasing financial independence from public institutions and depending solely on affiliation quotas, the union augmented its political autonomy and capacity to produce public critical analyses of on-going processes. This encouraged a positive dynamic to seek greater support and legitimacy from the rank-and-file than from reaching agreements with government and employer associations;<sup>3</sup> (III) by increasing union delegate training and workplace collective bargaining technical support, it was sought to strengthen both the organisational cohesion and expand collective knowledge to become more effective at workplace scale negotiations. This pushed union delegates to be theoretically informed and vice-versa, nurturing union officials with the needs of the rank-and-file and the possibility of adopting new tactics; (IV) by abandoning the Basque roundtable of social dialogue and forming new confrontational alliances, both with the more sympathetic LAB and with various grass-root social movements, ELA sought to reconfigure its identity towards more class based and social movement positions.

The strategic alliance with LAB went through various ups and downs, and especially with respect the new collective bargaining strategy that ELA was to adopt (LAB1; LAB2). During the early 2000 negotiations of the Araba-MSA and the other two PMSAs it became manifest that ELA was not going to sign them if their content was not good enough, and if they were not shielded from the progressive decentralisation of the collective bargaining structure, that is, if there was not going to be any political engagement from the employer associations in producing a *real* protective ‘umbrella’:

ELA does not admit employer associations’ blackmailing: that we should sign sector agreements with simple wage increases and, in some cases, a small reduction of working hours, so that, and from such position, those signing such accords say they are very good and orient the collective bargaining at company level in the same manner. We have had enough time to evaluate the results of

---

<sup>3</sup> Whilst by the late 2000s ELA financed nearly 90% of its activities with membership quotas, a report from CCOO of 2010 states that slightly more than a third of the union’s expenditures (around 36%) were financed through internal resources (CCOO 2010; also El Mundo 18/11/13).

such model of bargaining. There is margin to demand. Wealth distribution during the last years has benefited tremendously corporate profits in detriment to workers' salaries. This and no other is the problem that collective bargaining must respond to (ELA 06/10/04).

To the crucial question of whether if organising to defend the implementation of strong PMSAs would be an appropriate way to protect the largest number of workers in the automotive industry, another ELA official responded that:

It would be nice, yes, but *there is no sector scale strong [union] network*. However, there will be union struggle at the workplace while companies remain unionised. It is not ELA who has made this context, it is not a decision that we made as ELA, it is because there is nothing more. And you find that unions are in pains to confront employers' demands, and that [the latter] have an immense advantage to subjugate and pressure union power with relocations or outsourcing. And it is from here, where I think that we have to start the debate, because it is not a reality that we are inventing ourselves, but one pressured upon us by capital. [...] And us [ELA], now that the attack has come through the neoliberal transformation, we have worked to be prepared for the confrontation, because we are organised at the company, because we have never abandoned them (ELA3).

Thus, in contrast to CCOO and UGT officials (CCOO4; UGT3), and to a lesser extent LAB's (LAB1; LAB2), who still thought the Araba-MSA to be an important mechanism in empowering Basque workers and signed its renewal up until today, ELA representatives openly challenged its effectiveness and necessity to be signed. As it will be shown next, adopting such organisational and identity reconfigurations resulted in completely new forms of collective bargaining in the Basque automotive industry, especially, with respect to unionisation rates, confrontation dynamics and the types of collective agreements that ELA and LAB have signed during the last decade.

## **Two Different Collective Bargaining Structures within the Same Legal System**

The two different collective bargaining strategies pursued by Catalan and Basque unions have resulted in the production of two different collective bargaining structures within the same legal system. First, unionisation rates in the Basque Country are substantially superior to Catalan averages. Although there are no official Catalan

unionisation statistics, Spanish union statistics can serve us as a proxy, based on the premise that Catalonia and Spain have followed similar trends (Rua-Fernández, 2008; Jódar et al. 2011). With respect to the Basque Country, the unique specific survey with respect to membership and unionisation trends was done in 2008 by the Basque Government. Thus, to keep it in comparative terms, the following table only refers to the year in which the survey was made in the Basque Country.

		Spain	Basque Country
Union Density by Sector	All Sectors	14.6 (12.6 for Catalonia)	29
	Manufacturing	22.1	36
Union Density by Company Size	Less than 10 workers	4.9	16
	Between 10 to 49 workers	12.2	21
	Between 50 to 249 workers	16.3	32
	250 or more workers	29.6	43

Table 2. Union Density by Sector & Company Size in 2008.

The table shows that Basque unionisation rates have been clearly superior to Spanish and Catalan rates, at least, until 2008.<sup>4</sup> With respect to the total economy the Basque Country doubles Spanish unionisation rates and nearly triples Catalan rates; whilst in the manufacturing sector there are 62% more union members in the Basque Country than in Spain. With respect to unionisation rates by company size it is also clear that there is stronger implementation in smaller companies than with respect to Spain. Taking into account that the largest share of companies have less than 50 workers (CCOO, 2012), an ‘organising’ strategy of Basque companies has resulted in double or even triple unionisation rates; thus, showing a relatively stronger commitment to build bonds in between the local-regional union federations and the rank-and-file. Nevertheless, these numbers have to be handled with care because there is still not enough comparative data on union implementation trends in Catalonia and the Basque Country to do a proper longitudinal analysis.

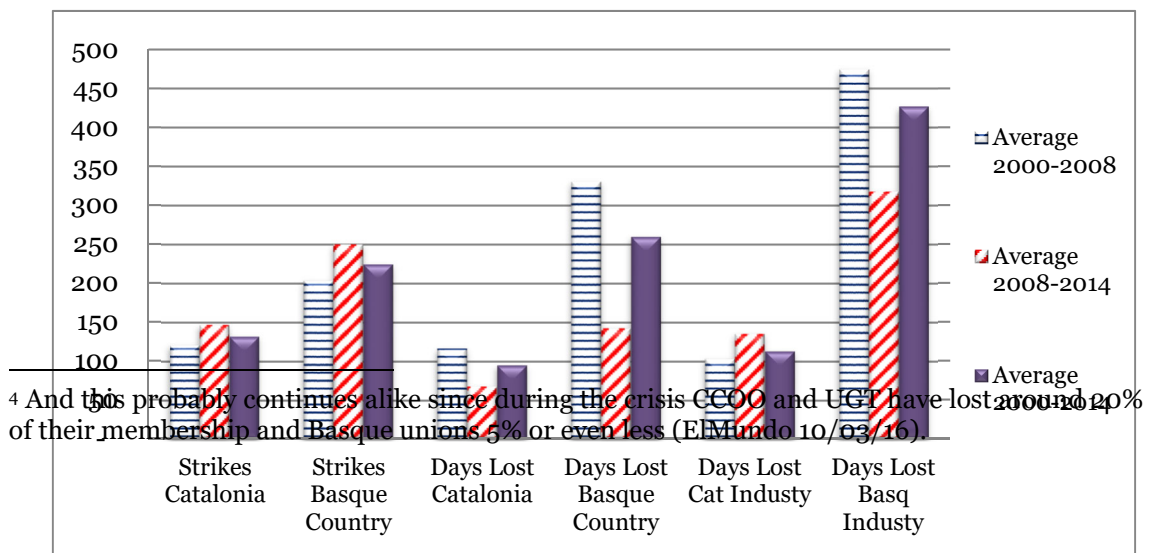




Table 3. Summary of Strike Activity in Catalonia & Basque Country.

Second, the strategy of Basque unions to negotiate and confront at the workplace has resulted in substantially higher strike rates than in Catalonia (Tables 3 and 4).<sup>5</sup> Despite that, and as Kelly (2011) points out, the economic crisis has reduced confrontational activity in both regions, especially in the Basque Country, ELA and LAB's strategy to confront materialises in the fact that in between 2000 and 2014 28% of all strikes in Spain, that is 225 out of nearly 800, occurred in this region (see Line 1.6. in Table 4 below). In contrast, only 17%, i.e. 132, took place in Catalonia (Line 1.1.).<sup>6</sup> This has also been reflected in the number of days lost due to industrial action. In Catalonia, 95 days were lost per 1,000 employees per year (Line 2.0.), and 113 days in the manufacturing sector (Line 2.2.). Meanwhile, in the Basque Country, 260 days were lost across the economy (Line 2.3.), and 426 in the manufacturing sector (Line 2.5.). Or put it simply, Basque automotive workers operating in medium and small size companies were likely to strike 3.76 times more than Catalan workers; fundamentally, as a result of ELA's and, to a lesser extent, LAB's confrontational strategies towards collective bargaining. Such higher inclination towards engaging in industrial action has been paralleled by higher rates of social conflict and mobilisations by the overall citizenry (ElPaís 15/04/17).

---

<sup>5</sup> This was only tangentially explored in previous studies on strike activity in Spain (e.g. Luque-Balbona et al. 2008; Garcia-Calavia, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Note that, for the same period, Basque employees summed up to 900,000 active workers, whilst in Catalonia the total number of the workforce was approximately 3 million.

Strike Activity Barcelona-Catalonia & Araba-Euskadi																				
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Average 2000-2008	Average 2008-2014	Average 2000-2014
		1. Number of Strikes	1.0. Catalonia	92	136	107	139	95	126	118	137	139	137	148	122	140	186	158	125	121
1.1. Cat / State (%)	13%		19%	16%	21%	13%	19%	15%	18%	17%	14%	15%	16%	16%	19%	20%	20%	17%	17%	17%
1.2. Barcelona	80		126	90	131	85	119	114	129	123	123	138	110	124	163	137	114	111	131	119
1.3. Barc / Cat (%)	87%		93%	84%	94%	89%	94%	97%	94%	88%	90%	93%	90%	89%	88%	87%	91%	91%	89%	90%
1.4. Barc / State (%)	11%		17%	13%	19%	12%	18%	15%	17%	15%	12%	14%	14%	14%	16%	18%	19%	15%	15%	15%
1.5. Basque Country	164		196	194	221	251	180	224	191	212	274	284	223	247	318	192	154	204	250	225
1.6. Basq / State (%)	23%		27%	28%	33%	36%	27%	29%	25%	26%	27%	29%	29%	28%	32%	25%	25%	28%	28%	28%
1.7. Araba	78		52	50	45	47	44	65	45	56	56	68	67	59	85	58	58	54	64	58
1.8. Ara / Basque (%)	48%		27%	26%	20%	19%	24%	29%	24%	26%	20%	24%	30%	24%	27%	30%	38%	27%	26%	27%
1.9. Ara / State (%)	11%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%	6%	7%	6%	7%	9%	7%	9%	7%	9%	7%	7%	7%	
2. Strike Days Per 1,000 Employees	2.0. Catalonia	197	120	335	29	31	101	104	31	105	24	36	60	29	127	96	-	117	68	95
	2.1. Barcelona	178	135	374	36	37	113	125	35	115	26	42	62	32	157	118	-	128	79	106
	2.2. Cat - Industry	38	148	40	39	41	305	54	81	187	57	94	61	54	87	409	-	104	136	113
	2.3. Basque Country	269	374	781	392	684	114	178	107	74	123	327	95	151	165	64	-	330	143	260
	2.4. Araba	425	1.991	1.379	316	324	202	79	40	54	92	70	64	158	89	47	-	534	82	355
2.5. Basque - Industry	569	213	150	1.305	944	324	271	397	96	236	832	192	524	252	92	-	474	318	426	
3. Not Attending Rate	3.0. Catalonia	60%	91%	67%	93%	81%	66%	49%	65%	97%	51%	67%	96%	78%	51%	43%	39%	74%	69%	70%
	3.1. Barcelona	59%	91%	64%	93%	79%	61%	46%	63%	96%	39%	64%	96%	75%	48%	39%	34%	72%	65%	68%
	3.2. Basque Country	89%	54%	62%	62%	73%	75%	53%	69%	70%	56%	63%	78%	62%	82%	77%	82%	68%	70%	68%
	3.3. Araba	46%	56%	39%	48%	93%	80%	77%	81%	77%	70%	82%	74%	73%	61%	73%	80%	66%	73%	69%

Table 4. Strike Activity in Catalonia & Basque Country for years 2000-2014.

Finally, and most significantly, ELA's 'counter-power' strategy of organising the rank-and-file and struggling at the workplace (Elorrieta, 2017), has resulted in a significantly uneven structure of collective agreement. The type and coverage of the collective agreements that Spanish and Basque trade unions have signed are significantly different. As Table 5 shows, in Catalonia around 10%-12% of workers are covered by company-agreements whilst nearly 90% are covered by sector-agreements. In the Basque Country, however, it is only around 70% of workers that are covered by sector-agreements and 30% by company-agreements. This means that Basque unions have provided much more importance to struggle and regulate working conditions along the different nodes of the automotive industry at the factory-company level than to negotiating 'from above'. Or in other words, that ELA's strategy to remain effective at factory level has led to the signing of more company agreements than in other regions.

		2002	2005	2007	2010	2012	2014
Company Level	Catalonia	9,30%	6,10%	11,40%	9,20%	12,60%	12,00%
	Basque Country	19,04%	22,82%	17,87%	31,44%	32,97%	32,70%
Sector Level	Catalonia	90,70%	93,90%	88,60%	90,80%	87,60%	88,00%
	Basque Country	80,96%	77,18%	82,13%	68,56%	67,03%	67,30%

Table 5. Workers coverage by type of agreement.

ELA's strategy to 'organise the workplace' could also be accompanied by signing the PMSAs, so that non-unionised factories could also be, at least, formally protected by overarching agreements. However, as the following two tables show (Tables 6 and 7), this has not been the case.

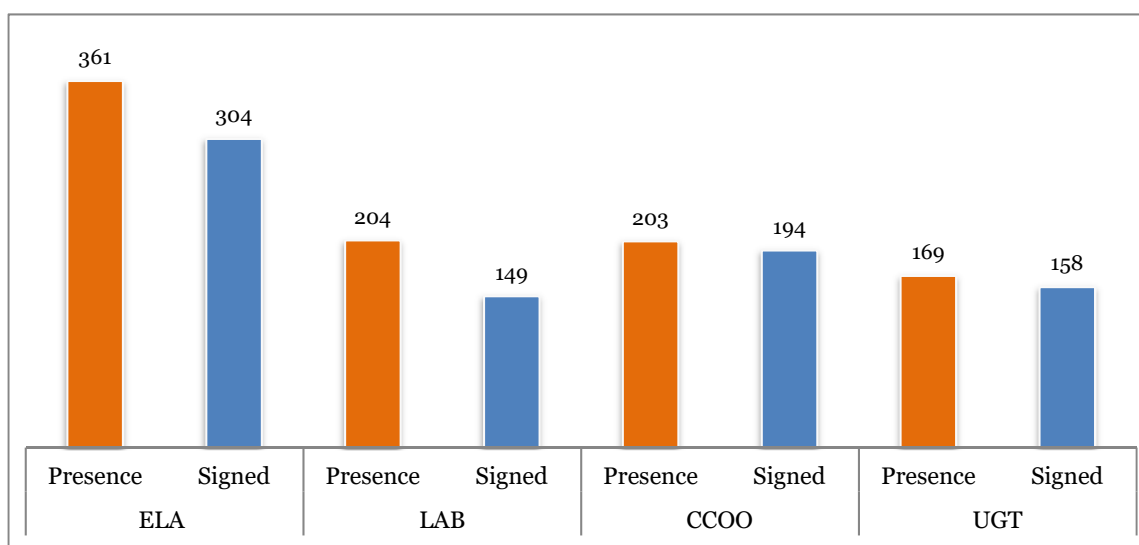


Table 6. Agreements where unions are present and sign them in the Basque Country, 2014.

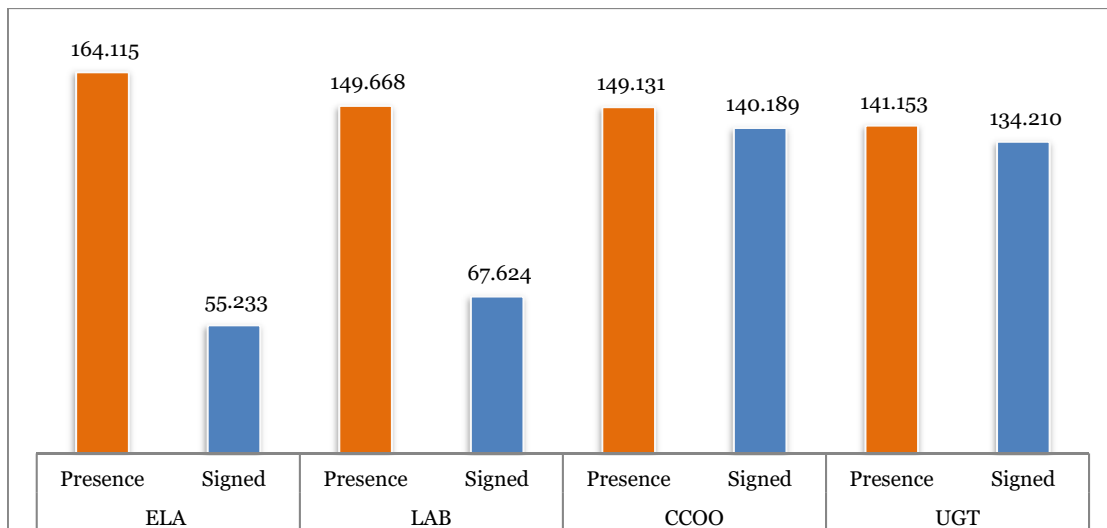


Table 7. Number of workers covered by collective agreements in the Basque Country, 2014.

Interestingly, ELA's organising strategy is an open critique to the *erga omnes* clause, and has become a formal call for non-unionised workers to unionise if they wanted to be protected by the collective agreements they signed. This brings the two different Spanish and Basque collective bargaining structures into the fore. On the one hand, ELA has signed 84% of the agreements where it was present (304 of 361; Table 6), but these covered only 33% of the workers (55,233 out of 164,115; Table 7). On the other hand, UGT, which was nearly in half of the negotiation tables that was ELA, signed 93% of the possible agreements (Table 6) and covered 95% of the workers (134,210 of 141,153; Table 7). LAB follows ELA's collective bargaining strategy, as it has not either signed, for example, the PMSAs, but to a lesser extent. Their agreements covered 44% of the workforce they could protect. Meanwhile, CCOO keeps the 'umbrella' strategy and is the trade union that covers most workers in the Basque Country with the agreements that they sign. Therefore, and quite interestingly, despite ELA being the union that could potentially provide the largest formal shelter for the largest number of workers, it has preferred *not to sign* and challenge institutionalised forms of collective bargaining, pushing workers to join their ranks if they wanted to actively become involved in the regulation of their own working conditions.

## **Conclusion: The Contradictions of Collective Bargaining in a Global Economy**

This article has shown how trade union strategies at sub-national level can have a strong impact on collective bargaining structures. The significant differences between Basque and Catalan collective bargaining structures clarify that there is no one single-path towards union renewal. Even less that there is a non-problematic union strategy.

Spanish trade unions have engaged in social dialogue and micro-corporatist practices prior to, during and after the 2008 financial crisis to first secure factory competitiveness and, when possible, worker employment (e.g. Las Heras, 2016). This has resulted in, for example, their systematic recurrence to 'top-down' collective bargaining strategies at sector level to regulate working conditions across the automotive industry. In the absence of a clear 'organising' strategy that brings class conflict back to the workplace, CCOO and UGT have preferred to recur into 'top-down' negotiations for the homogenisation and protection of working conditions. This is legitimated from their position of representative unions, regardless changing economic and legal structures that have decentralised and fragmented union power. Unionisation rates in medium and smaller companies remain low, strike rates are lower than in other regions and, whilst the formal coverage of the workforce remains high, the effectiveness and content of those agreements are highly questioned from within and outside the unions. Therefore, one may think that CCOO and UGT sign the PMSAs for those workers that are organised and can vote at the workplace, irrespective of metal federations' power, but without supervising that non-organised workers can also benefit and be secured by those agreements.

Differently, Basque trade unions have engaged into more disruptive dynamics since the late 1990s, thus, making the point that within the same legal system it is possible to produce a different Industrial Relations environment. Unionisation rates are higher across the different nodes of the GVCs, and rates of industrial action double or triple Catalan patterns. For example, in the province of Araba, which hosts around 1% of the total Spanish workforce, 7% of the total number of strikes in Spain were organised in between 2000-2014. Crucially, ELA and LAB have challenged the legitimacy of the PMSAs in producing an effective shelter in the automotive industry. By recognising their incapacity to supervise the implementation of sector agreements, they have instead made an open call for Basque workers to join their unions and actively engage into collective bargaining 'from below'. They have done so at the expense of signing the PMSAs, which have been signed in minority by CCOO and UGT who criticise them 'for trying to make a profit by encouraging non-unionised workers to affiliate to their unions' (UGT3). In contrast to the Catalan case, ELA and LAB explicitly present themselves as class organisations with which the rank-and-file has to actively engage if

they want to empower themselves, thus, formally displacing those workers who do not want or cannot engage into union struggles.

We can derive one major conclusion from the different institutional environments that these two different union strategies have produced in Spain: that trade union renewal is not *the* solution, but a *provisional* and *limited* solution to the impasses created by global capitalism. Hence, the strategic question that unions may need to face is not *how can we remain representative class actors within a territory*, because there is always an ample margin for (union leaders) legitimising any strategy that reproduces any power resource, as in the case of CCOO's and UGT's capacity to secure their representativeness and institutional role during the crisis (e.g. Molina and Barranco, 2016; Rigby and Calavia, 2017). But rather, *what contradictions do we seek to embody* when empowering ourselves as class institutions, and how the path chosen is likely to lead us to more encompassing, inclusive and democratic forms of class organisation and representation in the future. Or put it differently, when building particular power resources, trade unions must face the discomfiting trilemma of: (i) whose interests do we *actively* represent, (ii) whose interests do we *passively* undermine, and (iii) whether if in the next period we will be in a more advantageous position to *incorporate* the interests of the latter into the former. In contrast to CCOO's and UGT's path-dependent strategies towards collective bargaining, and paraphrasing an ELA metal official, Basque trade unions' response to the hollowing-out of the PMSAs has been one of 'join-us and participate actively if you want to be stronger, we will not pretend that we can do it for you'. The rationale underlying such discourse confronts widespread collective bargaining patterns in Spain, namely, that Basque unions do not seek to protect workers who are not active in the production of the Industrial Relations system because it erodes their organisational power which is not dependent on their institutional representation and state financial support (e.g. Martínez-Lucio, 2016). In contrast, it is a open call for the worker to join the union so that there is sufficient organisational power to maybe later build more effective forms of institutional power. Under current socio-economic conditions building both institutional and organisational/associative power resources in Spain seems difficult; the dilemma is then what direction want unions to follow.

## List of Interviews

CCOO1 (09/06/15) Catalan Metal Sector Official, Barcelona  
CCOO2 (08/06/15) Catalan Metal Sector Official, Barcelona  
CCOO3 (10/06/15) Cross-Sector Official, Barcelona  
CCOO4 (13/03/15) Basque Metal Sector Official, Vitoria-Gasteiz  
ELA1 (18/03/15) Araba Metal Sector Official, Vitoria-Gasteiz  
ELA2 (17/02/15) Cross-Sector Official, Bilbao  
ELA3 (19/03/15) Basque Metal Sector Official, Bilbao  
Expert1 (06/07/15) Academic on Spanish/Catalan Industrial Relations, Barcelona  
LAB1 (07/04/15) Araba Metal Sector Official, Vitoria-Gasteiz  
LAB2 (10/03/15) Basque Metal Sector Official, San-Sebastian  
SEA-Manager1 (25/03/15) Araba Metal Sector Employer Rep, Vitoria-Gasteiz  
UGT1 (25/05/15) Catalan Metal Sector Official, Barcelona  
UGT2 (09/07/15) Car Assembly Company Delegate, Barcelona  
UGT3 (27/02/15) Basque Metal Sector Official, Bilbao  
UPM-Manager1 (13/07/15) Catalan Metal Sector Employer Rep, Barcelona

## References

- Artiles, AM (2002) *Pacts for employment and competitiveness: Case studies, Ford, Spain*. Brussels: Eurofund.
- Alaez, R Bilbao-Ubillos, J Beldarrain, V García, JC (2009) 'Reflexiones sobre la Crisis de la Industria Española del Automóvil y sus Perspectivas'. *ICE*, 850, 41-56.
- Banyuls, J Lorente, R (2010) 'La industria del automóvil en España: Globalización y gestión Laboral'. *Revista de Economía Crítica*, 9, 31-52
- Benassi, C and Dorigatti, L (2015) 'Straight to the core—Explaining union responses to the casualization of work: The IG Metall campaign for agency workers'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 53(3), 533-555
- Beneyto, P Alos, R Jodar, P Vidal, S (2016) 'La afiliación sindical en la crisis. Estructura, evolución y trayectorias', *Sociología del Trabajo*, 87, 24-44
- Bernaciak, M (2010) 'Cross-border competition and trade union responses in the enlarged EU: Evidence from the automotive industry in Germany and Poland'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 16(2), 119-135
- Bernaciak, M Gumbrell-McCormick, R and Hyman, R (2014) *European trade unionism: from crisis to renewal?*. Brussels: ETUI

- Bilbao-Ubillos, J (2010a) 'Spatial Implications of New Dynamics in Production Organisation: The Case of the Automotive Industry in the Basque Country'. *Urban Studies*, 47(5), 1117-1146
- Caprile, M (2000) 'Outsourcing and industrial relations in motor manufacturing', *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, EIRO*.
- Charnock, G Purcell, T and Ribera Fumaz, R (2016) 'New International Division of Labour and Differentiated Integration in Europe: The Case of Spain'. In Charnock, G and Starosta, G (Eds.), *The New International Division of Labour*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- CC.OO. (2012) *Posición de las plantas españolas en la cadena de valor del sector de fabricantes de equipos y componentes de automoción*. Observatorio Industrial del Sector de Fabricantes de Equipos y Componentes para Automoción. Madrid: Federación de Industria.
- Devine, Fiona (2002) 'Qualitative methods', In Marsh, D and Stoker, G (Eds.), *Theory and methods in political science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Doellgast, V and Greer, I (2007) 'Vertical Disintegration and the Disorganization of German Industrial Relations<sup>1</sup>'. *British Journal of industrial relations*, 45(1), 55-76
- Dorigatti, L (2016) 'Trade Unions in Segmented Labor Markets Evidence from the German Metal and Chemical Sectors'. *ILR Review* (2016). DOI:0019793916677993
- Dufour, C and Hege, A (2009) '12e congrès de ELA, confédération syndicale basque', *Chronique internationale de l'IRES*, 117, 27-36
- El Mundo (10/03/16) UGT y CCOO han perdido el 21% de sus afiliados en cuatro años. Available online at:  
<http://www.elmundo.es/economia/2016/03/10/56e07229e2704e63248b45bc.html>
- El País (15/04/17) Los españoles que más protestan y los que menos. Available online at:[http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/04/14/actualidad/1492185621\\_871646.html](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/04/14/actualidad/1492185621_871646.html)
- Elorrieta, J (2017) *Una Mirada Sindical Contracorriente*. Barcelona: Icaria
- Erne, R (2008) *European unions: labor's quest for a transnational democracy*. Cornell University Press.
- Fernández-Rodríguez, C Ibáñez, R and Martínez Lucio, M (2016) 'Austerity and collective bargaining in Spain: The political and dysfunctional nature of neoliberal deregulation', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22 (3), 267-280



- Flecker, J (2009) 'Outsourcing, spatial relocation and the fragmentation of employment'. *Competition & Change*, 13(3), 251-266.
- García-Calavia, M (2008) Las huelgas laborales en el Estado Español (1976-2005). *Arxius de Ciències Socials*, 18, 93-117
- Gumbrell-McCormick, R and Hyman, R (2013) *Trade Unions in Western Europe: Hard Times, Hard Choices*. Oxford University Press.
- Hamann, K (2011) *The politics of industrial relations: Labor unions in Spain*. London: Routledge.
- Hermann, C (2014) 'Structural adjustment and neoliberal convergence in labour markets and welfare'. *Competition & Change*, 18(2), 111-130.
- Hertwig, M Pries, L and Rampeltshammer, L (2011) 'Stabilizing effects of European Works Councils: Examples from the automotive industry'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 17(3), 209-226
- Hyman, R (1989) *The political economy of industrial relations: Theory and practice in a cold climate*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Hyman, R (2007) How can trade unions act strategically?. *Transfer*, 13(2), 193-210
- Hyman, R (2015) Three scenarios for industrial relations in Europe. *International Labour Review*, 154(1), 5-14
- Jódar, P Vidal, S and Alos, R (2011) 'Union activism in an inclusive system of industrial relations: Evidence from a Spanish case study', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 49(1), 158-180
- Kelly, J (2011) *Rethinking industrial relations: Mobilisation, collectivism and long waves*. London: Routledge
- Köhler, HD (2008) *Los sindicatos en España frente a los retos de la globalización y del cambio tecnológico*. Madrid: Fundación Alternativas.
- Köhler, HD and Calleja Jiménez, JP (2012) 'Transformations in Spanish trade union membership'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 43(3), 281-292.
- Kvale, S and Brinkmann, S (2009) *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. UK: Sage
- Lambert, R (2002) Labour movement renewal in the era of globalization: Union responses in the South. In Harrod, J and O'Brien (Eds.). *Global unions*, London: Routledge
- Las Heras, J (2016) United we stand, divided we fall: Poder de Clase, Cadenas Globales de Valor y Estrategias Sindicales en el Parque de Proveedores de Mercedes-Benz Vitoria-Gasteiz. *Lan Harremanak*, 35(2), 305-329

- Las Heras, J and Ribera-Almandoz, O (2017) When Corporatism Fails: Trade union strategies and grass-root resistance to the Spanish economic crisis. *Journal of Labor and Society*, DOI:10.1111/wusa.12303
- Luque-Balbona, D Iglesias, B and Díaz, F (2008) 'Un análisis regional de la actividad huelguística en España'. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 124(1), 107-140
- Luque-Balbona, D and Gonzalez-Begega, S (2016) 'Crisis Económica y Coaliciones Anti-Austeridad en España (2010-2014)'. *Sociología del Trabajo*, 87, 45-67.
- Martínez-Lucio, M (1992) 'Spain: constructing institutions and actors in a context of change'. In Hyman, R and Ferner, A (Eds.), *Industrial relations in the New Europe*. Wiley-Blackwell
- Martínez Lucio, M (2008) '¿Todavía organizadores del descontento? Los retos de las estrategias de renovación sindical en España'. *Arxius de ciències socials*, 18, 119-133
- Martínez Lucio, M (2016b) 'Incertidumbre, indecisión y neoliberalismo emergente'. *Sociología del Trabajo*, 87, 68-88
- Molina, O and Barranco, O (2016) 'Trade union strategies to enhance strike effectiveness in Italy and Spain'. *Transfer*, 22(3), 383-399
- Ortiz, L (1998) 'Union response to teamwork: the case of Opel Spain'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 29(1), 42-57
- Ortiz, L (2002) 'The resilience of a company-level system of industrial relations: Union responses to teamwork in Renault's Spanish subsidiary'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 8(3), 277-299
- Otaegui, A (2014) 'Desequilibrio negocial y debilitamiento del actor sindical como efectos de la reforma laboral'. *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*, 32(2), 337-360
- Recio, A Banyuls, J Cano, E Lorente, R, and Amigo, M (2008) 'The Motor Industry in Spain'. In Caputo, P and Delle Corte, E (Eds.), *The labour impact of Globalization in the Automotive Industry*. Quaderni della Fondazione G.Bradolini, 45
- Rigby, M and García-Calavia, M (2017) 'Institutional resources as a source of trade union power in Southern Europe'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, DOI:0959680117708369
- Rua Fernández, JM (2008) *Nacionalisme i món sindical a Catalunya*. Barcelona : Consell de Treball.
- Stewart, P et al. (Eds.) (2008) *We Sell Our Time No More: Workers and the Fight for Control in the UK Automotive Industry*. London: Pluto Press.

Visser, J (2013) *Wage Bargaining Institutions—from crisis to crisis*. Brussels:  
Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs