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10
Global Unionism and Global Governance

Andrew Vandenberg

In 2001, several international unions and union bodies[1] met to discuss a wide-ranging review of international unionism (Schmidt, 2005). One upshot of this review was that the international unions began to rebadge themselves as global unions. There were several reasons for this organisational name change. First, it reflected efforts to address the social consequences of neo-liberal policies of economic globalisation and the International Labour Organisation (ILO)-led campaign for decent work for all workers everywhere. Second, it reflected the way global unions seek alliances with other transnational movements against neo-liberal globalisation. Third, after the end of the Cold War, the collapse of apartheid, and union involvement in several democratisation movements, the new name reflects the unions' attempt to move beyond old tensions between revolution and reformism, or communist, social democratic, and liberal forms of internationalism.

Another consequence of the 2001 review was that the global unions and the ILO began to negotiate with academics at several universities to constitute a Global Labour University (GLU). Since Masters of Business Administration courses at many universities have long provided large corporations with personnel skilled in understanding the complex consequences of globalisation, it was high time comparable Masters programmes provided global unions with similarly skilled personnel. The first intake was in 2004 and the first graduates finished in 2005. Consequently, when the global financial crisis began to unfold in late 2007, the global unions and many national union bodies were better prepared to contest neo-liberal public policy responses than they might otherwise have been. The formation of Global Unions and the GLU demonstrate an attempt to promote the interests of workers within a context shaped by neo-liberal forms of governance.

The first part of this chapter describes the GLU, its annual conferences and the fortnightly publication: the *Global Labour Column*. This description poses the question of whether the networking within and around the GLU can contribute to a democratisation of global governance. The second part considers three responses: (i) a pessimistic response based on Robert Michels's iron law of oligarchy within initially democratic organisations; (ii) a guardedly optimistic response based on Gramsci's approach to the wider context of labour movements; and (iii) recent responses in various models for union renewal. The third part considers another response that draws on recent research about contentious politics and transnational activism. This response consists of arguments about why the discursive constitution of global actors is crucial to any prospect for global unions to contribute to a democratisation of global governance. A fourth part deploys criteria derived from studies of contentious politics when it compares the GLU and the Global Labour Column against other contemporary labour networks. This leads to a conclusion that the GLU improves the way workers interact with union officials at local, national, regional and global levels and therefore improves the capacity for global unions to resist neo-liberal forms of governance and democratise global governance in order to achieve decent work for everyone, everywhere.

The Global Labour University

During 2001–2003, conversations among Frank Hoffer at the ILO, Christoph Scherrer at the University of Kassell, Hansjörg Herr at the Free University, Berlin, and Eddie Webster at Witwatersrand, South Africa, led to the creation of a pilot Masters Programme on Labour Policies and Globalisation, comprising one term at each university and six-week internships at German or global union bodies. In 2005, the first cohort of students graduated and the first Global Labour University (GLU) conference for researchers, teachers, students and alumni was held in Berlin. In 2006, the second conference was held in Kassel. In 2007, Witwatersrand University started Masters Programmes in Labour and Development, Economic Policy, Globalisation and Labour and the third GLU conference was held in Johannesburg that year. In 2008, the University of Campinas in Brazil started a Masters Programme in Social Economy and Labour and the fourth GLU conference was held in São Paulo. In 2009, The Tata Institute of Social Sciences brought into the GLU a Masters Programme in Globalisation and Labour that had begun a year earlier and the fifth GLU conference was held in Mumbai.

No further Masters programmes have joined the GLU, but several research centres at universities in Britain and the USA have become affiliated, and several more want to affiliate, providing the GLU with a larger circle of visiting teachers and research-project collaborators. The annual conferences have continued to alternate among the five campuses. After these years of expansion and, as the global financial crisis was becoming a great recession, it proved timely to reflect on both the promise of GLU and its problems.[2] In many ways, the global financial crisis and many nations' subsequent problems with sovereign debt and neo-liberal austerity have underscored the importance of shifting from 'international' to 'global' unionism.

In an early article, Frank Hoffer (2006: 16) prefaced his presentation of the GLU with Keynes's often-cited comment in the last chapter of his *General Theory* from 1936:

> The ideas of economists and political philosophers ... are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. ... I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.

The idea of networking certainly appeals to academics and perhaps it is an encroaching idea. In any case, running the Masters programmes gives the network an ongoing task and purpose (Hoffer, 2006, p. 22). The GLU has become a network that embodies global unionism, but the question remains as to how well it is rooted in the experience of workers around the world. Does it differ from international unionism? Is this network more than an encroaching idea?

First, one can question how well the GLU is connected to national union bodies. The annual GLU conferences attract 200 participants with three–four parallel streams over two days, but few unionists participate or present papers. Kassel and Berlin enrol annual cohorts of around 20 students, while Witwatersrand, Campasina and the Tata Institute, each enrol smaller cohorts of around a dozen students. Not surprisingly, most of the conference participants are academics and they tend to overwhelm the students and the few unionists, but not only by their numbers but also by their research training and experience of academic life that sees them dominate discussions. At the same time, the students and alumni appreciate the opportunity to participate in an international conference. This is important for the locals or people from other newly industrialising countries when they are held in South Africa, Brazil or India rather than Germany (Waghorne, 2009, p. 50).

The students' interaction with the academics and researchers is what you might expect for mid-level union officials acquiring a stronger sense of what globalisation means for labour.

The GLU is meant to extend students, offering them personal development (living outside of one's home country for an extended period and learning to speak and write English more effectively), opportunities to establish useful contacts for their organisations at home and a strong sense of policies that promote globalisation in ways that sustain societies, decent work, economic prosperity and the environment. Since the GLU offers university education which addresses the big issues of our time, rather than adult education or on-the-job training, it is a labour-oriented equivalent to the many Masters of Business Administration that inculcate the interests of capital with vast numbers of staff who have advanced competency in English and wide knowledge about the problems and opportunities of globalisation (Hoffer, 2006, pp. 30–33). After ten years, over 200 students have graduated from the GLU and 80% of them are working in either the labour movement or labour research (Hoffer, 2012, p. 11). In many ways, the GLU challenges Robert Michel's precepts about oligarchical organisations. As Mike Waghorne puts it in the concluding remarks of his review:

> The GLU needs to consider mounting a serious debate globally and in each country over just what unions want from universities. Some students say that they detect a kind of reverse elitism in unions – a feeling that people who undertake university studies, even a labour-oriented course such as the GLU, can't be 'real unionists'. Many senior unionists have come up through the ranks; in the past, it was true that they could be effective union leaders through highly skilled demagoguery and fluent rhetoric. More and more union leaders are now aware that the top layer of the union has to encompass a whole range of professional knowledge and expertise that can withstand withering media exposure and television face-to-face debates with leading politicians and policy makers who have teams of spin doctors and experts at their disposal. (Waghorne, 2009, p. 9)

This last point, about dealing with the media and media-savvy opponents, points to the importance of GLU as a network with a crucial power to constitute unionists as global actors who can respond to both globally oriented managers and politicians or public servants influenced by neo-liberalism. If the GLU is a network that constitutes global unionism in itself and also promotes global unionism within other union

bodies, then it marks an important departure from the tension between international socialism and international liberalism that characterised the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1949–2006) and all the international union bodies.

Models of union renewal

For a hundred years, all workers' organisations have had to deal with problems that arise from Michels' (1962 [1915]) well-known law that organisations inherently centralise power as they become larger and that this centralisation makes democracy impossible within the organisation. Dealing with the suspicion if not conviction that this law holds true is especially difficult for transnational, global or international labour organisations because they are necessarily several steps removed from workers and union members. Despite the dated social science behind Michels's law on the inevitability of oligarchic bureaucratisation, many activists continue to believe that all political organisations tend to become bureaucratic and oligarchic. Self-critical scepticism aside, consistency demands that, if global labour hopes to democratise the governance of public policy formation, it must then uphold democratic principles within its own organisation.

The problem is that many activists, inside and outside of unions, accept that what starts out as a small, militant group of committed organisers who persuade other workers to join a union, organise strikes, stage rallies and marches, print pamphlets, hand out notices, start newspapers and organise a party to contest elections or resist a dictatorship, eventually turns into a series of large and bureaucratic organisations. Many activists further accept that professional employees develop rational procedures for achieving the given objectives of their bureaucratic organisation, which consequently become oligarchies run by a small elite in order to achieve the organisation's ends with maximum efficiency in the use of its available scarce resources. The Weberian sociology behind this argument about bureaucratisation (Held, 1987) rests upon the pre-supposition of an 'under-socialised' (Granovetter, 1985, p. 485) view of individuals who start out as activists but become organisational elites. This prompted Gramsci (1971, pp. 150, 430 – note 79) to offer an 'over-socialised' (Granovetter, 1985, p. 485) emphasis on a wider and longer-term context for the politics and history of an organisation. To understand the importance of a party or a union, in Gramsci's view, one should ignore the statements of leaders and the declarations of congresses and instead study the impact of the party or

union upon the history of the nation. Whether it is under-socialised or over-socialised, generalisations about a historical trajectory from participatory protest to oligarchic bureaucracy are not much help for appreciating how workers can challenge undemocratic networks of governance within and around governments and corporations.

The literature about Michels (Hands, 1971; Hindess, 1971; Hyman, 1975; Lipset, 1962; Piven and Cloward, 1977) can be succinctly summed up as offering 'a career model' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 65) for understanding the history of a protest movement. This model can describe what happened to many social-democratic and labour parties, unions and single-movement organisations between the 1890s and 1960s, but the model struggles to understand the re-radicalisation of many parties and unions, along with other long-standing protest networks such as feminism and peace movements, towards the end of the long post-war boom. Developments since then, including one-off campaigns, networks among activists in diverse movements opposed to neo-liberal globalisation, are beyond the ken of the career model, because it presumes linear, one-directional change within a single movement.

Since the end of state communism and apartheid, radical activists and scholars of industrial relations (Moody, 1997; Scipes, 1992; Seidman, 1994; Waterman, 1999, 2001) have argued that unions should emulate the bottom-up participatory democracy of not only the 'new' social movements from the 1960s but also the strike waves and worker-led protests that led to democratisation in Poland, South Africa, Brazil, Korea and the Philippines. These arguments build upon the sociology of a contrast between the way most unions had become 'old' bureaucratic and institutional pillars of the industrial age, while some militant unionists had more in common with the 'new' networks of protest (Castells, 1997; Habermas, 1981; Touraine, 1983). The arguments for social-movement unionism, also called 'community unionism' (Brecher and Costello, 1990a, 1990b), have included calls to build more numerous and meaningful bridges between unions and community groups. These arguments prompt a contrast between a dated service model of bureaucratic unionism, in which paid officials provide members with negotiation and representation services, and an organising model of political unionism that seeks both new members and more active current members who rely less on paid officials and more on themselves (Crosby, 2005; Hurd, 2006). These various arguments all include a normative call for bottom-up participatory democracy to counteract oligarchy and renew unionism.

The other main approach to analysing the fate of contemporary unionism looks to its context in the developments of global labour, global capital and nation states. For example, between 1990 and 2010, as people left traditional subsistence in their villages to find paid work in the cities, the Chinese and Indian labour markets each expanded by around 150 million workers, which is approximately the current size of the USA's entire labour market (Mörtvik, 2006, p. 22 see also http://laborsta.ilo.org/). Given this huge and rapid expansion of relatively cheap labour in the world's labour markets, it is not surprising that densities of unionisation have declined in all industrially advanced countries (Kelly, 1998; Kjellberg, 2000, 2007; Peetz, 1998; Stephens and Wallerstein, 1991; Western, 1995, 1999) and failed to arise in most industrialising countries (Visser, 2003). Besides drastic shifts in the 'supply' of labour, this decline is associated with greater tensions, if not 'delinking' (Piazza, 2001), between union movements and parties of labour, and is commonly associated with the way neo-liberal forms of economic globalisation undermine the labour movement.

A leading example of the context-oriented approach is Beverly Silver's (Hulden, 2013; Silver, 1995, 2003) structuralist argument about the distribution of labour unrest around the world between 1870 and 1996. Rather than presume unionism is an organisational dinosaur of the industrial era or analyse the objectives of unions and the motives of union officials, she analysed reports in *The Times* and *The New York Times* that reported strikes arose in different countries and industries. The analysis covered a period long enough to allow reflection on globalisation over the long run. She predicted that the next labour-mobilising strike waves would occur in China and Mexico (Silver, 2003, pp 64–66) because that was where large amounts of capital had most recently been invested in highly exploitative workplaces hiring workforces lacking traditions of unionism. Because of its clarity and breadth this context-oriented analysis has been influential.

Between the guarded optimism of norms about social-movement unionism, and qualified pessimism about global capital and localised strike waves, many leading authors have attempted to thread a middle course (Hyman, 1999, 2005; Kelly, 1998; Waterman, 2001; Waterman and Munck, 1999; Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008). To take a more recent example offered by authors who also teach within the GLU, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout (2008) start from a critical reading of Polanyi's (1944) argument that neo-liberal public policies impose anti-social consequences and generate spontaneous opposition. They insist that opposition to neo-liberalism at work or in public

policy requires workers to understand that personal problems are social, economic and political problems and therefore organise themselves to resolve those wider problems. They compare three workplaces manufacturing white-goods in South Africa, Australia and South Korea, note that the three different employers face the same pressure to cut costs and secure profits in a competitive global industry, and reflect on the widely differing responses of the workers they interviewed who lived in quite different social, cultural, historical and political contexts. Their book is called *Grounding Globalisation* because they advocate a bottom-up analysis of unionism in the context of globalisation.

In parallel with these reflections on the present fate of unionism, several observers have noted a potential for computer-mediated communication to drive a renewal of unionism (Kochan et al., 2004; Lee, 1999; Showstack, 2002). More recently, such possibilities have been updated to cover social networking New Unionism Network, 2013. The central shortcoming in several of these arguments is the reliance on an optimistic version of technological determinism (Lairson, 2003; Tilly, Charles 2004b, pp. 95–122). Very large numbers of people can now easily and cheaply publish blogs or upload videos, and workers too can broadcast communications from one to many, just as unions can mobilise petitions, or email attacks, to channel communications from many to one. However, the very proliferation of do-it-yourself websites and dubious online information has also seen users turn to familiar, reliable sources in greater numbers. Compared to either optimistic or pessimistic versions of technological determinism, a considerably more plausible approach to networking and interaction is to analyse how the new technology is embedded in the way various practices and events constitute both institutions and people. This focus on networks is where we can find ideas relevant to thinking about how global unionism can democratise global governance.

Networks and interaction

Where leading theorists of governance (Jessop, 1998; Kjaer, 2004; Rhodes, 1996) regard networks as an alternative form of organisation to markets and hierarchies, Tilly and Tilly (1998, pp. 71, 69–93) presuppose that markets and hierarchies are each a form of network. Like various other networks, including coalitions, neighbourhoods, friendship circles and kinship groups, markets and hierarchies can be characterised in terms of transactions, contracts, social ties, roles and organisations. This elevation of networks to a more abstract level of conception above

markets and hierarchies has two important consequences. First, it subsumes 'old' bureaucratic unions and 'new' social movements under the same heading of 'networks' and disregards sweeping generalisations about hierarchies belonging to an industrial era and networks belonging to a post-industrial era (see also Calhoun, 1995). Second, it focuses methodology upon interaction *between* people embedded in a network rather than on either individuals or their context (Howard, 2010; Tarrow, 2012, p. 22). These arguments about networks as a higher-order concept and interaction as a methodological precept have important consequences for understanding democratisation and transnational activism.

Tilly's (1995, 2001, 2004a, 2005, 2006, 2007) arguments about democratisation depart from the various strategies of explanation deployed in an extensive literature (Geddes, 2007; Potter, 1997). Modernisation theory explains democratisation when it identifies the necessary conditions for democracy, analyses correlations between democracy and various indicators of development and modernisation, but it can only sometimes predict when democracy will emerge. Transition theory calls for a sense of where democracy comes from (its genesis) and why democratisation begins (causality), and asserts that when elites – both authoritarian regime insiders and regime challengers – avoid violence and negotiate like democrats, then those elites drive a transition to democracy (Rustow, 1970). Structural theory turns to a wider context over a much longer term when it insists that structures of power, including class formations, the state, the legacy of imperialism and the demands of war (Moore, 1973; Therborn, 1977; Tilly, Charles, 1978), can preclude democratisation or allow it to begin. Since the mid-1990s, Tilly, along with his collaborators and followers (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, 2009; Tarrow 1998, 2005, 2006, 2012; Tilly, Charles, 1995, 2001, 2004a, 2005, 2006, 2007; Tilly, Charles and Tarrow, 2006), maintained the structuralist focus upon collective action but abandoned sweeping generalisations about an over-socialised context in favour of analysing the specific causal mechanisms of democratisation as a form of contentious politics.

Tilly (2007, pp. 78, 197–198) identifies three causal mechanisms of democratisation. First, the integration of interpersonal trust networks (such as the labour movement) into public politics or the disintegration of segregated trust networks among patrons and clients within an authoritarian regime. Second, the insulation of public politics from categorical inequality (rich versus poor, black versus white, coloniser versus colonised, men versus women, castes, and so forth) by means of secret

ballots and candidates' equal access to media, which allow the possibility of cross-class or cross-category alliances. Third, the dissolution of autonomous coercive powers (for example, among clan leaders, war lords, drug dealers) allows citizens' representatives to acquire greater control over not only the funding of armed forces but also all taxes, welfare and public policy formation. Each mechanism involves popular contention, in which collective actors make claims on other actors including governments. If one or more of these mechanisms fails or reverses then an existing democracy begins to de-democratise. Sidney Tarrow has taken Tilly's ideas and developed them in application to the operation of transnational social movements.

Unlike other transnational movements, such as international feminism, the ecology movement or Islamism, workers face opponents with a large, long-standing and increasing structural advantage (Tarrow, 2005, pp. 154–155). As a factor of production, capital has always been more mobile than labour but in recent decades, the globalisation of production has amplified this old advantage. At the same time, labour movements' countervailing power within welfare states has been waning. Labour movements have largely taken institutional pathways through political rights and alliances at the national level, but globalisation has undermined this pathway for redressing the structural imbalance between the power of labour and capital. The long-term reliance of both international socialism and international liberalism on interaction between national bodies is why they are much less viable in an era of economic and political globalisation. In any case, at the transnational level, institutions have less salience. Consequently, direct action, especially in the form of industrial action, is 'the foundational mechanism for workers' (Tarrow, 2005, p. 159). International federations, peak national union bodies and various institutional bodies can all work in tandem with direct action, which is to say that centralisation, institutions or bureaucracy need not necessarily develop at the cost of local activism. Come what may, if direct action fails then no form of labour contention can succeed. All transnational activists need to be 'rooted cosmopolitans'. Tarrow's (2005, pp. 148–149, 58–59) comparison of international human rights, transnational feminism and transnational labour movements makes it clear that where other groups can extend existing frames of interpretation to include their problems or construct a bridge between existing frames and more advantageous frames, transnational unionism must contest neo-liberalism.

Where other groups can use existing institutions to inform international NGOs of their plight or access international institutions to put

pressure on their own governments, transnational unionism must back up information politics and institutional action with direct action outside of institutions. In short, while direct action is an option for many groups, it is essential for transnational unionism. On this point, social-movement unionism and the politics of contention applied to transnational unionism agree, but Tilly's conception of 'contentious politics' accepts the evidence that, in order to succeed, the transgressive contention of direct action needs to be supported by the contained contention of federations, peak councils, national union offices, and so forth. Union bodies can, and often have chosen to, undermine direct action, but the fading of the old tension between reformist social democracy and revolutionary communism now means that central union bodies are much more likely to support local direct action.

Activists in the South often suspect that campaigns for fair trade, a social clause in free-trade agreements, the abolition of child labour, and better health and safety are but thin disguises for protecting employment in the developed countries. At the same time, activists in the South are more likely to interact vertically with activists in North America in a bilateral way while activists in Europe are more likely to interact horizontally in a multilateral way (Silver, 2003, p. 11; Tarrow, 2005, p. 166; Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout, 2008, p. 201). Activists in the South will either externalise their domestic issues or internalise global issues. If they take the first path, they seek redress against their governments through international NGOs or intergovernmental institutions and shift the scale of their contention upwards to the global level (in the way that Islamism has moved from national contention within Egypt, Iran and Pakistan up to transnational contention against the USA anywhere). If they take the second path, they internalise global issues and shift the scale of global contention downwards into their domestic politics (in the way that IMF riots spread throughout the world in the 1990s). Both farmers and workers in Europe, on the other hand, since the late 1990s, have begun to mobilise across nation states (Imig and Tarrow, 2001; Tarrow, 2005, p. 159) for example, by organising marches of the unemployed against neo-liberal public policies across many European cities (Mathers, 2007; Taylor and Mathers, 2002). Here, research into empirical relations and comparisons with other forms of activism yields specific lessons about what works, for who, against whom, where, when and why. Tarrow's typology of transnational coalitions starts from a fourfold table based on a dual distinction between high or low involvement and short- or long-term duration. The main upshot of this typology of transnational

activism is that rather than critique the 'old' union internationalism for failing to fulfil the norms of social-movement unionism, it specifies how and why particular forms of transnational activism arise and for what purposes.

Where Tilly focuses on three specific causal mechanisms to explain the democratisation, or de-democratisation, of a particular nation state at a particular time, Tarrow takes a comparable approach to analysing transnational unionism with respect to liberalism. If liberalism constitutes people as individuals who subjectively calculate the costs and benefits of any choice and thereby determine their own best interests free from interference by anyone, then how does global unionism constitute workers and unionists? The methodological precept about interaction assumes that people are not individuals but are instead embedded in communities, groups and a variety of networks. If this assumption holds, then the integration of interpersonal trust networks, such as unions, into the process of public policy formation can cause a democratisation of governance. Transnational policy formation is poorly insulated from categorical inequality across the world. Following Tilly's conclusions about interpersonal trust networks as a causal mechanism of democratisation and Tarrow's fourfold typology for analysing the length and intensity of transnational unionism, it is important to look more closely at whether GLU constitutes its students as global unionists and whether the network contributes to the direct action of striking workers. One way of doing this is to compare the GLU's fortnightly *Global Labour Column* against other labour websites.

The Global Labour Column

The GLC is based at Witwatersrand where the editor Nicolas Pons-Vignon works at a research centre. Since the first number in November 2009, the GLC has published a two-page article each fortnight or so. Contributors are asked to describe a problem, offer an analysis of it and suggest policy ideas within 1,000–1,500 words (Global Labour University, 2010, p. 6). After three years, the column had attracted 3,000 email subscribers (Global Labour University, 2012, p. 4). Many of the contributors are either well-established academics or global or national union leaders, but GLU alumni also contribute columns.

In the first column, Frank Hoffer advocated a left-Keynesian agenda, in which he identified root causes of the global economic crisis, spelled out the ILO's decent work policy and concluded that the crisis posed an opportunity, not to be wasted, to implement a wage-led recovery,

advance the social wage, increase taxation on capital and rein in the financial industry. Several articles by academics on similar themes followed. Many contributors commented on various countries' experience of the crisis, the role of finance and the prospects for labour, for unions, for social democracy, for green jobs, for development in industrialising countries, and so forth. In April 2010, number 17, Christoph Scherrer (from the University of Kassel) offered a penetrating analysis of why the global economic crisis was a crisis of capitalism that would continue to weaken labour. He called for political strategies to promote labour-oriented public policies. In June 2010, number 22, the GLC editor Nicolas Pons-Vignon offered a wide-ranging and rather more post-Keynesian analysis of neo-liberalism. He effectively illustrated the importance of the Occupy Wall Street critique of the wealthiest 1% of Americans with a graph. It offered an overview of the income share of the USA's wealthiest 1%, showing that the income share of the wealthy peaked at 22.5% in 1930, declined to 9% in 1975 and returned to 22.5% by 2006. In September 2010, number 31, the ILO Director General, Juan Somavia, demonstrated his strong support for the GLU with an article about decent work for all everywhere.

To get a handle on the GLC, we can usefully compare it against Labour Start and Union Book (Lee, 1999), the Global Union Research Network (Schmidt, 2005) and the New Unionism website. This chapter briefly describes and then analyses whether these networks: (1) develop policies to contest transnational neo-liberal policies; (2) develop horizontal interaction among global unions; (3) develop vertical interaction between local, national and global unions; and (4) develop or maintain links between global unions and direct action by workers.

Eric Lee founded Labour Start after the media, and the UK Labour government contributed to the defeat of dockworkers in their 1995–97' dispute in Liverpool. Lee is optimistic about the potential for podcasting, or many-to-one and many-to-many patterns of communication, to activate passive citizens and overturn the broadcasting, or one-to-many pattern of communication, between powerful authors, broadcasters, managers and politicians and passive readers, watchers, workers and citizens. Labour Start has become a channel for, first, aggregating labour news stories from around the world and disseminating them to around 50,000 individual and institutional subscribers, and second, calling for online petitions and donations to help particular workers on strike in difficult circumstances or persecuted by authoritarian regimes. In 2010, Union Book sought to create a Labour version of Facebook to gather petition signatures and donations. In many ways, Labour

Start plus Union Book resembles Amnesty International except that it focuses on labour rights.

The Global Union Research Network (GURN) arose out of the same discussions that led to the GLU. In 2001, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, the European Trade Union Council, several global unions and the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities met and adopted a major review of international unionism. This review called for urgent efforts to build unions' research capacities and establish better links to university researchers, especially in the South. Consequently, the GURN was established in 2004 (Schmidt, 2005, pp. 45–46). It comprises a database of affiliated research institutes and trade union departments in many countries and regions around the world, a database of articles, an email subscription list server and a newsletter. Schmidt (2005) accurately characterises the network as an 'incremental' innovation.

New Unionism was established in 2007. Compared to Labour Start, GURN (and GLU and GLC), New Unionism is much more critical of the ILO, the global unions and the national union confederations. Rather than undertake reviews, debate policies and issue position statements, it seeks to engage members in building unionism around principles of: (1) organising; (2) workplace democracy; (3) creative thinking; and (4) internationalism. The website has many contributions by academics writing about these themes. In response to a recent call to develop ideas about how to build global unionism, it can be noted that Facebook has only recently acquired as many users as there are union members in the world but any similarities end there. Where Facebook collects information about users in order to sell it to advertisers, social-network unionism needs to create a safe place for exchanges that cannot be viewed by employers or sold to advertisers (Table 10.1).

GURN is based on long-term and consistently low-intensity interactions. It is more likely to spawn alternative views of the world capable of dislodging neo-liberalism. The way it constitutes strong interaction with global unions and some interaction with national union confederations may see it constitute stronger institutions of transnational labour. However, the absence of interaction with strikers and protestors and the foundational mechanism of direct action means the GURN has little prospect of constituting workers as global actors.

Labour Start is based on long-term and mostly mild, but sometimes intense, interactions. Its podcasting of labour news and calls for petition signatures and donations to help strikers deploys a rather procedural idea of labour cosmopolitanism that is unlikely to effectively contest

Table 10.1   Labour networks and criteria of transnational unionism

	GURN	Labour Start	Union Book	New Unionism	GLC	GLU
Cosmopolitanism	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Links to global unions	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Links to national unions	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Linked to direct action	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

or displace neo-liberalism or constitute either unions or unionists as global actors, but it does constitute strong and long-term links to unions at various levels. It obviously has very strong links to direct action.

New Unionism is not as old as the other labour networks, but it does appear to involve long-term interactions among its members. Those interactions appear to place mid-way between the low-intensity of the institutionally oriented GURN and the high intensity of the direct-action-oriented Labour Start. The global unionism debated among various contributors is quite substantial. There are no immediate or obvious interactions with workers on strike or undertaking any form of direct action.

The GLU and GLC arguably fulfil all of four of the criteria for unions to contribute to the democratisation of global governance. Younger, mid-level union officials network with each other as students at the on-campus Masters programmes and with their teachers, visiting teachers and researchers at the annual conferences. Their endorsing unions also benefit from these students' experiences and networks. That four out of five students either resume working within the labour movement or go on to further study at a labour studies research institute indicates the extent to which the GLU is succeeding at constituting workers as transnational actors and their unions as global unions. There have only been 200 graduates, whereas there are vastly greater numbers of students graduating from business administration programmes. This points to the immanent potential of the GLU and GLC to include the representatives of workers and workers themselves into national and global forms of governance. This suggests that global unions and networked unions are now more capable of contributing to such democratisation.

Conclusion

Where the main models of union renewal stipulate norms of bottom-up, participatory democracy as the means to renew unionism and challenge neo-liberal forms of undemocratic governance, the politics-of-contention approach to analysing transnational unionism allows explanation of how, why, when and where workers seize opportunities to change their circumstances. This approach seeks a middle way between an under-socialised career model of union decline due to the formation of internal oligarchies and an over-socialised model of fatalism about unionism doomed to decline under neo-liberal policies of capitalist globalisation. Consequently, transnational unionism needs to, first, intellectually contest neo-liberal policy formation, and second, constitute both workers and their unions as global actors capable of dealing with globally oriented employers, politicians and public servants in order to support the interests of workers. The GLU and GLC are important developments in recent efforts to extend transnational networks of unionism which balance the political participation of workers with efforts to develop forms of education and communication which are supportive of the interests of workers. Such measures are crucial if unions are to effectively counter neo-liberal forms of governance and operate in a context of globalisation. The global unions today are more capable of contributing to a democratisation of global governance than they were a decade ago. If workers' organisations interact with both workers and union officials at all levels, then they can contest the policies of neo-liberalism and contribute to democratising governance.

Notes

1. These union bodies included the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD), the European Trade Union Council and the Bureau for Workers' Activities within the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
2. The discussion below relies primarily on Mike Waghorne's (2009) report on the GLU and his account of many interviews with students, alumni and various people in all of the programmes. It also draws on more recent GLU steering committee minutes (http://www.global-labour-university.org/125.html), observations by Frank Hoffer (2006(2012)) and my own discussions with a couple of Anglophone alumni.

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11
Climate Crisis and the Limits of Liberal Democracy? Germany, Australia and India Compared

James Goodman and Tom Morton

Climate crisis poses an existential challenge to global governance and to democracy. There is clearly a 'democratic deficit' in climate governance, where democratic representation ends at national borders. At climate negotiations, national liberal democracies are locked into beggar-thy-neighbour territoriality that condemns climate governance to ineffectiveness. More fundamentally though, failures in climate governance and indeed climate change itself expose a systemic failure in liberal democracy. A model of democracy that thrives at the expense of future generations, and at the expense of those currently vulnerable to climate change, is clearly a flawed democracy. If climate change exposes the territorial limits of liberal democracy, at the national level it has also exposed the systemic limitations of global climate governance. Accordingly, this chapter seeks a diagnosis of climate governance failure through an account of climate policy in liberal democracies. One explanation of this failure may be found in the evident failure of liberal democracies and the wider economic pressures on governments that produce policy failure. Liberal democracy itself is positioned as the key barrier to effective climate governance, and climate change is interpreted as prefiguring alternative forms of democratic engagement. This chapter focuses upon how elected governments in India, Germany and Australia have failed to respond to climate change and the extent to which these failures translate into a crisis of political legitimacy. At this nexus we find that new, more direct forms of democratic participation are emerging – beyond liberal democracy – to reground more effective responses to the climate crisis.