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Unions and Networks – Unions as Networks

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1. Introduction

Economic globalization has many facets, one of which is its effect on trade unions. While the labor movement has had an international dimension since it very inception in the course of industrialization, its main field of activity has been within the particular institutional settings of individual nation states. Historically, trade unions have become nationally embedded organizations, for which "international action is an uncertain means of achieving members' interest" (Logan 1980: 10). As such, trade unions have continued to fight to hold on to and protect their collective bargaining gains and institutionalized achievements within their national domain. But with the massive expansion of global economic activity through the "liberalization of trade" (deregulation) and the growth of investment, production and services driven by Transnational Corporations (TNCs) over the past decades, unions have also begun to reorient themselves toward developing cross-border approaches to combating unfettered international competition fed by a race to the bottom over labor costs.

A paramount sign of this new paradigm of union activity has been the emergence of Transnational Union Networks (TUNs). Unions are focusing on the value creating activities of TNCs in inter-firm networks in general and in "global production networks" (Coe et al. 2008) in particular (unions and networks). Where they are already present, they are linking centers of local strength and national embeddedness across borders; where they are weak or not present, they focus on organizing new representational bases at key "contested fields" (Levy 2008) within global production networks (GPN). In doing so, they become "unions as networks", i.e. multifaceted and flexible, ideally moving synergistically beyond existing hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational structures.

At first glance, it would appear that the phenomenon of TUNs exists in myriad forms with a heterogeneous range of network organizing strategies. A closer look into TUN reality however has led us to a better understanding of their organizational underpinnings and governance forms in the context of

particular global union strategies. In our conceptualization of this mode of "international revitalization" (Bieler and Lindberg 2011 for example), we find evidence of two archetypical TUNs in the largely unregulated realm of global labor relations: TNC-centered and GUF-centered union networks.

In this paper, we explore both types of TUNs, focusing mainly on the opportunities and challenges involved when unions adopt the (network) organizational form for pursuing policies and strategies which aim at organizing and representing labor in TNCs acting in inter-firm networks in general and in global production networks in particular. In this endeavor we use not only examples from the field of global union activism but also insights from the abundant literature on inter-organizational networks (see, for recent reviews, Borgatti and Foster 2003; Provan et al. 2007; Zaheer et al. 2010; Müller-Seitz 2012). These latter insights provide a supportive theoretical base and an analytical tool to help us to designate, understand and explain the TUN phenomenon.

In this manner we will contribute to a broader theoretical understanding of unions and networks as well as of unions as networks. In particular we will provide insights into the chances of the Global Union Federations, or GUFs for short, to establish themselves as network organizers and, thus, as key players in global labor relations.

2. Inter-organizational Networks – Insights from Management Research

Formally speaking, inter-organizational networks consist of 'knots' (organizations) and 'ties' (inter-organizational relations). From the perspective of the broad field of network analysis (Wasserman and Faust 1984) and the emerging network science (Barabasi 2002), most natural and social phenomena can be analyzed as 'networks' (Grabher and Powell 2004). This is also characteristic of the heavily "social network" orientation of social science approaches to this topic (cf. Holton 2008; Kahler 2009; Siegel 2009). In contrast, our more specific approach focuses on inter-organizational networks and on their

particular modes of economic governance (Provan and Kenis 2008). More precisely, in management research inter-organizational networks are defined as an organizational form of economic activity, where more than two organizations coordinate at least some of their activities in time and space on a repeated basis to pursue joint (economic) objectives. The collaborating organizations work closely with each other and may be bound through trust-based ties or more formally by official membership in the respective network through bi- or multilateral contracts.

Despite wide-spread agreement about this very fundamental understanding of inter-organizational networks it is still debated whether they are an organizational form combining important elements of market and hierarchy (Williamson 1991) or, regardless of whether they are based on formal contracts or informal connections (Behrends et al. 2011), a form of governance "beyond market and hierarchy" (Powell 1990). While research in the field of management and organizations has traditionally investigated the governance as the formal and, increasingly, informal structure of inter-organizational networks, it has more recently also paid attention to network dynamics and network management.

2.1 Structures of Inter-organizational Networks

No matter whether such networks are considered as an organizational form *between* or *beyond* market and hierarchy, their structure can be usefully be described with regard to number and properties of the organizations ('knots') and with regard to the quantity and quality of 'ties'. Some examples for such structural measures will be given before we explain their relevance for unions regarding TNC-centered as well as GUF-centered networks.

A classic example of an important structural or relational measure is the weakness or strength of ties (Granovetter 1985). This can be assessed with regard to specific (dyadic) inter-organizational relation or the "whole network" (Provan et al. 2007). A strong tie may be either the outcome of repeated

interactions or of mutual interdependence. While certainly the strength of strong ties can be postulated, there is also a strength in weak ties, that is, their potential to gather new information (Granovetter 1985). Examples for measures that capture important structural features of the whole network are network density and network centrality (Wasserman and Faust 1984). Like the strength of a certain tie, network density shows how many of the possible links between organizations have actually been established. Network centrality, by contrast, indicates the position of organizations in the overall network. Other structural dimensions of inter-organizational networks concern their extension – as social systems – in time and space while their structures can also be described in terms of rules of signification and legitimation and resources of domination (Giddens 1984; Sydow and Windeler 1998).

Examples of structural measures that relate to the characteristics of the member organizations of a network are – apart from their sheer number (as a crude indicator of network size) – the size and type of organizations (e.g. firm, union, state agency), their domain of activity (e.g. industry, region), or kind of network membership (e.g. formal vs. informal). With regard to the number and type of member organizations and membership networks are either considered as either quite diverse or homophile (Powell 1990).

All these structural dimensions of inter-organizational networks matter potentially, regarding unions and networks as well as unions as networks. Take for instance the emerging union networks around GUFs. On the one hand, GUFs are formal organizations with constitutions, budgets, officers and members. On the other hand, GUFs like the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) are only more or less central knots in emerging global networks comprising member unions from different countries. In the sectors of IMF's jurisdiction these would be national unions like the German IG Metall or the US auto union UAW, all of which are themselves specific types of organizations. Conceiving these GUFs as "meta-organizations" (Ahrne and Brunsson 2008) with the role of network organizers, we emphasize not only the importance of inter-organizational relations as a means and outcome of strategic coordination of

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union activities but also the lack of formal authority or "hierarchical fiat" (Williamson 1991) to coordinate these activities across organizational boundaries. Since GUFs must deal with powerful national unions such as the IG Metall, the centrality of their role in the network is a crucial issue, just as are density and diversity of the overall network, the strength of certain ties within the network, and the dynamics of the network's development.

2.2 Managing Inter-organizational Networks

Network dynamics do not only depend upon the exit and entry of network members ('knots') but also on the development of network relations ('ties'). For instance, tie strength as well as network density may vary over time. While some ties may be discontinued others may become more trusted, turning from competitive into cooperative, or increase in their level of multiplexity (Wasserman and Faust 1984). Multiplexity may indicate increased stability of a tie or a tighter coupling of two or more organizations. Enhanced stability or tighter coupling of a tie may be aimed for, but its downside may be over-persistence undermining the strategic flexibility usually ascribed to inter-organizational networks (Maurer and Ebers 2006).

The notion of network governance, even if including more informal structures and allowing for change, does not fully capture these dynamics. For that reason, more recent network research has started to focus on practices that either reproduce or transform the formal and informal structures of an inter-organizational network. Sydow and Windeler (1998), for instance, investigated organizing and evaluating practices of a strategic network of firms in the German insurance industry. Ness (2009), in order to give a further example, looked at the negotiations in three inter-organizational dyads in the Norwegian retail sector as relational practices. These and other practice-based studies of networks, more often than not informed by Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, highlight the processes of reproduction and

transformation of network governance through management practices; practices, though, that are at the same time enabled and constrained by the structures (i.e. rules and resources) not only of the network but also of the member organizations and the organizational field (cf. Sydow and Windeler 1998).

In the case of global production networks, for instance, the lead organization is more likely than any other organization in the network to organize the relationships along the value chain. The outcomes of this organizing effort are quite diverse types of global production networks. Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon (2005), for instance, distinguish between three different types of global value chains or networks on the continuum between market and hierarchy: (1) *Modular value chains* are characterized by the outsourcing of complex modules from manufacturers to suppliers where standardized interfaces allow for codified transactions thereby requiring less inter-firm interaction than the second and third types. (2) *Relational value chains* demand much closer inter-firm collaboration because, compared to so-called black box designs, the exact specification of products or services requires frequent communication and mutual adaptation. (3) *Captive value chains* come somewhat close to organizational hierarchies that characterize TNCs or respective corporate groups. This mode of governance, however, is often based on organizational dependence of the supplier.

Such a perspective on governance in reference to the different types of global production networks between market and hierarchy is basic to our subject of transnational union networks[1]. TUNs are spun around a cross-border economic network structure of different firms, i.e. a GPN, inter-acting at strategically defined nodes as well as across the institutional distances inherent to a GPN. Transnational union networks are not merely mirror-images of global production networks. While corporations construct their GPN according to business goals and market strategies, TUN must link organizations with differing organizational resources and boundaries as well as varying and, not too seldom, contrary

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[1] It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the role of labor in GPN governance. We would, however, point out that its "absence" from the mainstream of academic discourse in this field has been the subject of recent publications. Cf. Rainnie et.al. (2011).

political, social and institutional logics. Nevertheless, we find the market – hierarchy juxtaposition used in management research regarding networks to be a relevant dimension for understanding union networks. Historically, unions have formed hierarchical organizations to overcome market weakness. But for reasons inherent to their organizational form and history, unions may resist hierarchical restructuring. Moreover, as the research on global commodity and value chains referred to above has shown, hierarchical forms of value creation are being eclipsed by other, less vertically structured forms, for which hierarchically structured union organizations may be unsuited.

Such considerations may also, with regard to union reaction to global production networks such as pressing for negotiating and signing International Framework Agreements or IFAs (Hammer 2005; Fichter et al. 2011; Papadakis 2011), be complemented by a study of actual leadership practices of the hub firm (Müller-Seitz 2012). The study of network leadership would also be highly relevant with regard to the role of GUFs in respective union networks. One important finding from this research is that even networks of formally equal partners may informally – and effectively – be led by one or several of the partners which, under these circumstances, may qualify as "network orchestrators" (Dhanaraj and Parkhe 2006).

No matter whether an inter-organizational network is strategically led or characterized by a more heterarchical structure, managing such networks implies to be concerned with at least for important managerial functions: (1) selection of network members, (2) allocation of tasks, responsibilities and resources among the members, (3) regulation of the network, and (4) evaluation of member contributions, network relationships, and – last but not least – network management practices (Sydow 2005). Selecting, reselecting, and deselecting network members is of foremost importance. Selecting the "right" members makes network management much easier. To some extent, the allocation or reallocation of tasks, responsibilities and resources is determined by the selection of the network members, as they are engaged in certain task domains and represent certain capabilities. Regulation of

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the network refers to the management task of defining or defining the rules of collaboration, of a formal as much as of an informal nature (Behrends et al. 2011). Network evaluation, finally, comprises all activities that aim at the assessment of the contributions of network members to the overall goal of the network. Like network regulation, network evaluation may be either restricted to rather informal "reflexive monitoring" (Giddens 1984) of network-related activities or follow formal procedures. Respective management practices that are used to execute these four tasks and, thereby, balance the tensions and contradictions that characterize each network organization (e.g. those between trust and control or cooperation and competition), no matter whether by deliberate design or emerging behind the backs of the actors, contribute to the dynamics of the network as much as these practices are influenced by the current state of network development (Sydow 2005).

These practices are not only used for managing global production networks requiring respective responses from TUNs; they are or can also be used for managing TUNs. For instance, a GUF may select among different national unions applying for membership, thereby codetermining the network's capabilities. Furthermore, the GUF, more or less in accordance with other members of the federation, may set the rules of knowledge exchange and network coordination and even start to think about evaluating the effectiveness of the TUN. Similar, national trade union may take the lead in organizing a TNC-centred union network. Again, members of the network are to be selected, the domain of activities as well as the rules of coordination to be agreed on, and the effectiveness of a particular network be evaluated.

3. Towards a Typology of Unions as Networks: TNC-centered and GUF-centered Union Networks

The idea of building networks is not new to international trade unionism (Platzer and Müller 2011: 758ff.). Currently it is widely used in the academic literature, for example as "transnational labour

networks" (Kidder 2002) or as networks of unions and movements (Evans 2010). Others have applied the term to "inter-union policies" (Anner et al. 2006), "global labor networks of action" (Cumbers et al. 2008), "cross-border union alliances" (Levesque and Murray 2010), and even "virtual networking" (Pulignano 2009), i.e. consideration of the appropriate use of electronic media and social networking in union activism. Nevertheless, none of this literature makes a serious attempt at a typology of the phenomenon in regard to the goals of the network(s), their membership and modes of governance, and their management practices. Indeed, with the exception of historical overviews such as the one offered by Platzer and Müller (2011), publications on union networks generally confine themselves to explaining cases of a single type.

In the course of our research on IFAs[2] we have come across a variety of different transnational union networks. Just as networks of business organizations are driven by a primary goal (value creation and expropriation), so may networks of unions be defined according to their aim of raising the collective voice of labor in co-determining employment conditions and employment relations. Beyond this general goal, however, union networks – and in particular, TUNs – differ in a variety of ways. Based on these differences, we would argue that such networks can be divided into two basic categories: TNC-centered networks and GUF-centered networks. Within each of the two categories we can discern two further sub-groups (see Table 1 below): the TNC-centered networks consist on the one hand of a long-term type, operating generally (but not always) within the context of an IFA and under the leadership of an employee representative body. The other sub-group covers more temporary, campaign-oriented and generally single-issue networks, often marked by a coalition of union and non-union (e.g. NGOs) members. Regarding the second category, GUF-centered TUNs, one of the sub-groups may be defined by its representational function, meaning that it is based on an ongoing and integrated relationship of dialogue with the lead organization in a GPN at headquarters and other levels. The other sub-group lacks

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[2]   See the research project website at http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/polwiss/ifa_projekt

this kind of integrated relationship and is as such focused on organizing new centers of collective union voice under GUF guidance.

Table 1. Transnational Union Networks

TNC-Centered	GUF-Centered
Case 1 Volkswagen Long-term, integrated.	*Case 3 Rhodia* Representational social dialogue.
Case 2 Deutsche Telekom/T-Mobile USA Temporary, campaign-oriented, single issue.	*Case 4 Securitas* Organizing.

In line with the aim of this paper to explore and develop analytical approaches and conceptual tools for examining the phenomenon of transnational union networks, the following sections present single cases in each category and sub-group which illustrate our arguments. Based on our typology, all of the cases refer to globally constructed TUNs; regional networks are included only to the extent that they are part of or closely associated with globally constructed TUNs.

The cases will be introduced by briefly portraying the TNC and/or the GPN around which the TUN is built, while the TUN itself will be presented by explaining its structure, its governance and its practice. Case presentations are based on publicly available sources in addition to materials from an ongoing research project[3]. Following this, we will summarize our findings and reflect on the extent to which the concepts we have presented from management research are applicable to our subject.

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[3]   See our project website at http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/polwiss/ifa_projekt

3.1 Building and Managing a TNC-centered Transnational Union Network

Case 1: Volkswagen. Long-term and integrated

As one of the leading manufacturers of automobiles, the German-based Volkswagen AG has production sites in 62 locations around the world. With nearly 400,000 employees the company reported sales revenues of € 127 billion and a net profit of over €7 billion in 2010. It's key markets include Western Europe, China, Brazil, the US, Russia and Mexico, with China, Brazil, India, Russia, the US and the ASEAN region expected to have the greatest growth potential (Volkswagen 2011). This development is also reflected in the steadily rising proportion of employees outside of Germany (2009: 53.2%; 2010: 54.6%) and the opening of new production sites 2011 in the US (Chattanooga) and in Russia.

Basic to VW's internationalization strategy is on the one hand a centralization of strategic decision-making at corporate headquarters and – together with global standard setting – an increase in competition for investments, product models and production quotas among the company's production sites (Pries 2000; Müller, Platzer and Rüb 2004: 182). At the same time, the highly institutionalized system of co-determination in the company based on German law and the strong position of the home country union IG Metall has resulted in generally cooperative labor relations which since the early 1990's have been extended first across Europe and subsequently to most other production locations worldwide. This development culminated in the negotiation and signing of a "Charter on Labour Relations within the Volkswagen Group" in 2009 (IMF 2009). It is true that the predecessor of the Group Global Works Council (GWC) at VW, founded in 1998, may be seen in the Global Corporation Committees promoted by the IMF in the early 1980's. However, the really effective international networking was being driven by works council members, union officials and activists located at corporate headquarters in Wolfsburg, Germany (Müller et al. 2004: 186). Both the grass roots working group named "International Solidarity" and, after its founding in 1990, the official European Works Council, worked closely together to develop

contacts to production sites outside of Germany. Then, in 1998, the GWC was founded, with the 20 member EWC expanded to include seven members from non-European sites[4]. In 2002, the GWC negotiated and (along with the IMF) signed an IFA with the company, providing a basis for its activities and setting labor standards throughout VW's operations.

The TUN at VW is clearly TNC-centered, does not extend beyond the focus TNC to cover even major suppliers and sub-contractors. It revolves around the GWC and all of its members are VW employees. Beyond the leading role of the WGWC at corporate headquarters, it has regional nodes (coordinating committees) of VW employees, the most active one being in South America (Müller et al. 2004: 191). An outer layer of support for the network is provided by a liaison network established by the IMF consisting of trade union officials at VW production sites in the different countries. The two layers are linked through a representative of the IMF on the GWC (Müller et al. 2004: 193). GWC policy is communicated through both channels: the TNC-internal network and the more peripheral union network coordinated by the IMF[5].

In practice, the work of this TUN is based on the need to develop a common position among employee representatives in untypically far-reaching negotiations with VW management over production volume, production distribution, restructuring and investments. Of course, working conditions at each production site are also central topic of the TUN. And especially since a "Charter on Labour Relations within the Volkswagen Group" was negotiated and signed in 2009, the TUN under the leadership of the GWC has been actively promoting a policy of conflict management based on a defined set of employee participatory rights. While the IG Metall has provided backing for this approach, and the IMF is a signatory to the Charter, unions are not mentioned as an integral part of this process. The Charter refers

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[4]   In principle, each country in which VW has a production site is represented in the GWC. However, final decisions on the inclusion of representatives from China, Russia and the US are still pending.

[5]   It is not known to what extent (if at all) the two networks interact regionally or locally independent of the GWC.

only to the requirement for the "parties concerned" to "recognise country-specific trade-union traditions within the Volkswagen Group and herewith set out their objectives for the further development of collective labour relations at the operational level" (IMF 2009).

Case 2: Deutsche Telekom/T-Mobile USA. Temporary, campaign-oriented, single issue.

The German telecommunications giant Deutsche Telekom was established in 1995 when the German postal service was split into three companies and privatized. Today, about one-half of its 250,000 employees are stationed outside Germany under the jurisdiction of Deutsche Telekom's holding company T-Mobile International. T-Mobile is present in ten European countries (seven in Eastern Europe), in the US, in Puerto Rico and in the US Virgin Islands. The US operation is by far the largest with a turnover of $21 billion and almost 40,000 employees in 2010.

In Germany, the service sector union ver.di has a comprehensive and strong position in Telekom's labor relations policies, which has grown out of its integrated role in the postal service public monopoly before privatization. Regular rounds of contract negotiations, institutionalized exchanges over restructuring, representation on the corporate advisory board and works councils throughout the various divisions and departments of the company are the hallmark of its influence and recognition.

However, Deutsche Telekom (2011: 40) has pursued a different course in its operations outside of Germany, arguing in its HR Report 2010/2011 that

> "… it is important that we show respect for each individual country's legal and cultural characteristics. … We do not consider it appropriate to "export" Germany's regulations to other countries. Instead, we respect the other forms of cooperation with legitimate employee representatives and/or workforces that have developed in different countries. In our Guideline for Cooperation with Employee Representatives, we have made it very clear that we support the individual responsibility of national management bodies and their HR functions in building employee relations."

However, in the same report, Deutsche Telekom states that its Guiding Principles are based on "internationally recognized rules such as the United Nations Global Compact, the OECD guidelines, and the core Labor standards issued by the International Labor Organization (ILO)" (Deutsche Telekom 2011: 40). And when Deutsche Telekom bought the US telecommunications company VoiceStream in 2001, the US telecommunications union CWA supported the transaction, arguing that an employer with a reputation for respecting unions would be a positive impulse for the industry. In contrast, Telekom's central management allowed its US management to continue along the anti-union path VoiceStream had followed. When negotiations between Deutsche Telekom management and ver.di at corporate headquarters over an IFA broke down, CWA fought back by joining forces with ver.di to publicly pressure the company globally to revise its position and resume negotiations for an IFA which would include the recognition of the ILO's core labor standards (CWA 2012).

Structurally, the global campaign of this TUN has been built on a close working arrangement between CWA and ver.di. Until late 2010, their activities were embedded in a wider, albeit rather loose TUN of unions at T-Mobile locations in other countries (primarily in Europe) and UNI, the private service sector GUF. At that time, UNI, which had played only a minor role in campaign operations up until then, joined with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to strengthen the campaign's global reach. It is not clear to what extent this expansion of the network complicated the clear lines of communication and the governance structures of the network established between CWA and ver.di. The front-line involvement of the ITUC and UNI had just begun when Deutsche Telekom announced that it was selling T-Mobile USA to AT&T, the largest provider in the US. That put the campaign on hold as CWA did not want to directly fight AT&T with which it had union contracts.

According to information available through the internet sites of both CWA and ver.di, the T-Mobile campaign was publicly marked by organizing drives at call centers in the US and by a media campaign (Internet, YouTube, union publications) focused primarily on Germany and the US. Internally, the

campaign organizers researched the corporation, held meetings with investors and politicians in both countries, organized regular exchanges between call center employees at T-Mobile USA and at Deutsche Telekom in Germany and reached out to employees and unions at T-Mobile in other countries, in particular in Eastern Europe.

3.2. Building and Managing a GUF-Centered Transnational Union Network

Case 3: Rhodia. Representational social dialogue

The responsible GUF for the chemical sector, the International Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), is one of the leaders in negotiating and implementing – in its terminology – Global Framework Agreements (GFA). In December, 2011 it signed its 16th GFA, this time with the Brazilian TNC Petrobras, the world's third largest energy company. Based on the strength of its affiliated national unions in the industrialized and threshold countries, the ICEM uses its GFAs to pursue an accentuated representational policy of social dialogue with its corporate counterparts. An exemplary case of this is the Rhodia GFA.

Rhodia is a specialty chemical manufacturer. In 2011 it was merged into the Belgium Solvay Group. Based in France, it is organized around four clusters representing 11 Global Business Units: Consumer chemicals, advanced materials, polyamide materials, and acetow and eco services (Rhodia 2012). With 14,000 people employed at 65 locations in 25 countries and sales of EUR 5.2 billion in 2010, Rhodia can be classified as a medium-sized TNC. Since its founding in 1998 as a spinoff from a restructuring at Rhône-Poulenc, Rhodia has sought to define its uniqueness by promoted sustainability and environmental solutions within its reference framework for business development.

For Rhodia's management, the GFA with ICEM is part of its sustainability and risk management program labeled the "Rhodia Way". The agreement demonstrates its "commitment to CSR" and to social dialogue, the latter which meshes easily with ICEM policies and is clearly stated in the GFA: "Rhodia and ICEM share the same commitment to a rich, balanced social dialog. This dialog, which is part of Rhodia's corporate culture, takes the form of various initiatives involving employee participation, as well as regular negotiations with staff representatives. Rhodia and ICEM will work together to increase the involvement of employees and their representatives in this dialog and to develop it at an international level" (Rhodia and ICEM 2011).

The GFA, which was first signed in 2005, was negotiated exclusively by ICEM on behalf of Rhodia employees. This was also the case when the agreement was renegotiated in 2008 and 2011. Using the provisions of the GFA, which include joint labor-management missions to production sites around the world, ICEM has built ties to its key affiliates in support of the agreement's implementation. The TUN which has been established in this case is clearly structured around the leadership role of the ICEM at its center. While the strong home country unions are involved and do participate, the ICEM takes care to uphold the global character of its Rhodia-based network. In countries such as Brazil and the US with more than one production site, ICEM has sought to strengthen the outer ranges of the network by developing regional networks among its affiliated unions. And where conflicts have arisen between unions and Rhodia local management, such as in the USA in 2010, ICEM was at the center of strategic decision-making (ICEM 2010).

As referred to above, a major focus of practice in this TUN is on social dialogue. Through inter-union exchanges and joint labor-management missions, the ICEM seeks to institutionalize union involvement and promote employee participation at the workplace throughout the company. Moreover, after a fatal accident at a supplier in 2009, ICEM initiated action to create a new health and safety committee which includes ICEM staff and union representatives from Brazil, China, France, and the US.

Case 4: Securitas. Union recognition and employment standards

With some 300,000 employees in 50 countries, Securitas is one of the largest global security providers. In 2011 it had a turnover of almost 7.2 billion Euros (MSEK 64,057). Building on its long-standing good labor relations in Sweden with the home country Transport Workers Union, UNI as the responsible GUF negotiated and signed an IFA (in its terminology a "Global Agreement") in 2006. UNI considered Securitas management's approach to corporate social responsibility a model for constructive labor relations, training of employees and improving wages in a sector "traditionally not a union stronghold" (Schömann 2008). But by early 2010, UNI and many of its affiliates in the countries in which Securitas operates were dissatisfied with the progress of unionization and in general the treatment of employees of the company. UNI organized a global alliance comprising affiliates from 15 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Spain, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, The Netherlands, UK and USA). After twice raising their concerns in meetings with corporate headquarters in Stockholm, UNI and its affiliates embarked on organizing campaigns in several of the countries. While the campaigns themselves were managed by the responsible national affiliate, UNI coordinated the activities and the exchange of information within the TUN. A media campaign was launched and union representatives from Sweden were brought to local campaigns in other countries to get a first-hand view of the organizing activities onsite. The US service union SEIU reported that the Swedish delegate, a member of the company's board of directors, was "shocked" at what she experienced, for example, when local managers in Cincinnati slammed the door in the face of employees requesting union recognition (UNI 2010).

At this writing it is uncertain as to what overall results the campaign has achieved. In regard to the US there is some indication that SEIU has reached an agreement (which is confidential) with the four largest security providers Securitas, G4S, ISS, and Allied Barton.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The starting point of this paper was the argument that the abundant research on the structure, governance and practices of inter-organizational networks, though mainly focused on inter-firm networks (e.g. Provan et al. 2007) and largely neglecting the (collective) role of labor, can help to understand the emergence of transnational union strategies aimed at TNCs and their GPNs (unions and networks) as well as the organization of global unionism (unions as networks). Towards this end, it was necessary to distinguish a network perspective on unions from a governance perspective (Grabher and Powell 2004), even though the issue of whether networks are a form of governance between or beyond market and hierarchy has not yet been resolved. Nevertheless, more recent contributions have fortunately started to distinguish different modes of network governance (Provan and Kenis 2008). Although our preliminary evidence on unions *and* networks and union *as* networks does not (yet) allow to make use of these more differentiated insights into the governance mode, we have been able to delineate a few structural properties, provide first insights into the form of governance, and look at practices unions resp. TUNs use when dealing with TNCs and their GPNs. Above all, we have endeavored to introduce an analytical and comparative approach to the issue of inter-organizational networks in regard to the transnational activities of unions which recognizes both the issue of unions and networks (GPN) and the issue of unions as networks (TUN).

Distinguishing TNC-centered TUNs from GUF-centered TUNs allows us to develop a more precise under-standing of unions and/as networks. Both of these types may be differentiated into two sub-groups according to a temporal perspective (long-term vs. short-term) as well as according to a functional perspective (representational vs. organizing). We argue that this categorization provides an analytical structure which enables us to shed even more light on the diversity of union and/as networks. Being aware of the fact that the four case studies presented need a richer description and a deeper analysis

with regard to network structure, governance and practices, we are nevertheless convinced that these cases demonstrate the relevance of this typology.

The next steps will be to gather further information on the structure, governance and practices of these TUNs in order to make even more use of the insights provided by research on inter-organizational networks in general and inter-firm networks in particular. This would enable us, for instance, to analyze in more detail the importance of network size, the interplay of formal and informal aspects of network governance, and the enactment of network management practices with regard to the selection of network partners, or the negotiation of rules for collaborating within TUNs. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis needs to recognize and explain not only types but also consider the dynamics of both unions and networks and unions as networks. Indeed, as we have shown previously (Fichter and Sydow 2002), we consider labor as a governance factor and as a collective actor in economic networks to be a highly relevant topic, deserving of a stronger research agenda. And in this connection, further questions need to be addressed: might, for example, a campaign-driven TUN evolve into a more long-term representational TUN – TNC-centered or GUF-centered? Or, under what conditions might a representational TUN be redirected toward a more prominent focus on organizing? In answering such questions and delving more deeply into such issues can a broader analysis of more TUNs produce more significant results.

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