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Wp 1.4 The role of Quasi-Unions

ACTA

Collective representation of new workers

There is a huge academic literature and many case studies regarding the **crisis of the Trade Unions** and their efforts to reorganize themselves

There are **only few researches about other non “traditional” union forms** of collective action of new workers

«Academic research about labour renewal mostly remains **union oriented**» (Sullivan, 2010: 58).

Collective action of new workers

These are usually called in **different ways**:

«Proto-Union» Sullivan (2010)

«Pre-Union» Jenkins (2012)

«Quasi-Union» Heckscher-Carré (2006)

New representation forms aim to give voice to

- ✓ **new workers**
- ✓ that **individually face the risks** related to their employment status
- ✓ and are **excluded from the collective bargaining**

Quasi-Union (QU)- Definition

Organizations that have emerged to represent the interests of **otherwise unrepresented people** in their **work lives** and in their **relationships with their employer**, seeking to address matters of **worker rights** and **to improve working conditions**

(Heckscher-Carré 2006)

They have a **distinctive approach** and play a key role in domains **where Unions have not been very active.**

Existing studies are **mainly about the US case**

Quasi-Union (QU)- Definition

Quasi-Unions are particularly wide spread in two quite different Labour Market segments:

- ✓ among the **poorest and most marginal groups**, such as low-age temporary workers or undocumented immigrants (including self-employed day workers whose services are often hired informally and on daily basis)
- ✓ among **relatively advantaged white-collar workers** with technical skills who form the higher end of the 'contingent' workforce → **I-pros**

A third category of membership (that sometimes cross-cuts the previous two) is based on **social identity**: many organizations have been aggregated around categories of race, gender and ethnicity

Quasi-Union (QU)- Features

- ✓ They focus on **independent workers** that are **excluded from collective bargaining** either by trade unions and/or firms associations;
- ✓ They are **unstructured organizations** and based on voluntary work;
- ✓ They have a **“liquid” membership** (it is not always clear who is a member and who is not)
- ✓ They differ from standard professional organizations as **they aim to represent new workers across different sectors**
- ✓ They are **not umbrella organizations**

Focus on ...

- ✓ ...**Quasi Union**, but also on **contiguous hybrid forms**
- ✓ ...**I-PROS**, but also on a “**grey-area**” around them
- ✓ ...**European cases** (research on **9 countries** as case studies)

Dimensions to explore: **Quasi-Unions (QU)**

- 1. TARGET:** Kind of workers they organize: homogeneous or heterogeneous target?
- 2. ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS:** Most of the times they are voluntary associations. Do they have employees and paid staff or not? Or are they evolving towards a more structured organizational form?
- 3. AGE:** How old are the associations?
- 4. ORIGIN:** How was QU born? In a spontaneous way from the bottom-up? Or pushed by Trade Unions or Enterprise Organizations?

Dimensions to explore: **Quasi-Unions (QU)**

- 5. INDEPENDENCE:** Are the QU independent? Or are they affiliate to Unions or to Enterprises Associations?
- 6. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE:** Have QU a hierarchical organisation? Have they formally defined roles? Are there formal elections to define the association's governing bodies?
- 7. MEMBERSHIP:** How is membership acquired? Are there several categories of members? How are they characterized? Do QU require fees from members? How much is the membership fee?
- 8. MEMBERSHIP LEVERAGE** What is the reason why workers decide to become members?

Dimensions to explore: **Quasi-Unions (QU)**

- 9. STRATEGIC ORIENTATION** of Quasi-Unions between advocacy (pressure to change policies) and services to achieve power through market (we exclude the associations that provide only individual services, such as employment counselling or fiscal aid).
- 10. SERVICES:** Which services are offered? Group purchasing, facilitating access to training or to funding, etc.
- 11. GEOGRAPHICAL SCALE:** local or national?
- 12. FORMS OF INVOLVEMENT and MOBILIZATION:** How does QU communicate to its members? How does it involve them?