

# Transformation and Continuities in Urban Struggles: Urban Movements, Trade Unions, and Migration in Spain

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## **Abstract**

Spain was one of the countries at the heart of the work of Manuel Castells, due to its history of urban struggles and labour–urban-based alliances. It formed one of the key examples of city movements and the democratisation of urban spaces. The 1960s and 1970s were seen to throw up a range of new types of urban mobilisations and engagements, in part based on issues of internal migration and its urban and employment impact. With the changes in Spain during the late 1970s and 1980s—which were economic, political, and social—this dimension of urban politics steadily fell away, although Spain continued to exhibit very unique organisational forms at the level of local state and local civil society. Civic politics were linked to local associations in a curious way, but the extent of mobilisation had changed due to the steadily institutionalisation of urban and labour movements (and a weakening of their relations). However, this civic dimension began to reemerge with the strong wave of immigration beginning in the mid-1990s, when Spain transformed from a country with one of the lowest levels of first-generation immigrants to the European country with one of the highest levels. We focus on the way migrant organisations and trade unions have organised in relation to migrants in the labour market, showing how the legacy of previous mobilisations and structures continues to provide a framework for the politics and inclusion of migrant communities. However, we also argue that much of the new urban politics of migration has been influenced by a service delivery and hierarchical politics of inclusion—leading to a set of outcomes similar to that faced by the indigenous urban movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This is of theoretical significance to how we see network and urban politics in relation to unions and employment relations.

## **Introduction**

Spain was one of the countries at the heart of the work of Manuel Castells, due to its history of urban struggles and labour–urban-based alliances. It formed one of the key examples of city movements and the democratisation of urban spaces. The 1960s and 1970s were seen to throw up a range of new types of urban mobilisations and engagements, in part based on issues of internal migration. With the changes in Spain in the late 1970s and 1980s—which were economic, political, and social—this dimension of urban politics fell away, although Spain continued to exhibit very unique organisational forms at the level of local state and local civil society. Civic politics continued to be linked to local associations in a curious way, but the extent of mobilisation had changed due to the steadily institutionalisation of urban and labour movements (which had found a greater link in the past). However, this civic dimension began to reemerge with new forms of

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immigration beginning in the mid-1990s, when Spain transformed from a country with one of the lowest levels of first-generation immigrants to the European country with one of the highest rates.

We focus on the way immigrant organisations and trade unions have organised in relation to migrants in the labour market, especially the latter. Our paper illustrates how the legacy of previous mobilisations and structures continues to provide a framework for the politics and inclusion of migrant communities. However, we also argue that much of the new urban politics of migration has been influenced by a service delivery and hierarchical politics of inclusion—leading to a similar set of outcomes and issues as faced by the indigenous urban movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The theoretical significance of this relates to the issue of how we see network and urban politics. We thus aim to show that the urban and spatial dimension of union strategies in relation to the workforce is subject to a range of experiences and factors. It is not the outcome of some clear rational choice-type decision making (see UpChurch, Taylor, and Mathers 2009 for a critique) but of historical circumstances, political factors, and legacies of regulation and of the challenges brought by new workers and social changes. We show that the role of the state is a key factor in terms of how it develops its social service provision in both quantitative and qualitative terms—and in terms of how it supports and links with social actors and institutions in civil society. This is missing in a great part of the community union debate, which ignores how the community is structured and developed in terms of different templates of community strategies and structures (Tattersal 2006).

In turn, how unions relate to these community dimensions and state interventions is significant. Hence, we start with an outline of the employment relations debate in relation to the community and spatial dimension, leading to an outline of the way democratic union strategies emerged in Spain after the mid-1950s and developed through to the 1970s transition from the Francoist dictatorship to a new liberal democracy. This will show how the community and urban dimensions of the labour movement were central to the movement's structures and identity. However, the impact of political imperatives and industrial restructuring led to a decline in the centrality of community structures and politics to the labour movement during the mid- to late 1990s. The growing disconnection between work-based union politics on the one hand and the local community and aspects of the labour market on the other came to the fore in the context of changing migration patterns since the 1990s. This leads to a section on immigration in Spain and the way in which community centres have been developed as part of a strategy to provide information and social support. These centres are predominantly union centres that have a strong degree of state funding. We assess the extent of state dependency, the nature of the services provided, and the way different union strategies have been using such new structures. The tension between different views related to the urban and spatial dimensions of the labour market will be discussed in relation to questions of union autonomy, competing systems of representation and voice within immigrant politics, and the changing nature of the state's role.

### *The City, Migration, and Labour*

There is an ongoing concern within the study of trade unionism and employment relations broadly speaking with the failure to conceptualise local, community and spatial dimensions in terms of worker representation. The emergence of the industrial relations discipline during the early to mid-20th century has been focused on forms of job regulation such as collective bargaining and workplace informal bargaining (Clegg 1976). The focus is on the formal and informal mechanisms of job regulation through collective bargaining and informal negotiation processes. This focus on the rules and regulations of the workplace and the industrial sector has been mirrored even by prevailing critical approaches such as that of the Labour Process. Based on evaluating and explaining the way workers are controlled, monitored, and exploited within the workplace by employers and managers—and, indeed, at times by unions—the focus has been on how workers are progressively deskilled and alienated within the capitalist labour process (Braverman 1974, Thompson and Newsome 2004). In effect, the question of work and trade union representation has been addressed through the “primary” processes and relations at work at the heart of such analysis. While some would question such a characterisation, due to the counter traditions that exist within industrial relations and that are more interested in conflict and instability in the employment relation, one can nevertheless state that the study of trade union roles and relations have focused on the sphere of work in relative isolation from social and political issues (Martinez Lucio 1988).

However, within the traditions of labour history, issues around local community have been significant to a range of traditions. The role of established occupational communities located in specific geographic spaces has been seen as important to the development of working class identity in sectors such as docks, steel, and mining (Thompson 1963). There are traditions of labour history that through their technological or economic determinism have not always been sensitive to such issues, but an increasing interest in the social within labour history has tended to correct this since the 1960s. Recent studies of restructuring and change have within labour sociology referenced the significance of occupational identity even in shaping the restructuring of those communities (see MacKenzie et al. 2006). Within geography the role of the spatial in shaping labour markets and labour market politics has also been emphasised (Massey 1995). Labour exists in particular spaces and areas, and the impact of capitalism and employer strategies is experienced in different ways according not just to sector but to local spaces and traditions (Peck and Tickell 1995). Yet regardless of such traditions the study of labour and trade unions is not always open to these traditions, tending to focus on the relation with the employer around specific elements of the employment relation through formal or informal processes.

A debate on community unionism has emerged during the past decade in Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States due to the argument that such structures may be more relevant to a more decentralised form of work organisation, postindustrial development, and weakening of traditional trade union politics, with their focus on collective bargaining and formal mechanisms of job regulation. The debate on community unionism is linked to changes in labour markets and migration along with displacement and change in traditional established communities (Stewart et al. 2009). In collective terms, more or less, we see that such constituencies may organize in a variety of ways—and not solely through traditional forms of trade unionism. Fine (2006) is concerned with cataloguing the phenomena of worker centres in the United States. These are centres that provide a range of services, social and cultural spaces, and support for marginalised communities. Trade unions are but one part of the narrative of struggles for rights within these communities. There are a series of characteristics that Fine draws out from these centres and that form an interesting tapestry of “new actors” and spaces of employment relations. These centres are based on hybrid organisation, service provision, advocacy, organising, a base in places rather than work sites, strong ethnic and racial identification, leadership development and internal democracy, popular education, global thinking, a broad agenda, coalition building, and small and involved memberships. These characteristics provide us with an interesting challenge. Many groups through such independent agendas and networks of centres are filling a major social gap in the United States. Trade unions are not the sole player, given the role of various social and religious organisations. The community union debate (see Tattersal 2006, Wills 2004) that has evolved in recent years is an attempt to see how unions can actually approach migrant communities, among others, with a view to providing broader and socially based forms of representation. So both in social and institutional terms we are seeing a major rethinking of how we understand the community and migrant dynamic within industrial relations.

However, regardless of such competing traditions within the study of labour, and trade unionism in particular, the question of the urban dimension and changing labour markets linked to the urban dimension is not always studied in terms of the strategic and political developments within the labour movement. Moreover, the recent turn toward community remains marginal to the study of industrial relations, regardless of the emphasis placed on the urgency of such an approach (Wills and Simms 2004). Yet the recent drive toward researching migration in the past 10 years has forced many to begin to study migration and unions in relation to spatial actors. Findings in the context of the United Kingdom and the United States have been stretched by two extremes: the way unions “reach” migrants through services and established systems of regulation (Martinez Lucio and Perrett 2009) and the way migrants and “other actors” (see Heery and Frege 2006) organise around independent organisational spaces such as workers centres (Fine 2006). Yet mainstream debates on union renewal, “organizing” union strategies, and new forms of trade union service activity rarely touch the question of space (see the collection in Frege and Kelly 2004). It is increasingly clear that the spatial dimension of work is vital for an understanding of how trade unions organise and relate to migrant communities, especially in the current context of a relatively disorganised capitalism and decentred approach to labour deployment and use (see Lash and Urry 1987 for discussions on this economic context). First of all, the declining presence in the United Kingdom and United States of larger industrial workspaces

capable of integrating immigrant labour into the industrial process challenges the spaces around which unions regulated and organise. Hence, the urban spaces that “surrounded” such workplaces provided a spatial context—albeit at times racially segregated—that allowed clearer and stable relations between trade unions and the local workforce and labour market. This was especially the case in terms of the context of stable employment during the 1950s through to the 1970s in the Western European context, for example—although this does not mean that segregation or exclusion within such spaces did not exist (Jenkins, Martinez Lucio, and Noon 2002). Second, the presence of new forms of informal and illegal economic activity create more hidden and “hard-to-reach” spaces where immigrants are in part employed. This means that the relatively smaller scale and less regulated character of employers in such cases make for a more complex pattern of relations with communities being less stable and more mobile. Third, the failure by trade unions to develop an urban or spatial dimension within their structures and strategies that was externally facing and clearly located within urban communities—beyond administrative offices or occasional drinking venues—meant that the new employment dynamics within urban spaces with an immigrant presence were disconnected from the work and influence of trade unions. Hence, the urban or spatial dimension becomes more precarious in employment terms, fragmented in terms of sectoral and employment identities and forms of work, and disconnected from the traditional forms of worker representation.

## Research Methods

The research for this paper comes from two distinct sources and time periods, hence allowing for a longitudinal study of the development of trade union strategies in Spain with regard to local community issues. The first emerges from a dataset of interviews on the Madrid Region of Spain gathered in the 1980s. This dataset consisted of 200 semistructured and unstructured interviews and was conducted by Miguel Martinez Lucio (1988). It was focused on the emergence of union strategies within the context of the Spanish industrial, social, and political transition of the 1960s through to the 1980s; this was part of an Economic and Social Research Council PhD research programme. The second set was collated in 2008–09 and consists of 20 interviews conducted in a number of different regions in Spain as part of a wider project by Heather Connolly and Miguel Martinez Lucio studying trade unions, migration, and social exclusion/inclusion in the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom and funded by the Leverhulme Foundation. The research methodology for both sets of data has been qualitative, with a focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of the evolution of trade union strategies in Spain. Interviews, both semistructured and unstructured, have been conducted with trade union officials and activists at various levels of the Workers Commissions and the Union General de Trabajadores. The research has also included some participant observation of trade union congresses and visits to trade union offices and union-run migrant worker information centres.

*The City and Labour Movement in Spain: Internal Migration, Worker Representation, and Urban Mobilisation, 1960 to 1980*

The Spanish context in historical terms is relevant because it is one of the few instances in the European context where, regardless of the repression of trade unions during the rule of General Franco from 1939 to 1975, there is a strong tradition of community engagement and activity in spatial and urban terms based on resistance and mobilisation. The emergence of an independent trade union movement during the last 20 years of regime was haphazard and prone to periodic repression from the state (Ellwood 1976). The attempt to develop an independent union approach, which nevertheless attempted to infiltrate the formal positions and “shop steward” roles of the official organs of the state, was driven by a range of left-wing movements (especially the illegal Spanish Communist Party) and a range of libertarian Catholic groups (Martinez Lucio 1998). The attempt to influence the pseudo- and uneven collective bargaining system that had been emerging since the late 1950s met with variable success. In the latter period of the regime, new, less military-oriented policy elites prepared the ground for a post-Franco scenario with democratisation as an option, although levels of repression remained, if less intense than those of the 1940s and 1950s.

In terms of the urban and local spatial dimension during this period, Castells (1977, 1978) was one of the pioneers in studying the Spanish context of urbanisation and urban movements. Informed by research and his own experience as a Spanish academic and left intellectual, he pointed to the significance of the urban

movement and neighbourhood associations in Spain during the 1960s and 1970s. His studies outlined the development of a strong mobilisation and collective dimension to the urban movements during that period. This was partly driven in other countries by the crisis in collective welfare provision, but in the case of Spain in its absence and slow development (see also Navarro 2002). Castells spoke of a politics of collective consumption that paralleled the politics and contradictions of collective production. Much of this was configured around welfare and work issues due to the nature of internal migration patterns within Spain during the 1950s through to the 1970s, where large numbers of migrants left regions such as Extremadura, Murcia, and Galicia to relocate in Madrid, Bilbao, and Barcelona, for example. This brought rapid changes in labour markets and an intensive period of urbanisation in key areas. Hence, social infrastructure and social welfare issues came to the fore of the agenda of urban protest. So while there was an extensive phase of industrialisation and growth in industrial employment, it was not clearly paralleled by a phase of coherent and consistent urbanisation. Hence, urban movements mobilised on a range of issues—and what is more, through a variety of internal and participative democratic means, such as the assembly (Villasante 1984).

This had two effects on the character and structure of trade unions as they emerged from the dictatorship, especially the Workers Commissions. The basis of this newly emerging trade union movement, beyond the strategy to infiltrate local state union offices and positions, was twofold. First, it was “assemblyist”—being driven or highly influenced by the role of mass open meetings in the workplace or local communities. This was a prevalent feature of the communist and left of communist dimensions of the Spanish labour movement (Fishman 1990, Ruiz 1988). The role of the assembly was at times conditioned by local tiers of independent trade unionists to one extent or another, but there was a realisation that the role of mass worker meetings was essential for participation and communication within the newly independent streams of the labour movement. It represented the reclamation of public space in the context and wake of the authoritarian tradition in Spain: the assembly was a way of reclaiming a new democratic dynamic, and its real and mythical status among the workers at that time cannot be underestimated. Second, the link with local urban movements and demands was a further dimension of the newly emerging labour movement. In fact, many members of the Spanish Communist Party and other Marxist groups played a role inside the urban and labour movement—acting as a link between the two, alongside other left activists. Hence, the local urban issues of working class communities were linked to their workplace issues—and common mobilisations were not unusual. This is what configured both informally and formally the notion of the Workers Commissions union (CCOO) as a socio-political union—although over time this would be redefined in various ways. Thus in terms of union identity, the spatial and the community dimensions were significant features. In organisational and structural terms the CCOO—and other unions such as the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT)—had a range of local offices throughout the major cities and local agricultural centres. This created local organisational spaces that were not merely administrative, as in cases such as the United Kingdom, but that served as political and cultural spaces that interfaced with the local urban movement and its politics, especially in the CCOO. This dynamic has remained, in one form or another, a feature of the Spanish labour movement (Martinez Lucio 1998, 2008). The CCOO have represented this dynamic more clearly than the more social democratic currents within the labour movement such as the UGT, which reemerged in the 1970s after the dictatorship as a significant force, having been a major union during the pre-Francoist period (although Maravall [1978] questions and challenges the way the UGT is depicted by many observers as being marginal during the dictatorship, pointing to the group’s work in Spain during the period). However, in the late 1970s, the changing political context and the national consensus generated between the left and new centre-right democratic government began to “privatize” and close these newly emerging public spaces (Aguila and Montoro 1984).

#### *De-industrialisation and the Decline of the Urban Dimension, 1978 to 1990*

The alternative and new dynamics of Spanish organised labour in the period from the 1960s to the late 1970s was in great part an outcome of the circumstances and politics of the period. Identities in some of the key left unions and their structures were driven by particular views of organised labour but also by the way history and context shaped its urban, spatial, and social identity (see Foweraker 1989). Yet the political and economic pressures of the 1970s and 1980s tested this embryonic and alternative view of labour organisation.

First, the need for political consensus and stability during the first years of its liberal democracy meant that unions signed a series of national agreements and engaged with a general politics of demobilisation (Arramberri 1979). The political break of the late 1970s was meant to limit the negative impact of strikes and union-led mobilisations. This meant that the more sociopolitical features of key aspects of union activity were redefined. A more passive approach developed. Traditional workplace and bargaining activities became more central to these consensus-generating processes (Martinez Lucio 1998), putting into question the community and local features of trade union politics. A crisis of union resourcing and membership in the early 1980s began to accelerate the closure of many local union offices, and union bureaucrats focused activity on a limited number of local facilities. This had a knock-on effect on the community role of the labour movement.

Second, the economic crisis in Spain during the 1970s and 1980s meant that unions were focusing local community-based mobilisation on challenging restructuring in traditional industrial sectors. This focused attention for the moment on restructuring, away from a broader approach to community politics. Trade unions found themselves divided on how to deal with restructuring in terms of negotiations and mobilisations, with the CCOO and the UGT entering a period of open competition with each other as the UGT felt that a closer relation to the state and the new Socialist government (1982–1996), with its politics of “pacted” industrial restructuring, was to be preferred due to promises of social support and employment creation. The unanticipated emergence of a market-oriented social democratic government, supportive of more monetarist and privatisation-based views of industrial and economic policy (Rand Smith 1996), meant that trade unions were unable to work consistently and closely with the state around a more progressive set of social strategies beyond providing retraining services and some minor regulatory roles in questions such as labour contracting. The steady distancing between all unions and the state on broad social and industrial policy after the 1988 general strike did not lead to a return to locally based sociopolitical approaches to community and the city. If anything, the declining activist base of the union, which had not been as extensive to start with given historical circumstances and political constraints, meant that unions were forced to mobilise around short, focused general strikes on the one hand and an acceptance of new state funding for union development and services such as learning and training to workers on the other. Memories of the link with urban movements and a broader politics of citizenship (see Alonso 2007) did not explicitly contribute to configuring new union strategies. The role of local offices was steadily becoming focused on services in legal and social information and developing training centres. Within the two main confederations, such offices did not have a major bearing on young workers or women workers, who were in relative terms still relatively excluded from the labour market in the 1980s. Some minority unions, such as the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT) and General Confederation of Labour (CGT), were able to attract newer generations of workers to their offices, but these were in the main weak unions in terms of their general presence.

#### *The Impact of Immigration and the City in Spain, 1990 to 2010*

The relative disconnection between union structures around gender- and age-related issues at that time in the 1970s and 1980s (especially related to youth) was not a genuine challenge to the Spanish labour movement because it was one that could be sustained socially due to the role of the family and traditional social relations in Spain, even if this was rapidly changing in the 1980s and 1990s (Meil Llandwerlin 2005)—and because the primarily male activist and leadership base was focused on changes in established industrial sectors. However, during the course of the 1990s the situation in Spain in relation to the labour market began to change with the context of an older workforce, increasing females in the labour market, and a sudden increase in immigration. Whilst unemployment had rarely been below 15 percent in the first 25 years of the new democracy, the structure of the labour market made for a very uneven and low level of worker participation in terms of labour market entry. The 1990s began to see a variety of sectors such as construction, agriculture, and hospitality turn to immigrant labour sources. Spain’s immigration level up until the 1990s was one of the lowest in Europe, with the country having emerged from a relatively closed and internally looking economy under the dictatorship in terms of labour markets. If anything, the regime prioritised emigration as a way of sustaining managed urban development and growth during the 1960s and 1970s. However, during the 1990s, immigration from North Africa, Latin America (especially Ecuador and

Columbia), and Eastern Europe (Romania and Poland in particular) meant that a new workforce was arriving and settling in key urban areas and agricultural towns. In 1996 1.4 percent of the population was born overseas, whereas by 2008 the rate was 11.33 percent (Aragon Medina et al. 2009).

According to various trade unionists, this reality led to a range of challenges for the labour movement due to a broad presence of the immigrants in the informal economy—hospitality and agriculture—and an increasing use of migration in key sectors such construction. Trade unionists from the CCOO and the UGT were encountering a range of bad employment practices, health and safety hazards, and low pay levels emerging amongst small and medium-sized firms who employed immigrants that were relatively more significant to the Spanish economy compared with countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany. There was a growing awareness that as workers, immigrants were subject to high levels of exploitation and susceptible to greater risks in terms of health and safety issues, whilst also placing pressure on the system of regulation within labour markets, such as collective bargaining, by undercutting wages. Spanish unions had developed internal organisational structures for emigrants but had not really considered immigrants during the 1980s. Antiracist initiatives at work and in society were not a priority within the labour movement; in part this was due to initially low levels of immigration and a preference—according to our research—to see exploitation in mainly class terms. Immigrants were seen to be exploited due to their precarious employment relations and low levels of social inclusion mechanisms in society. This was the main narrative within both main unions (although anarcho-syndicalist trade unions have been more focused on the impact of racism and xenophobia within society). Various national and local union interviewees in larger unions felt that the major challenge was extending and enhancing the mechanisms for regulating work that were already in place in terms of sectoral-, regional-, and company-level bargaining, along with a body of union representation within the firm. However, whilst there are works council and union elections in Spain every four years that determine worker representation in the firm and receive 80 to 90 percent turnouts from the workforce, in smaller and medium-sized firms the role and scope of the representatives have always been challenges and in parts limited (Martinez Lucio 2008).

Yet the scale of immigration, its intensity in a short period of time, and its impact on the regulation of work brought a range of responses from Spanish unions in the 1990s. Unions began developing immigrant sections aimed at raising the question of immigration and the levels of support for immigrants within the union, as in the case of the CCOO, where the department for emigration mutated into one that was dealing with immigration. This occurred with the involvement of immigrant members. These sections were secretariats, and unlike counterparts in certain unions as in the United Kingdom, for example, they did not have systematic internal representative mechanisms and democratic processes such as annual conferences for immigrant members. Interviews with various senior members in the relevant secretariat during 2008 and 2009 revealed that the idea of autonomous immigrant sections was not “on the table and neither should they be.” This was a response from both immigrant and nonimmigrant union officials. However, most of Spain’s leading and majority trade unions have developed and involved a series of immigrant activists. A series of leading figures have begun to play a role within these sections, although in national conferences and congresses of the unions the presence of immigrants is not visible to any great extent. These new voices—whilst still less apparent at the leadership level—have been central to developing a range of campaigns on questions of legality and legalisation. Unions have been at the forefront of pushing governments—both on the right and left—into wide-ranging amnesties for illegal immigrants and blanket legalisation of particular immigrant constituencies on a mass scale. The last decade has also seen the development of national tripartite institutions at the level of the state where unions, employers, specific immigrant bodies, and other “social partners” work alongside government representatives at the level of the state on a range of advisory projects for government initiatives and research projects. These bodies have become a form of neocorporatist dimension of immigrant economic and social interests, which involve strong union engagement and advice. These are bodies that serve to provide a network for communicating concerns and discussions—creating a topography of representation, albeit not always clearly connected with civil society (yet bodies such as these and the role of the agreements they lead to in broader terms is one the features of such systems of interest intermediation in the context of Spain—Guillén Rodríguez, Gutiérrez Palacios, & Gonzalez Begaga 2008).

Trade unions have taken this further through an institutional strategy that has called for and gained resources for learning and support—including that of the local level of state administration, where unions

have developed information services, local social services for younger workers, emergency housing, and others (Aragon Medina 2009). Yet the major unions have developed their services with new immigrant communities in mind, with special reference to information and learning. They have begun to use their leverage with respect to learning and training funds (see Rigby 2002) as a way of developing courses on language and basic information relevant for immigrants in terms of labour markets. This service approach varies according to region, but both Socialist and Conservative regions have developed high levels of commitment in terms of support—albeit within a welfare state context that remains underdeveloped by west European standards in key areas such as housing and social services (see Alonso 2007). Yet at the heart of these developments is the systematic creation in recent years of information centres throughout the Spanish nation.

*Trade Unions and the Role of Community Initiatives in Relation to Migration: Renewing the Community Dimension*

The role of the union local information centres for immigrants in Spain is for many a major “benchmark” and source of interest throughout Europe. Spain is seen as a country coming late to the debate on immigration but which has learnt most from other experiences, especially when compared to France. Various unions, especially the CCOO and the UGT, have developed a network of information offices and centres throughout virtually every major Spanish city. They are normally located in local union offices, and their role is to act as a first port of call for immigrants in relation to work and other social or labour-related concerns. There are many immigrant centres and law firms focused on these types of activity, but none can compare to the sheer extent and breadth of the union network—something that is unusual in most European nations. One of the features of this new form of engagement with immigrants is that the state provides a wide range of the funding for such resources. This allows trade unions, which have been identified as being a key part of the provision of such services, to develop these trade union-oriented information centres and a strategy of support centres more generally.

Such centres provide a range of information services in relation to employment, citizenship, social rights and housing—amongst others. The unions in the main are expected to keep clear records of such activities. A range of individuals—not always from an immigrant background—are employed in such centres, and in some cases there can be anything up to half a dozen people working in one capacity or another, although numbers vary among offices. Our research covered various cities in the centre and north of Spain, along with visits to the centres and interviews with their staff and the relevant union. These offices were not always located in areas where immigrant communities would reside but in the main trade union offices. However, there is a tradition of visiting such offices due to the legal and training services required. Hence one could argue that such offices were integrated within the main structures of the union in spatial terms. In a place such as Oviedo, the CCOO’s offices (CITEs) would attend to at least 3,000 individuals a year. It is clear that as worker centres they are mainly information-based and formal in their approach to attending to immigrants. They do not organise in themselves broader social activity or coalition building with the local immigrant groups. This is driven mainly by the immigration departments of the unions themselves and those coordinating some of the offices in question. Hence, one sees that the actual service provision element is divided from the broader immigration-related strategies of the unions. This means that there may be less of a role than at first anticipated as centres for bringing workers into the trade union movement who are from an immigrant background. In the geographic areas researched, links with organised immigrant groups were sporadic as far as the unions were concerned, due to the problems of sustainability that such groups had. This varied according to the extent and politics of different immigrant communities. Hence, in the case of the region Castilla Leon, coalition building was a problem even if the CCOO union had organised a range of regional-level cultural events.

There were concerns within the CCOO locally that a need existed to connect traditional CCOO work into the CITE and the “clients” they had. In the case of the UGT in Oviedo, there was an acknowledgment that the service had become more detached and that there was a need to rethink such service provision. The CCOO began in 2009 to fuse its immigration section into its employment section, which led to a joint department at the national and regional levels—although this mirrored developments in certain state departments. This was seen as a vital step for integrating the issue of immigration into the mainstream of the union’s work. There were also discussions of building a more proactive network of CITE



activists throughout the country, with the aim of using that as a link into and an information gathering role vis-à-vis the immigrant population. However, it was not seen as the basis for a stand-alone section or autonomous body along the lines of the Black Worker sections in the United Kingdom, according to senior members of the CCOO. This question of fusing the community dynamic into broader strategies around social inclusion and union activism is therefore a challenge, even if the experience of information centres such as Spain's is one of the most elaborate in Europe. For the UGT this was a greater problem, with the CITE offices being considered to be part of the servicing logic of the union, and the work they did was seen as more technical and ideological in approach. Specific activists in the specific regional union structures were, for example, concerned with the way local regional leaders were increasingly disconnected generally from the local dimension and community dimension of the union. In this instance, it was recalled how union officers in the regional union would visit the local town and city offices more regularly and be more connected to the local dynamic—instead now the interviewees felt that it was only during the trade union elections every four years (see above) that people from the union offices and even the larger workplaces visited local communities and small to medium-sized employers.

Hence the new “community union” dimension and the link to the past tradition of the union is not so clear in such developments. In the CCOO this dilemma has in recent years been especially apparent given its history. The CITEs are not contextualised in terms of the sociopolitical identity of the union—itsself a changing object of internal union politics within the CCOO—and therefore remain ambivalently linked to the union's overall work and activities. This could be what led to the organisational meditation about how immigrant work was linked to employment policy, international development, and others. The CCOO has begun to see the CITE as a vital port of entry into the mainstream activity of the union—allowing seasonal agricultural workers to be supported and logged when they visited different offices in different regions according to the harvesting calendar. So whilst CITEs and local immigrant activists took on causes, they were not always part of the broader political landscape of the union. Hence, whilst they form a vital part of support for immigrants in terms of their rights, recent strategies have been developed to fuse such activities more clearly. This demonstrates the way such highly elaborate structures of worker support were ambivalently linked to the union and a broader politics of community unionism—leading to internal political discussions.

## Conclusion

The role of the urban and spatial dimension within the question of worker representation is significant to the case of Spain. Spain's trajectory of union development has been bound up with spatial and local issues since its resurrection in the late 1950s and early 1960s during the dictatorship. The role of community-oriented strategies has formed part of the identity of trade unions such as the CCOO—something that was the case with the anarcho-syndicalist traditions in the earlier 20th century as well. Yet the paper has suggested that such community traditions cannot be seen in some static sense—that is to say, they cannot be seen as being some straightforward alternative to “traditional” workplace or industrial politics. The community itself is structured and restructured in strategic and ideological terms across time. Emerging as a way of connecting to broader issues and experiences within a nascent working class, they formed a vital backdrop to the workplace mobilisations and struggles against employers and the state. They were part of a system of coalition building that led to specific views of work and labour politics that were broader and more inclusive. Hence, the notion of community needs to be seen in dynamic terms. It is a concept that is moulded and structured in different ways throughout recent history. With the demands on union leaders and emerging bureaucracies during the late 1970s and early 1980s to stabilise and even control the panorama of industrial relations through formal mechanism, the sociopolitical dimension began to be rewoven (Martinez Lucio 1998, 2008). This in turn was reinforced by a systematic restructuring of the key areas of trade union organisation and historic mobilisation, such as mining, steel, and others. The link to the community—broadly speaking—was reduced in strategic and structural terms. Hence, the development of immigration during the 1990s found a trade union movement less connected to the local labour market and local urban and rural spaces as it had once been. The concentration of immigrant labour in sectors with relatively weaker trade union traditions meant that the community dimension reemerged within the discourse of trade unionism. However, it reemerged and was remade in a more instrumentally supportive, social, and service-driven

direction. The link into the immigrant community and through local offices was therefore constructed as a primary stage of the regulatory process dealing with immediate issues and concerns. It was a functional link into the more established “internal” workplace and collective bargaining–based regulatory systems of the union—it was in effect a subservient dimension of the regulatory function of unions detached from issues of identity and purpose—and in effect broader renewal.

These developments dovetailed as a discourse with state concerns about social order, labour market regulations and control, and legality and exclusion. This led to the “majority” union movement being offered resources by the state to develop the offices and centres discussed above, mainly within established union centres. The community dimension was remade, but whereas once it was against the state it is now related to the state—albeit a very different state. This could be due to the perceived weakness of civil society and associational cultures (Perez Diaz 1990) or the failure of the state to systematically develop strong welfare support (Navarro 2002). Either way, the state through various agencies enters the debate on community-related representation. To this extent, the politics and autonomy of community initiatives are central to any discussion of the role of urban and spatial politics within the labour movement and within immigrant communities. Yet a curious development is that the trade union movement has begun to rethink its view of such new community initiatives, once more showing us how community and spatial issues are the subject of political and ideological intervention and invention. How these community initiatives fit into the broader dynamic of trade union politics, how immigrants are linked to in active and open and not just passive and service delivery terms, and how a broader strategy of coalition building emerges appears to be a new agenda that recognises the risk and tensions of using state resources. The community dimension is therefore the subject of political intervention: its structures are articulated and provided with meaning through the combination of different spheres (Martinez Lucio 1988). It is not therefore a simple opposite or simply definable concept vis-à-vis “noncommunity” strategies (for a parallel discussion on organising and partnership, see Martinez Lucio and Stuart 2008). The urban may be a silent dimension of industrial relations and labour studies—emerging at certain times in debates within urban studies and geography—but it has been a very explicit dimension of labour movement history in certain contexts. It has also been a dimension that has its history, dynamics, and ironies.

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