How do trade unions contribute to democratisation?

A study of three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka

Master

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Executive summary

The Tunisian General Labour Union was one of the members of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, this year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The quartet was awarded the prize for its contribution to the democratic process in Tunisia. In the third wave of democratisation civil society and trade unions played an important role. This thesis aims to investigate how civil society and more specifically trade unions contribute to democratisation within a society. To analyse the question I have used some of the theoretical offspring of Tocqueville's «Democracy in America». More specifically I have used the institutionalist and pluralistic traditions and the participatory perspective. As examples for my analysis I have used three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka. I have conducted interviews and used text analysis as methodology, hence the thesis is based on qualitative research. The trade unions do to some extent contribute to democratisation within the Sri Lankan society. Despite fragmentation, politicisation and restraints on unions organising public servants, the unions are able to influence politics, and hence contribute to democratisation. Moreover there are small, but not verifiable, signs that the participants' 'social capital' might increase. To reach their goal of becoming strong, independent, democratic and sustainable professional teacher trade unions there is a need to overcome some cleavages and work more closely together. To be able to contribute to democratisation at local level more inclusion of the grass root is required.

Innhold

1. Introduction: Aims and goals of the study

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2015 was awarded to the National Dialogue Quartet «for its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia in the wake of the Jasmine Revolution of 2011» (NobelPeacePrize.org).

The National Dialogue Quartet is comprised of four key organisations in Tunisian civil society: the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT, Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail), the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA, Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat), the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH, La Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme), and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers (Ordre National des Avocats de Tunisie). These organisations represent different sectors and values in Tunisian society; working life and welfare, principles of the rule of law, and human rights.

This is not the first time civil society and trade unions have been credited with playing important roles in a democratisation process. The significant contributions of Solidarity (Solidarność) in Poland towards the fall of the communist regime and the importance of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) towards the fall of the apartheid regime are worth mentioning.

These well-known examples are not the focus of this thesis. However, civil society has been seen as a vital player in both forming and maintaining a democracy. Trade unions are a part of civil society that, in this context, has gained less interest.

> In many transitional countries, unions are potentially among the most important civil society actors. Unlike many other of the groups reached by aid programs expressly aimed at civil society development, unions have genuine ties to large numbers of citizens, are able to mobilize people for forceful civic action, and have the ability to come up with domestic funding. (Carothers, 1999:247)

Trade unions are economic and political organisations (Hassel, 2012). They work for better conditions for their members, but can also have wider political goals. Contributing to

democratisation of the society, the welfare state and reduced inequality are some examples. Moreover trade unions are democratic institutions and can contribute to the education of their members to become democratic citizens.

> Democracy, as it relates to trade unions has then two major stands: (1) the issue of 'voice' – the influence ordinary members has over union policy, (…) and (2) the issue of 'control' – how ordinary members exert influence over those responsible for implementing policy. (Flynn, Brewster, Smith and Rigby, 2004:320)

Furthermore:

> (…) associations are thought to generate civic engagement and to further the ability of their members to influence public affairs by being «schools in democracy.» (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002:32)

In this thesis I will try to analyse civil society's, and more specifically the trade unions', democratic role, by looking into if and how their contribution is formulated and expressed, both nationally, locally and within the organisations.

As examples I will use three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka. These organisations represent different members, organise themselves differently and act differently within the society, but have the same overall goal; to be strong, independent, democratic and sustainable professional teacher unions.

The research question of this thesis will be: «How do trade unions contribute to democratisation?» which I will try to answer by investigating the three Sri Lankan teacher trade unions.

The thesis is organised in six chapters. Chapter two will give an introduction to central definitions of terms like 'democracy', 'civil society' and 'trade unions and professional associations'. Here I will also try to identify a union's place and role in the context of democracy. In chapter three I will try to develop a theoretical framework. Here I will explore structural and participatory theories. For the future analysis both approaches will be used to investigate whether the organisations contribute to democratisation within the unions and in the society. In chapter four I will explain the methodology used in this study. Rather than taking a theoretical approach, I will try to assess the validity and reliability of the data, hence methodological challenges will be discussed. In chapter five I will analyse the data within a

structural and participatory framework. I will underline that with the data available and within the scope of this thesis, it is not possible to fully understand and capture the work of the unions used as examples. In the last chapter I will wrap up and present my thoughts on some possible challenges today and in the future related to trade unions and democracy.

2. Theory: Democratisation and civil society

2.1 Introduction

Between 1974 and 1990 at least 30 countries made the transition to democracy (Huntington, 1991). Many authoritarian states in Eastern and Southern Europe and Latin America collapsed. Huntington identified this transition as the third period of democratisation; hence this period is referred to as the «third wave».

During and after the third wave of democratisation, the combination of market and civil society was seen as a universal cure with the ability to transform a country into a stable democracy. As mentioned earlier, civil society was credited with playing a crucial role in the collapse of communism and authoritarianism, and in the transition to democracy (Burnell and Calvert, 2004). «The rise of these movements, and their triumph in 1989, fostered the appealing idea of civil society as a domain that is nonviolent, but powerful, nonpartisan yet pro-democratic and that emerges from the essence of particular societies yet is nonetheless universal» (Carothers, 1999:206). Civil society was the counterpart both to the market in the economic sphere and to the government in the political sphere. As a result, the connection between civil society and democratisation gained new attention.

In my thesis I will try to analyse how trade unions in Sri Lanka contribute to democratisation. The terms 'democracy', 'civil society' and 'trade union' will play important roles. Definitions and discussions on some definitions are needed.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Democracy

In its most basic form democracy is defined as the power of the people. However democracy can be defined as a system for organising people's power; «that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote» (Schumpeter as cited in Rakner, Rocha Menocal and Fritz, 2007:6). This is a rather narrow definition of democracy, and Robert A. Dahl developed a set of criteria which he meant were essential for a functional democracy rather than one specific definition. These were:

1. Control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials.

2. Relatively frequent, fair and free elections.

3. Universal adult suffrage.

4. The right to run for public office.

5. Freedom of expression.

6. Access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolised by either the government or any other single group.

7. Freedom of association (i.e. the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties, interest groups, etc.) (Ibid.).

These criteria focus on contestation and on the electoral process, and are often referred to as minimalistic definitions of a liberal democracy. The process of democratisation entails consolidation of a democratic system. However the minimalistic definition of democracy does not capture the challenges of transforming into a consolidated democracy. Nor does it capture the continuous process which is needed in order to preserve and maintain a democracy. Raker et al. offer what they see as a more substantial definition, one that gives more prominence to the role and importance of accountability.

Their definition includes three different dimensions of accountability needed in a consolidated democracy:

i) vertical accountability, which enables citizens to hold their political leaders accountable through the electoral channel at specified points in time; ii) horizontal accountability, which refers to the accountability mechanisms that exist within the distinct bodies of governance itself (…) and iii) societal accountability, which refers to the (ongoing) watchdog functions of civic associations, other NGOs and an independent mass media over actions of the state. (Ibid.:7)

This definition of democracy gives associations and organisations important functions within a democratic society. It also refers to their role as watchdogs in the implementation of policy, but not their role as possible actors influencing governmental policy making.

Fung mentions three alternative notions of democratic governance: the classical liberal, the representative democratic and the participatory democratic. According to Fung, all scholars working in each of these traditions find that civil society and secondary associations make fundamental contributions to democracy. Furthermore he claims that: «Those attracted to participatory democracy are also frequently attracted to the notion that association can contribute to existing democracy» (Fung, 2003:517).

While some scholars are preoccupied with the structural and vertical meaning of democracy, others are more occupied with the horizontal meaning. Here democracy is a political regime which constitutes the way of life of society by instituting a horizon of symbolic meaning. «(...) the emergence of interpretations of democracy as a less fixed structure of political rule and more as an orientation that shapes social relations in general and that is manifested in contemporary culture» (Browne, 2006:45). When discussing theories of democratisation, different visions and views of democracy will be examined.

2.2.2 Civil society

Civil society as distinct from the state is a relatively modern concept. Hegel was one of the first who focused on and defined the sphere between the family and the state as civil society: «the intermediate realm between the family and the state, where the individual becomes a public person and, through membership in various institutions, is able to reconcile the particular and the universal» (Kaldor, 2003:584).

Building on this definition, Alagappa identifies the purpose of the civil society in his definition, where:

(...) civil society [is] (…) distinct public sphere of organizations, communication and reflective discourse, and governance among individuals and groups that take collective action deploying civil means to influence the state and its policies but not capture the state power, and whose activities are not motivated by profit. (Alagappa, 2004:9)

Four aspects in this definition are important, whereof the first two are in line with Hegel's definition. Firstly, civil society is distinct both from the state and the market simultaneously; secondly, civil society is an arena for communication, discussion and reflection. The third and fourth aspect in Alagappas definition is that civil society is a place for governance, and a means to influence the politics without changing the rules of the game. Here civil society is an instrument for influence and possible political change, a way of alternative organised empowerment of people. The organisations, associations or meeting places defined as civil society will ensure a greater involvement of people, beyond only those who are active in government or party politics. Civil society's possible influence on political priorities will therefore broaden the democracy.

There are many variations of definitions of civil society, and Kaldor's definition is:

(…) civil society (…) is the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centres of political and economic authority. Through voluntary associations, movements, parties, unions, the individual is able to act publicly. (2003:585)

This definition more specifically highlights how people organise and play an active role in order to participate in the civil society. When Alagappa highlights the purpose and Kaldor highlights people's involvement in their respective definitions of civil society, this difference has an impact on the theoretical approach. Hence the role of civil society in democratisation and democracies will be viewed and analysed differently depending on the definition on which the analysis is based. I will come back to this when discussing theories of democratisation.

According to Strømsnes (2002), organisations are seen as important actors for at least five reasons. Firstly, they represent and express interests; secondly, they act as a protective body against abuse from public institutions; thirdly, they represent a critical element in society; fourth, they are an alternative channel of actuation; and finally they contribute to pluralism.

Hence the role of civil society is both to influence policy making and to control realisation of politics.

However, there is a need to draw special attention to trade unions as one of the players in civil society. Trade unions are a part of civil society. At the same time, in countries that have ratified ILO's core conventions they differ from other organisations and have a special role. Sri Lanka has ratified ILO's core conventions. What characterises trade unions, what is their role in civil society, and how do or don't they play a role in democratisation and in a democratic society?

2.2.3 Trade unions and professional associations

Trade unionism has a long history, particularly in Europe. One of the first groups of organised workers was the craft workers. They organised both for better working conditions and to protect their profession. Later, the industrial revolution created new roles for large numbers of workers who were drawn into the cities. By 1860 unions were recruiting, organising and taking action across the expanding industrial economy. One definition of a trade union is: «A trade union (…) is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving their conditions for employment» (Webb and Webb, 1920:1).

Webb and Webb's definition implies that trade unions are bread-and-butter organisations, safeguarding their member's wages and working conditions, but having none or little function beyond this.

According to Howard Gospel three different ideal types of unions can be identified:

> First there are **market**-oriented unions where unions are essentially economic actors pursuing economic goals. (…) Under this model the unions seek to improve the welfare of members (…) Second there are class-oriented unions. Such unions are deemed to be vehicles of **class struggle** (…) Third there are **society**-oriented unions. Here unions may be seen essentially as social actors or social partners, engaged in social dialogue and operation in a social democratic context.» (Benson and Zhu, 2008:14-15) [my underlining]

A rough distinction of unions might be drawn between blue- and white-collar organisations. Blue-collar work is manual, manufacturing work. White-collar work is related to people who work in offices, doing work that needs mental rather than physical efforts.

Teachers could be identified as white-collar workers. However, teachers will also claim that they belong to a profession, although 'teacher' is not a protected title. The difference between a traditional trade union and a professional association is that the profession emanates from shared values based on trained qualifications. According to Stjernø, prominent members of a profession were often pioneers in social reform policy and hence able to argue that their interests corresponded with the society as such (Stjernø, 2013). This might be reflected in the following definition of a profession:

> (...) an occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of a social contract between a profession and society, which in return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served and to society. (Cruess, Johnston and Cruess, 2004:75)

Also within professional organisations it is possible to differentiate by class. The definition above is from a high-class profession; the doctors, who have traditionally had an easier job persuading the society that they belong to a profession, than teachers have.

Literature related to trade unions does not always include a distinction between white-collar and blue-collar unions. Even more absent are a distinction between trade unions and professional associations, and a focus on the grey area between the two. I will argue that it is in this grey area many teacher trade unions are at the moment. First and foremost the unions are promoting teaching as a profession, for example by focusing on professional ethics. At the same time they are fronting traditional trade-union issues like wages and working conditions. (This however, should not be seen as contradictory to being a professional association.) As an example one can use the fact that Education International (EI) adopted a comprehensive policy paper on education before they adopted a policy paper with similar status on human and trade-union rights. The unions are broadening their scope and perspective while simultaneously excluding the non-trained. As it is difficult to find academic work that addresses the grey area, I will sometimes use sources from literature addressing trade unions

as such, blue-collar unions or white-collar unions, and occasionally professional organisations or other civil society groups. There are of course differences between the different types of organisations that might not be captured, but the purpose here is to analyse internal and external democratisation, therefore I think it is within the framework.

2.3 Trade unions' legal place in a democracy

Trade unions belong to the civil society. However, it is beyond discussion that unions, since World War I, have been recognised and treated differently than other civil society organisations.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles. The reason for establishing ILO was the acknowledgement that peace would last only if there was social justice. There were three main arguments; a social, a political and an economical. First and foremost it was necessary to improve social conditions for the working class, second to avoid turmoil and possible revolutions. And third, economic cooperation and binding international legal frameworks were essential in regulating international competition.

ILO is a tripartite organisation bringing together representatives from government, employers and workers in its executive bodies. The declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the ILO adopted on 10 May 1994 states the following:

> The Conference reaffirms the fundamental principles on which the Organization is based and, in particular, that: (a) labour is not a commodity; (b) freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress; (c) poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; (d) the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare. (ILO Constitution)

In this declaration the democratic role of trade unions is established. First the declaration recognises the freedom of expression and association, thereafter the representativeness of workers' by giving them equal status to that of the governments, with the right to join in a free discussion and democratic decisions.

Tripartite cooperation is fundamental in ILO and is recognised and reflected in ILO's structures. Here workers and employers have an equal voice with governments. In order to foster communication between the stakeholders, tripartite cooperation and social dialogue is fundamental.

ILO has identified eight conventions as fundamental, covering fundamental principles and rights at work:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, No. 87

- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, No. 98

- Forced Labour Convention, No. 29

- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, No. 105

- Minimum Age Convention, No. 138

- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, No. 182

- Equal Remuneration Convention, No. 100

- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111

Conventions no. 87 and 98 are of vital importance to the trade union movement. Without ratification of these conventions, unions are neither legally recognised nor able to enjoy the status as equal partners in discussions and decisions. As mentioned, Sri Lanka has ratified both conventions.

Within ILO's conventions and recommendations the right to strike is not explicitly stated. However the Committee on Freedom of Association has recognised that strike action is a right and not simply a social act. In Sri Lanka civil servants are not allowed to strike.

Also the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights safeguards the workers' right to form trade unions or associations. Article 23 (4) states: «Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests».

Hence the trade unions' right to exist and to work for their members' interests is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, in the 187 countries that have ratified the ILO core conventions, trade union rights are double protected.

Where the tripartite system is recognised, trade unions can be seen as an independent political institution. The system opens opportunities for trade unions to have political influence on wages and welfare state reforms. Moreover, for the teacher trade unions dialogue gives them the opportunity to negotiate and influence national, regional or local education policy. However, in countries where trade unions are weak in political, institutional and organisational terms, governments might exclude them from the political decision making.

In this chapter I have discussed some definitions of democracy, civil society and trade unions. I have also tried to frame the trade unions' legal role within a democracy. To sum up the discussion; a democracy where civil society in general and trade unions and professional associations in particular play an important role, is the starting point for understanding in this thesis. Before looking more closely at the teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka and their possible contribution in a democracy, a framework on how democratisation occurs is needed.

3 Theories of democratisation

Even if there was a renewed interest in the interaction between civil society and democratisation after the third wave of democracy; civil society, civil association or civic engagement have been treated as important for democratisation and in democracies since the 1830s. The French historian Alexis de Tocqueville studied the American societies, a study which led to the work «Democracy in America». Tocqueville was impressed by the civic society of America and their ability to contribute to making democracy work:

> Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition:' he observed, «are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types--religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute.... Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America. (as cited in Putnam, 1995:65)

Tocqueville argues that the diversity of associations that existed between the market and the state in America, contributed to a democratic political culture. The associations/civil society played an important role in protecting the individual's autonomy as well as in creating good/decent citizens (Strømsnes, 2002). Hence civil society contributes to democracy both at a micro and a macro level.

Before the third wave of democratisation the mainstream literature espoused a modernisation approach to democratisation. In countries with high levels of socio-economic development, democracy was more likely to emerge. Lipset (1959) demonstrated that democracy was more likely to occur in high-income countries than in low-income countries. High income was associated with industrialisation, a growing middle class, urbanisation, better education and wealth. The democratisation was a consequence of the transformation of class structure, the emergence of bourgeois economics and increased urbanisation. The transformation of these structures led to a more mature socio-economic society, which laid the fundament for development of democratic values and hence a democratic society (Rakner et.al 2007). Modernisation theorists saw development as a linear structure, where one step on the ladder was a precondition for the next steps.

From Tocqueville's «Democracy in America» scientists and scholars have emphasised the civil society's role in democratisation differently. This distinction has fostered two theoretical directions, which will be presented in this thesis. The first direction is more macro oriented, towards structures and institutionalisation. The second is micro oriented, towards civil society's contribution to socialisation, active participation and local orientation.

At a macro level, civil society contributes to democratisation in a not yet democratised society, whereas in a democracy it helps maintain democracy by acting externally. Civil society develops politics and seeks to influence the government through negotiation, lobbying, demonstrations or by other means, in accordance with the interests of the group they represent. On a micro level the organisations have an impact on their members. Through participation in organisations the citizens will gain democratic values, and will be given democratic skills and skills required for political participation.

3.1 Institutionalism and pluralistic tradition of theories

New institutionalism focuses on democratic changes at a macro level. Theories within this framework have a number of different positions, but their common focus is on political

institutions and their roles in democracy and democratisation. New institutionalists see institutions as the most important building block in a democracy. Moreover the structure within and the interaction between the institutions determine whether and how democracy functions. Preconditions for a stable democracy are, they argue, strong institutions with a functioning rule of law.

Two representatives of new institutionalism are March and Olsen. They argue that the process of change has either been seen as single-actor design, design of conflict, a consequence of learning or a result of competitive selection. Each of these, according to March and Olsen, is understood better theoretically than practically, as institutions have proven to be robust and seldom change. Participants and their behaviour can only be understood within the institutional framework and forms where the behavioural activities take place. Hence the analysis and the understanding of the society and political activities should focus on the interaction between society, political institutions and participants' interests.

The new institutional perspective builds on two core elements or assumptions. The first is that institutions create elements of order and stability in the society. Institutions will act as buffers and prevent conflicts and problems. Political institutions put the political life in order. Institutions are carriers of identity and roles and they are markers of a polity's character, history and vision.

The second core assumption is that the translation of structure into political action and action into institutional continuity and change, is generated by comprehensive routine processes (March and Olsen, 2005). Between the institutions and within the legal framework of the institutions' democratisation, democratic evolvement and changes might occur.

Here political institutions have a more autonomous role, and are given more importance than before in the political theory. A political democracy and the existence of democratic political institutions presuppose some sense of community and the existence of citizenship associated with rights and obligations towards the community (Hansen, 1991).

March and Olsen emphasise that the institutional perspective is a supplement to other theories of democratisation:

> Institutionalism (…) connotes a general approach to the study of political institutions, a set of theoretical ideas and hypotheses concerning the relations between institutional

characteristics and political agency, performance and change. Institutionalism emphasizes the <u>endogenous nature and social construction of political institutions</u>. (…) They are collections of <u>structures, rules and standard operating procedures that have a partly autonomous role in political life</u>. (March and Olsen, 2005:3) [my underlining]

Furthermore they see institutions as an enduring collection of rules and organised practises, relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances (March and Olsen, 1989).

New institutionalism does not restrain its focus as to <u>if</u> institutions matter, but seeks to analyse and understand <u>how</u> institutions matter. In this tradition, institutions are imagined to organise the polity and to have an ordering effect on how authority and power is constituted, exercised, legitimated, controlled and redistributed.

An additional perspective of new institutionalism is their attempt to broaden the approach by taking into account the interdependency between the state and society. Organisations and institutions do not operate in a vacuum, but will be affected by changes in the society. A specific community might be influenced by other political, economic or social communities. However it is within the institutions that new preferences and meanings might be developed. This will happen through the combination of education, indoctrination and experience gained by participation. Moreover engagement in politics will form and to a degree determine your interest. The organisations' constitutions, laws and customary rules of politics exclude alternatives from the agenda before politics begins. Institutions reinterpret rules and codes of behaviour, impact causal and normative beliefs, foster civic and democratic identities and engagement, and improve adaptability (March and Olsen, 1996).

Although new institutionalism focuses on democracy at a macro level, institutional impact on people within organisations is to a certain degree in line with Tocqueville's focus on association as important for democracy at a micro level. Members or associated persons in organisations will become more democratic citizens through active participation. However their ability to make changes is limited as the «regulations» within the institutions determine the outcome. Here we can go back to Alagappa's definition of civil society, where he underlined that civil society can take civil means «to influence state (…) but not capture the state power».

Two scholars who elaborate on the interaction between the state and the society are Theda Skocpol and Bob Jessop. They are looking at the interaction and conflict of class and structures within the society. Going back to Tocqueville, Skocpol argues that politics and policy are developed and exist between the state and society. She, like other new institutionalists, emphasises that the structure and function of the state will have an impact on the society. The structure and function of the state determine how the society functions. Jessop, on the other hand, emphasises the interaction between state and society, where the society also has an impact on how the state is structured. Hence Jessop argues that the state's institutional structure is important in the political struggle. The state's institutional structure is an important element in the struggle that some classes and groups are having safeguarding their interests through the state. This effort is not just a «passive» attempt to make use of existing institutional structures, but also an attempt to actively create and shape these structures for their own benefit and purposes. Various state projects and strategies are a central element in the political struggle (Hansen, 1991). The interaction between state and society will not only have an impact on the society, but might also have an impact on the state.

This focus on the political coalitions and ongoing political manoeuvring among what we might think of as institutional 'rule takers' and between 'the rule takers' and 'rule makers', opens the room for talking about strategy, conflict and agency as important all the time, and not just in those rare moments when structures break down or are being built up (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Hence democracy is not something that happens by casting votes regularly, but an ongoing process.

There are, I am sure, many approaches and dimensions to analysing the trade unions and the states' interdependency. However I will draw attention to three factors that might be addressed under the theories of new institutionalism. The first is the Industrial Relations (IR), the second the trade unions and their possible connections to political parties; and the final factor is the institutions' ability to develop preferences and meanings.

Trade unions will have different institutional roles depending on the structure of the Industrial Relation (IR) system. Within a well-established system of tripartite cooperation, trade unions have a pre-defined role to negotiate their members' wage and working conditions. The unions' bargaining power depends on their capacity to organise all or the majority of the workers in an industry or within a profession. Union bargaining power derives from the

union's ability to inflict damage on the firm or employer by withdrawing labour (Boeri, Brugiavini and Calmfors ed., 2001). Hence negotiation between employers, employees and state creates buffers and contributes to stability.

An example is the trade union movement in Western Europe after World War II. In post-war Europe trade unions were seen as important partners of governments for economic policy making. The governments' economic policy was primarily to constrain the inflation pressure. Hence it was important that wages did not increase too much, or too rapidly. With close to full employment rate, the trade unions negotiated moderate wage inflation for their members in exchange for a better welfare system. According to Streek and Hassel «Trade Unions played a major role in welfare state development by promoting democratization and evolution of social rights as an integral part of citizenship» (Streek and Hassel, 2003:29).

Some unions are closely connected to political parties. In Western Europe the unions that have been closely affiliated to the political labour movement, have had an important influence in designing market regulation and social welfare systems. The relation between trade unions and political parties can be classified by two structural dimensions: the degree of political unity and the degree of politicisation of trade unions (Ibid.). Political unity exists in countries where political differences within trade unions have not led to organisational fragmentation. The degree of politicisation describes the extent to which trade unions are active in the political agenda. Even if the union–party relationship has been relatively stable since World War II, the linkages have become weaker as both parties have responded to the evolution of their respective industrial and political environment. However Benson and Zhu imply that unions do not play a major part in transforming whole political systems. On the other hand they refer to the thesis that if unions are given a voice, it might legitimise the political processes and add to stability (Benson and Zhu, 2008).

3.2 Participatory perspective: The micro, creative model

Roy Suddaby is one scholar who questions the importance of institutions and structures. His main critique against new institutional theory is that is has been too occupied with quantitative methodology. Hence, he claims, scholars have not been able to look into and analyse what is the interesting part of institutional theory. The tendency is that institutions and their structures and procedures acquire meaning and stability for their own ends rather than creating and being tools for the achievement of special ends (Suddaby, 2010). Institutional

researchers have to adopt a new perspective, according to Suddaby. The perspective should be internal rather than external, and look into how organisations are able to create collective interpretations, rather than the external perspective aiming to understand institutional meaning systems. One should «explore fully the interpretive capacities of organizations and consider closely the possibility that organizations are much more sophisticated managers of symbolic resources» (Ibid:18).

Focusing on the internal perspective of the organisations, one might argue that at a micro level Suddaby follows Tocqueville's perspective. He analyses, focuses on and theorises on the micro perspective on democracy; looking at how democracy is formed and supported within organisations and civil society groups. For some of the scholars supporting this path, the nature or the purpose of the organisation or civic engagement is of minor importance. One representative of this perspective is Robert D. Putnam.

Putnam found, through his studies of the subnational governments in different parts of Italy, that although the governments were identical on paper, their level of effectiveness varied. In the northern part of Italy, Putnam found there was a mutual trust between society and the governments. The southern part of Italy, on the other hand, had a culture of mistrust which hampered institutional reforms. His conclusion was that the quality or lack of quality of governance was determined by longstanding traditions of civic engagement. Networks of organised mutual benefits and civic solidarity create trust, which is fundamental for a democratic society. Civic engagement, where people come together face to face and solve common problems, is a precondition for democracy and socio-economic modernisation. Putnam named the civic engagement 'social capital', which «refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit» (Putnam, 1995:66). In an earlier work he defines social capital as follows: «By social capital I mean features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives» (Putnam, 1993:169).

The negotiations that take place inside these networks reduce the incentives of opportunism. As, and if, the networks prove their collaborative effort to be successful, they can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration. Finally, dense networks of interaction probably broaden the participants' sense of self, developing the 'I' into the 'we', or enhancing the participants' «taste» for collective benefits (Putnam, 1993). These networks facilitate

coordination and communication, and amplify reputations, thus they allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved.

Of special importance is the social capital's characteristic of being simultaneously limiting and bridge building. Social capital is limiting when creating social relationships between persons with similar backgrounds, and bridge building when creating relationships across differences. Hence it is not without importance through which kind of organisations the inhabitants are associated. The organisations which he refers to as 'tertiary associations', where the vast majority only pay dues or membership fees, do not create social capital of the same value as secondary associations, which are associated with horizontal, face-to-face interaction. The horizontal tie created in a secondary association creates more trust among the members of the association and thus more social capital, whereas the value of social movements, labour unions and political parties is downplayed (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002).

The exercise of political liberty, according to Tocqueville, depends upon trust between different social classes, whilst it in turn breeds responsibility. Differently put, participation is the only effective means of training that will suit the citizens to liberty (Hall, 1994). In «Bowling Alone» Putnam argues that the transformation that has happened in America, symbolised by people's preference on where to go bowling, has changed the social capital of the society. Bowling in organised leagues creates meeting places and interaction, while solo bowling illustrates vanishing from social capital.

Based on this definition one can say that Putnam is close to Tocqueville's original thought that democracy was created through active participation within one or many associations.

The organisations' ability to create collective interpretations and social capital is core in the participatory perspective of democratisation. Trust among different socio-political groups of people is fundamental in order to create democratic stability. It is important that the organisations and associations have the ability to overcome differences and create intersecting lines. Within this micro-creative model of theorisation, horizontally organised associations are viewed as more likely to imbue civic skills and virtues than hierarchically organised organisations. At least traditionally, trade unions have been both horizontally and vertically organised. Their fundament and their backbones are their members, and their ability to both train and mobilise members has been important. Within the participatory perspective the trade unions' ability to contribute to social capital among their members is vital. Civic engagement

is a component that provides a crucial link between social connectedness and participatory democracy. Active participation might include skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002). Hence knowledge and activity are important. As unions have often had a positive effect on training of members, especially their elected representatives, the members' social capital has increased. Moreover they have also had a positive effect on representation at work by giving members a voice.

However, given the nature of trade unions, working for their member's interest, one can imagine that the union's ability to reduce opportunism depends on what kind of organisation it wants to be. Some unions want to play a wider role in society than just being bread-and-butter organisations. The unions that also are, or want be professional associations, may create less mutual trust and be less bridge building because of the protective nature of professional associations. One factor that might contradict this is the union/association's ability to define the social contract between the profession and the society.

Related to social capital the contributions of trade unions depend on their ability to engage their members to be active participants within the organisations, and to function as possible media for broad political discourses.

3.3 Summary

Tocqueville's «Democracy in America» created two main theoretical frameworks of democratisation. One theoretical orientation focuses on a macro perspective, looking at how democracy functions at society level. Here structures, institutions and the political system are in the centre of research. Another theoretic orientation is looking at the micro perspective and highlighting the internal processes within associations and organisations. Democracy and democratisation are seen as a «way of life».

The interaction between civil society and democracy/democratisation can be related to the efficiency or stability of a democracy, or to the democratic «quality» of the citizens.

Major lines of division, or cleavages, within a society may contribute to stable or unstable democratic systems. How these cleavages are organised is important. Where parallel lines of division foster conflicts and contribute to an unstable democratic system, intersecting lines of division will subdue the political level of conflict. Trade unions are cleavage-based

organisations, and trade unions based on profession, like many teacher unions are, might be fostering instead of minimising the cleavages within a society. In order to stabilise the democratic system, intersecting lines of division are important. Based on new institutionalist theories, the political institutions and their interaction are important. Based on the participatory theory, the activity of the members within the organisations or associations is the most important factor in moderating conflicts between people.

Focusing on organisations in a micro or macro perspective will define what kind of organisations which are important in a democracy or towards democratisation. If the organisations' internal socialising effect is viewed as most important for democratisation, organisations where the fundament for socialisation lies within the organisation, are vital. These are often organisations with a local basis and a high level of member activities. The organisation's purpose or mission will be of minor importance. If, however, the main emphasis is on the direct, external democratic effect, the activity within the organisation is of lesser importance, while the organisation's purpose and its connection to democratic governance will be more important (Strømsnes, 2006). The organisation's goal, its structures, activities and members must be identified. High organisational density is not always sufficient for the organisation to be an important democratic player; all associations do not have the same importance as political actors.

However lately, worldwide, we have seen a decline in membership in traditional political organisations. This may in the long run affect the organisations' ability to negotiate. Although this is an interesting topic, it is outside the scope of this thesis.

There are some major differences between the two main paths of theories related to civil society and democracy. There are different views on what contributes to a stable democracy and subdues cleavages within the society, and also on what kind of civil society that best functions as a buffer, reducing friction between the state and the citizens. The participatory approach claims face-to-face interaction at local level and close ties within the society are most important, while the structural approach sees the possible interaction between the associations/organisations and the political structures as most important. Here the organisations' policies play a role and not necessarily activities at the grass-root level. The extreme version being that organisations could function only at local or national level, being organised as a laissez-faire manner or a centralised structure, collecting stamps or pressing political changes.

Trade unions have the potential to be tertiary organisations, functioning and prioritising on the national political level, with members just paying their dues regularly. Hence their ability to foster or broaden democracy will be on a macro or structural level. However, trade unions also have the potential to contribute to democratisation on a micro, participatory level, 'creating' social capital. Without taking stand, I will try to see if and how the trade unions of Sri Lanka contribute to democratisation on different levels.

4 Data and methodology

When I started working on this thesis I was convinced I should focus on democracy assistance from Union of Education Norway to all the six EI affiliates in Sri Lanka, and compare with EI affiliates elsewhere in Asia, for example in Nepal. Luckily one gets more realistic.

After discussions with my supervisor, considering my capacity, opportunities, roles and interests, I decided to try to analyse if and how trade unions contribute to democratisation within a society. I still wanted to use the case study as my methodology as it would hopefully elucidate the trade unions' contribution to democracy. I also hoped it would give me some valuable professional knowledge. Hence three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka were asked, and luckily all three agreed to contribute to my study.

To study trade unions' impact on democracy can be seen as an attempt to analyse and understand a real-life problem. One suitable methodology might be case-study research as the scope is empirically to «[investigate] a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident» (Yin, 2009:18). As I wanted to analyse democratisation within a special context, qualitative methods are more suitable for analysing the issue: «(…) qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts» (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:5).

However a context- and time-specific study can have some limitations related to generalisation of the study:

> Generalisation can be seen as involving three linked but separate concepts: representational generalisation, whether what is found in a research sample can be generalised to, or held to be equally true of, the parent population from which the

sample is drawn; inferential generalisation, whether the findings from a particular study can be generalised, or inferred, to other settings or contexts beyond the sampled one; and theoretical generalisation, whether theoretical propositions, principles or statements can be drawn from the findings of a study for wider application. (Ibid.:285)

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to try to draw a theoretical generalisation; moreover it might be difficult to draw any general findings from these samples. However as there are many small teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka, some generalisation might be possible within this specific context. In order to have some value, the research must be able to fall into the category of being representative, the findings must be equally true to the parent population from where the sample is drawn.

Qualitative research is often associated with methods like: observation, in-depth interviewing, narratives and the analysis of documents. A triangulation of the methods will increase the reliability and validity of the findings: «Validity is traditionally understood to refer to the correctness or precision of a research reading. In qualitative research it concerns the extent to which the phenomena under study is being accurately reflected, as perceived by the study population» (Ibid.:285). Whereas reliability «is generally understood to concern the reliability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken» (Ibid.:270).

The data used in this thesis are a combination of desk studies, different documents, and interviews. A description of the methodology and how the study is conducted will give some information on the study's reliability and validity.

In this thesis I have tried to analyse some of the work done by scholars within the subject of trade unions and democracy. My theoretical base shows that democratisation can be analysed as both structural and participatory. I have narrowed the perspective and tried to categorise works within these two approaches. Furthermore I had the intention to find research and data related to an Asian context, seeing as the history of trade unions and the context within which they operate differ from Europe to Asia and between Asian countries. However sometimes even the definitions of civil society and trade unions are different from continent to continent: «Civil society participation in SAARC is possible through what SAARC terms «recognized

bodies,» but this category currently includes professional associations such as in medicine, radiology, architects, town planners, teachers and media practitioners» (Nesadurai, 2010:26).

A major part of the thesis is the case-study research of three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka. The organisations I have analysed are all members of Education International, and they all participate in a solidarity programme funded by NORAD through my employer, Union of Education Norway (UEN). This is a joint programme which includes six teacher trade unions. The programme is organised via a network called Joint Sri Lankan Women Teachers Network. The aim of the network is to be more internally democratic by especially focusing on women's rights and to strengthen the unions in general. The overall goal for all solidarity work within UEN is: «To contribute to the development of strong, independent, democratic, and sustainable professional teachers' trade unions, working effectively to defend and promote their members' interests and contributing towards achieving quality education for all» (Analytical Framework UEN).

The cooperation between the organisations in Sri Lanka and UEN has a long history and goes approximately 18 years back. The past four years I have been the coordinator of this programme. There are objective reasons for choosing the organisations in the case study. For example they represent members from both private and public schools. However my position within UEN and my knowledge of the different organisations and their representatives have also been decisive. My position has an impact on how I am welcomed by the organisations and how I understand and interpret the interviews and the data collected. My long-lasting relationship with the unions might give me broader and more in-depth understanding of the situation and context, for example when interpreting and evaluating statements. On the other hand I may be too close to the objects I investigate; my positive or negative perceptions might keep me from being neutral. Moreover the representatives I interview and the documents sent to UEN may have the same challenge distinguishing between UEN as a partner trade union colleague and me as a student.

I have interviewed representatives from all three unions. The interviews were semi-structured. Before leaving for Sri Lanka I had listed some questions (see appendix 1). I interviewed five persons from ACUT, four from CTTU and three from SLITU (see appendix 2). The persons I interviewed were picked by the president or general secretary of the organisation. Moreover all of them except two representatives from ACUT had positions in the executive board. Thus the persons selected to be interviewed do not represent the wide range of members, and will

give more voice to the active members at top level than to ordinary members within the unions. However some of the interviewees have just recently been elected to the executive board and might therefore give a slightly different impression than the ones who are more experienced. The analysis of social capital and the 'thick trust' will therefore be biased.

In my desk study I have gone through reports from the Sri Lankan unions to Union of Education Norway, notes from different meetings with the unions, and online media cuttings. Some written material was collected during my visit to Sri Lanka in May of 2015. After returning I asked the unions for additional information whenever I found that something was missing. It has been rather difficult to collect data in retrospective, but some information was given. All written material has been in English, the information that was only available in Sinhala or Tamil is therefore not included in the analysis.

The relationship between the organisations and UEN is not neutral. The financial sustainability differs between the organisations. The larger organisations can be more financially independent and are able to continue their activities without support from UEN. Furthermore one might speculate if the same goes for organisations that are closer to the establishment. One of the organisations is said to be closer to the political establishment than the others. This organisation is also one of the most financially sound. It is from this organisation that it has proved most difficult to get information. Going back to the data in the archives of UEN, it is symptomatic that this organisation's reports are less comprehensive. Even if the organisations in Sri Lanka and UEN particularly underline the solidarity and the equity between the organisations, UEN has more financial, human and organisational resources, hence a patron-client relationship may be interpreted. However seeing as I am an employee and the interviewees are elected representatives, and higher ranked within the trade union, the patron-client situation might be contradicted.

There are differences between the three organisations both in quality and quantity of the information that was gathered. I have more information from ACUT and CTTU. From SLITU I received less information. Moreover the same pattern is recognised in the reports given to UEN. Lack of data and information related to SLITU will have implications on the analysis regarding this union.

Language is probably the single most important factor that has influenced my possibility to investigate the subject more closely. In addition to the missing written information, it also has

implications for the oral information. Many of my informants lack English skills, and an interpreter has therefore been necessary during most interviews. In addition to possible misunderstandings, the interpreter has more often than not been a senior trade union fellow of higher rank than the person I was interviewing. This may of course influence the answers I was given. Furthermore in some cases I had a male interpreter when interviewing a woman. Given the cultural situation in Sri Lanka this may have influenced the answers of the women. The translators I have used are not professional, this is reflected in the answers given. Grammar, choice of words and the sentences are sometimes not correct and probably not in line with the original version. However as I am in no position to know the exact sentences, I keep the quotes as translated to me.

Most of the written material from the unions is naturally not in English. The updated version of CTTU's constitution is one example; newspapers, websites and minutes others. Due to lack of both time and resources I have had to trust the English written material available. There is no doubt that knowledge of Sinhala or Tamil would have provided the study with better and more data.

5 Trade unions in Asia, with emphasis on Sri Lanka

The analytical relevance of the concept 'civil society' to Asia has been questioned by a number of scholars. The question is first and foremost if civil society can be seen as an autonomous sphere of voluntary organisations, and three reasons are frequently given:

> (i) blurred boundaries between what is «public» or «private» in Asia—where in many parts of Asia the state actively plays a direct role in establishing civil society and/or in shaping its features; (ii) supposedly distinctive cultural dispositions in Asia— particularly in Confucian and Islamic societies—where conformity to prevailing social and religious orders and acceptance of paternalistic rule and limitations on individual rights—mean civil society in the western mould cannot exist; and (iii) aside from voluntary associations, ascription based on religion and ethnicity abound in Asia, where an organization's mbership is by assent rather than consent. (Nesadurai, 2010: 4).

However, using Alagappa's definition of civil society, organisations that are formed by or aligned to the state are not excluded. Hence the concept of civil society is for analytical reasons also valuable in an Asian context.

Trade unionism in Asia has a shorter history than in Europe and North America. IR systems are often related to the detachment from the former colonial powers and to the establishment of Asian countries as independent nations. In Sri Lanka two general strikes in 1946 and 1947, led partly by trade unions, were key events leading towards the country's achievement of independence in 1948. Furthermore the teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka where powerful in the policy arena from 1956 to 1965 when the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) ruled, and from 1970 to 1978 when SLFP ruled in coalition with other parties (Tatto and Dharmadasa, 2004).

Trade unionism in Asia is highly diverse; the economic and political development likewise. In some economies the shift from manufacturing work to service and knowledge work means that the traditional organising base is declining. In developing countries where there is a shift from agricultural to manufacturing work one should suspect an increased base for organising. However the government has often placed restrictions on formation and activities of trade unions in order to be more competitive in a globalised world (Benson and Zhu, 2008:3). The difference can also be seen in relation to the heterogeneous political system of the countries. In some countries the ruling political party is strictly anti-union in their politics, in other countries there is an acceptance of trade unions as being part of a democratic system, while other countries find themselves in a middle of democratisation (Strøby Jensen, 2004).

The primary motive for governments to develop IR regulations in the Asian region has been the hope that these kinds of regulations would lead to a low level of labour conflicts (Kuruvilla and Erickson, 2002). However, due to the economic growth which dominated some Asian countries for quite a period, unions in some countries have freed themselves from the more nationalistic project. Furthermore they are more oriented towards working for specific employee interests.

> Industrial Relation (IR) systems in Asia are typified by six distinct stylised models: the Japanese flexible-workplace model, the tripartite Singapore model, the state-employer-dominated model (Malaysia and Indonesia), the pluralist decentralised and fragmented model (the Philippines), the politicised multi-union model (India and the rest of South

Asia), and the transitory model (a catch-all category that includes South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Vietnam) (Kuruvilla and Erickson, 2002).

Approximately 20 % of the Sri Lankan workforce are union members. More than half are women and unionisation among public sector employees is high (ITUC, 2010). In 2004 there were 1,604 registered trade unions with 583,323 members, 77 % were engaged in the private sector and 23 % in the public sector (Benson and Zhu, 2010:183). Approximately 15 % of the total workforce were public sector employees in 2012 (Department of Census & Statistics, 2013). As the education sector is mainly public and the teaching profession is highly feminised in Sri Lanka, the organising of teachers should be quite favourable.

Sri Lankan teacher unions can be well sorted under the politicized multi-union model. It is difficult to find figures on how many teacher trade unions exist, figures from forty to sixty-two have been mentioned, but cannot be verified. The relationship or connection to political parties varies between the different unions; however Lindsay and Ginsburg claim that the most important teacher trade unions are National Teachers Union, which is controlled by the United National Party, and Sri Lanka Independent Teachers Service Union, controlled by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (2013). Education International claims that most of the trade unions are bound to political parties, which rise in membership with the party in power.

The fragmented picture of the unions is partly due to problems within the unions themselves. The unions are often beset by internal tension, have weak democratic internal structures and low turnover of democratically elected leaders(Nesadurai, 2010).

Sri Lanka has ratified ILO Convention No. 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and Convention No. 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. Seven or more workers can form a union, adopt a charter and elect leaders. Employees in the public sector may join a public sector union, but not a union that also represents private sector workers. Private- and public-sector unions cannot form joint federations.

Any union representing more than 40 % of workers at a given workplace is granted compulsory recognition. However in practice, union organising and collective bargaining are often discouraged. The votes required to demonstrate that the 40 % threshold has been met are often delayed or never held. Official staff lists are often withheld, making it hard for unions to

reach the 40 % threshold (ITUC 2010). Furthermore, collective bargaining in the public sector is prohibited in Sri Lanka.

The public sector employees are covered by a code of rules adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers named the Establishment Code.

It is presumed that the exclusion of the public sector workers from the purview of the Industrial Disputes Act is based on the assumption that the State is expected to perform the role of a model employer and it will rightly discharge all its duties towards its employees. (Sahul, 2002:4)

However this can be questioned as the public employees are not entitled to hold strikes, there are no processes of collective bargaining and there are restrictions on forming federating unions among public-sector workers.

I will concentrate my thesis on the analysis of three of the unions UEN supports in Sri Lanka. These three trade unions are: All Ceylon Union of Teachers (ACUT), Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union (CTTU), and Sri Lanka Independent Teachers' Union (SLITU).

5.1 Three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka: A presentation

ACUT, CTTU and SLITU are chosen as examples for several reasons. First, their members are from different parts of the educational system. ACUT represent teachers in private schools, while SLITU and CTTU represent teachers in public schools. CTTU membership is restricted to Tamil teachers or teachers serving in Tamil schools, while ACUT and SLITU represent mostly Sinhalese teachers, but have no restrictions based on ethnicity. CTTU is mainly represented in the North and East while ACUT and SLITU aim at being nation wide. ACUT has recently started organising members from Early Childhood Education, while CTTU and SLITU organise members from primary and secondary education. SLITU is believed to be closer to the political parties, while ACUT and CTTU have no, or looser, political ties. The differences are interesting, but so are the similarities. Choosing these three organisations might give a better total picture of the trade unions' contribution to democratisation. I will first give a schematic introduction to the three unions.

5.1.1 All Ceylon Union of Teachers (ACUT)

All Ceylon Union of Teachers (ACUT) was founded in 1920; hence it is the oldest teacher union in Sri Lanka. From the start they represented teachers of denominational schools, which were many. In their prime, before 1960, they had over 30,000 members. In 1960-61 there was a new legislation where the vast majority of schools came under governmental control. Many of the former private schools became public schools. Hence ACUT lost many of their members, as their membership base is private-school teachers. According to Sinhalese law it is not possible to have members from private and public schools in the same union.

Today ACUT's membership base includes teachers from private schools, international schools and preschools. In 2015 ACUT reported having 4,107 members. Around two thirds of the members are women. Their dues are 180 Sri Lankan Rupees per annum, of which 30 Rupees are kept in the branches. Their annual dues collected are approximately 550 USD (report to UEN 2015). ACUT owns Canada House, a trade union office in Colombo. The first floor is rented by a private nursery.

According to the constitution, adopted in 2000, General Meetings (GM) shall be held annually. However, according to reports to UEN, ACUT holds biannual GMs, partly for economic reasons. The Executive Committee should consist of at least 17 members. The positions that have to be filled are: President, Senior Vice President (who shall be the immediate past President), four Vice Presidents (at last two of whom should be women), a General Secretary, three Secretaries, three Assistant Secretaries, a Treasurer and an Assistant Treasurer. Two additional members will be appointed as Chief Editor and Librarian. ACUT's constitution sets a limit for re-election to the same office. Article 9.1 states: «No office should be held by a member continuously for more than two years». The organisation is mainly based in Colombo, but has branches in the east and south. There are seven branches.

The constitution states that one of ACUT's modes of operation is women's committee meetings and women's network activities. In addition, according to their reports to UEN, there has been more emphasis on promoting women and their interests in the union lately. They have also tried to broaden their membership base by focusing on early childhood education, and a preschool unit has been established.

5.1.2 Sri Lankan Independent Teachers Union (SLITU)

The history of the Sri Lankan Independent Teachers Union (SLITU) starts in 1971. The first and only objective for forming the union was to fight a pay cut of specialised teachers. Later, in 1972, they merged with three other unions and expanded their membership base to all categories of teachers in the public sector. In the beginning the union had around 5,000 members, expanding to 20,000 within five years, but later «due to political turmoil in the country the membership was dropped miserably for a few years» (Woman Teachers, 2009). In 2015 they had 36,802 members, and in 2014 their total membership dues was 747 Euros. Their annual membership due is 120 Sri Lankan Rupees, which should have given them far more income based on the reported number of members. One explanation of the low income is that many of their members do not pay dues regularly, another that their membership records are not fully updated.

SLITU's organisational structure consists of: Branch Organisations, District Committees, a Central Committee, and an Executive Committee. They conduct an Annual General Meeting (AGM) every year. The Branch Organisations correspond to Divisional Education Offices; SLITU has 130 Branch Organisations, while there are 304 divisions in Sri Lanka. They have 22 District Committees, corresponding to the Zonal Education Offices of which there are 92. Hence SLITU has representation in around one third of all the divisions and one fourth of the districts in Sri Lanka. Of the three affiliates this makes SLITU the most geographically widespread union.

SLITU's Executive Committee consists of 49 elected representatives, where the General Secretary, President, Treasurer and Assistant Secretary are elected by direct votes at the AGM. At the moment there are twelve women in the Executive Committee, including the President. SLITU has a ladder structure where some representatives from the lower levels within the organisation are elected as representatives to the next level.

SLITU has five committees lead by five vice presidents. These committees are: organising, media, organisation, financial and education. The committees are in charge of the activities within their areas and report to the members at the AGM.

SLITU is sometimes associated with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). They themselves are very particular about mentioning that they are an independent trade union. However, based on information such as a PDF publication on the World Teachers Day, Wikipedia

articles and analysis of statements to newspapers, one might suspect that they are somehow closer to SLFP than to other political parties. I have, however, not been able to verify this.

5.1.3 Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union (CTTU)

Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union (CTTU) was founded in 1974 and organises Tamil teachers as well as Sinhala teachers and principals serving in government Tamil schools and teaching in Tamil medium. In 2013 they had 26,450 registered members. Their monthly dues are low, only 12 Sri Lankan Rupees per month, 144 Rupees per year. CTTU has managed to negotiate for check-off systems, hence the income is quite stable.

As CTTU organises Tamil teachers only, their membership base is mainly in the Northern, Eastern, North Central and UVA provinces. Their structure consists of branches at divisional, zonal, provincial and national level. CTTU has 52 branches at the divisional level. In the provinces where they are concentrated, they are as well represented as SLITU. These provinces have 138 divisions in total. The National Executive Board has 19 members, whereof 5 are female. There are 65 Council Leaders, whereof 17 female. The structure is based on the education administrative structure of Sri Lanka. CTTU has quotas for women as Vice Presidents, Assistant General Secretary and Assistant Finance Secretariat at national level. There are also women's quotas at all other levels of the organisations. Moreover Women's Networks at all levels are entitled to 0.5 % of the union funds (Woman Teacher, 2010).

CTTU is a relatively active organisation in their community. They have their own website and also close connections with the website Tamilcnn.lk, which publishes the CTTU union news on their site.

5.2 Analysis: Structures

The short presentations of the three unions in the previous chapter show some of the similarities and differences between the unions. One of the most striking differences, beside the membership size, is perhaps the structure. SLITU and CTTU are both quite large organisations with branches in one third of the geographical area they cover, while ACUT have quite few branches. With a structural, macro approach in mind I will therefore question if, why and how these structures give opportunities for influencing processes and policies within the structure.

Administratively Sri Lanka is divided into 9 provinces, 25 districts and 330 divisions, furthermore there are 14,000 villages (UNDP). The education administrative and management systems follow this structure (see appendix 3).

In 2013 there were 9,931 government schools and 98 recognised private schools. In addition there were 560 Buddhist centres (Pirivenas) of learning and approximately 300 «international schools». The schools are managed at different administrative levels. Some schools are labelled as national schools and administered by the Central Ministry of Education, in total 342. There are 143,398 government teachers in primary and secondary education; 65 percent are female and 56 percent are certificated teachers (Lindsey and Ginsburg, 2013:106).

At national level there is a National Education Commission, which was established to create a national education policy

> «that will be liable to necessary alteration as changed circumstances may require, and as determined through national consensus, but not a policy to be affected by the vagaries of transient political majorities» (as cited in Little, 2011: 502).

In 1987 constitutional changes devolved power of implementation of education reforms to the provinces. With the exception of national and private schools, schools are administered by the provincial councils. There is a Principle Ministry of Education in each province, and under the province level the administration of education is divided into a number of educational zones, where each zone has approximately 100 to 150 schools and is further subdivided into education divisions functioning under Deputy Directors in charge of education. The management of schools and supervision are carried out by the Zonal Education Office. At school level the managerial and financial matters are handled through the School Development Committee (SDC) comprised of the principal, representatives of the teachers, parents, alumni and the zonal director of education (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The structural layers' importance depends on where the education policy is designed, decided and executed. The organisations' possibility to discuss and influence through social dialogue is important. I will analyse the organisations' democratic contribution within a structuralist framework at three different levels. First I will analyse the influence at national level, where the public-sector employees are not entitled to collective bargaining. Second the analysis will look at the provincial and zonal level to see if there are some possibilities for meeting places

and dialogue, and finally I will analyse the union structures to investigate whether they foster democratic engagement.

5.2.1 Meeting the structures: National level

At national level the Ministry of Education or the Presidency is the political structure that meets the trade unions. However collective bargaining is not legal for unions from the public sector, and they are not allowed to form federations. Hence if the union wants to impose changes, or protest against proposed changes, they must appeal to the ministers. Nearly all the public-sector unions are continuously attempting to use political or personal connections, in informal, semi-formal or formal meetings (Benson and Zhu, 2010).

As previously mentioned, the trade unions are all members of Education International. Together with three other teacher trade unions of Sri Lanka they have a joint cooperation mainly focusing on women's issues within education and the trade union movement. However these organisations also work collectively on other issues where they find it relevant, perhaps especially addressing the ministry or public sphere. They have for example drafted a «Code of Ethics» for teachers which were handed over to the Ministry of Education. There are contradictions in the information on what happened to the proposal. Representatives from one organisation claim the Ministry came up with their own Code of Ethics, while others claim they just adopted the proposal from the organisations and are in the process of implementing it (interviews and discussions spring 2015).

Furthermore a collective open letter to the ministry regarding politicians' involvement in violent activities in 2013 was posted in one newspaper:

> Hence, for the sake of our children, if we are to leave them with a motherland that they can be proud of, it is we, the people of this country that have to rise up and protest until a suitable environment is created to rid this nation of such politicians. (…) stop giving nominations to those wrong holders whatever their political affiliations are (…) stop giving nominations to those of past history of corruption and thuggery. (Sunday Island online 2013, July 12)

This raises two important points; first the organisations are willing to cooperate to have a stronger voice when lobbying the government together, second they take responsibilities outside traditional bread-and-butter issues, addressing the welfare of the children.

Together with other teacher trade unions, CTTU and SLITU have annual meetings with the Ministry of Education. Moreover they are also represented in meetings with the Public Service Commission, whose vision is: «Dedicated Public Service for the Nation's Excellence» and mission: «To Establish and Promote an Efficient, Disciplined and Contented Public Service to Serve the Public with Fairness, Transparency and Consistency» (Public Service Commission web page 07.11.2015). «There are 22 unions in these discussions, and we do not meet only once a year, but around twenty-seven or thirty the last year. We are discussion principal problems, teacher problems and different problems from the different unions are submitted in these meetings» (interview SLITU, the President). Additionally the unions mention they have criticised errors in text books.

SLITU reports that they have achieved the following through the «The Committee of Salary Anomalies and Promotions in the Education sector», better known as the «Mahinda Madihahewa Committee» (MMC):

> Various salary anomalies of Principals & trs [teachers] that have been prevailing for many years have been rectified on the recommendations made by M.M.C which was convinced by the union at number of interviews. In that several salary scales have been determined for various grades of Principals and teachers considering their professional qualifications at degree and postgraduate levels. (report from SLITU to UEN 2014)

One SLITU member puts it like this: «We have some victories, we have been able to increase the salary for teachers, it was not what we wanted, but at least some. Furthermore the system of promotions and recruitment has improved, it is more generalised. I refer to the Service Minutes, Sri Lanka Service Minutes, it is a legal document» (interview SLITU, leader of the organising committee).

As previously mentioned my assessment, based on the information I have, is that SLITU might be in a better position to lobby the national ministry. This is partly due to their size and partly due to their somehow closer relationship with the political establishment. The following information from the Sunday Times might be a relevant addition to the information already provided:

> The Sri Lanka Independent Teachers' Union (SLITU) claimed that the Education Minister and officials, at a meeting held this week, agreed to several demands proposed by the Union. (...) But, Ceylon Teachers Union General Secretary, Joseph

Stalin severely criticised the SLITU, alleging that this was desperate act of the union to aid the ruling party in election propaganda activities. «(…) The SLITU is a part of the ruling party. It is also one of the only unions allowed to have an office within the Education Ministry.» (Sunday Times 2014, September 13)

ACUT has also had separate meetings with the national ministries. They have urged the Ministry of Education to «adopt and monitoring [sic] capacity and maintain high standards to ensure quality ECCE for every child in the country» (7th Asia Pacific Regional Conference 2013). In May, ACUT was scheduled to have a follow-up meeting with the ministry. Private schools and early childhood education are not administratively and politically decentralised. Their natural counterparts when discussing trade unions, educational or other matters are therefore either the principals or the ministries. One of the responsibilities at national level is human resources management of administrators, school principals and school teachers in these schools. Hence for private schools the next administrative level is the schools and the school management. Furthermore private-school teachers are not obliged to transfer to another school if they do not want to. Moreover even if early childhood education is mentioned in the policy paper «Education First» (2013), it is not fully implemented in the future plans, neither does the paper give a comprehensive suggestion about how early childhood education should be managed and structured. As ACUT organises members from private and international schools as well as early childhood education, they are not in need of the same decentralised structure as CTTU and SLITU. Considering the possibility of influencing the policy on education or teacher issues, there is no need for ACUT to have administrative levels between the local school level and the national executive board level.

A way to influence the policy, both towards the political establishment and the public opinion, is to use the media. There are examples of all the three unions being able to use this channel; however it is easier to find articles regarding SLITU and CTTU. While SLITU are (somewhat) more visible at national level, CTTU are more visible in provincial and zonal matters. CTTU on the other hand is very active in the area where they are based, but perhaps not so visible nationally. In Benson and Zhu (2010) Tamil Teachers Associations is mentioned, not CTTU. Whether the organisations are able to influence public preferences and meanings or pressure the government by having an active media strategy at national level, I am not able to verify.

Some structures fostering dialogue between the unions and the government at National level can be identified, the annual meeting with the Minister of Education and the meetings with the Public Service Commission.

The unions' ties to political parties are important channels of influence. SLITU representatives are very particular about mentioning that they are not affiliated with any political party, however there are signs they are somewhat closer to the ruling party than the other unions. This may give them an opportunity to influence politics, for example through the MMC, or they may adopt and promote the party politics.

The unions have some social dialogue within the structure of Sri Lankan context. They pressure the Government, the Ministry and also try to influence through media.

5.2.2. Meeting the structures: Provincial and zonal level

The constitutional change of 1987 devolved power of implementation of education reforms to the provinces, and increased the number of political actors who could assume the right to influence implementation, especially at school level (Little, 2011). At school level the organisation's representative might fit the position as a representative in the SDC. Managerial and financial matters in the education system are mainly teacher resources and teacher salaries. In comparison, across OECD countries 64 % of school expenditure is allocated to teacher compensation (Dolton and Gutiérres, 2010).

The structure is quite decentralised and complex. For organisations representing members from the public schools, a parallel structure is needed if they want to influence the education policy. Both SLITU and CTTU have structures that correspond to the administrative system of education.

Representatives both from SLITU and CTTU say teacher transfer is one of the major issues. According to the current policies on recruitment and deployment of teachers it is mandatory for all teachers to serve in a «difficult» or «very difficult» school for a period determined by the government. After the completion of the period teachers have the right to move to another location, which they often do (Balasooriya, 2012/13). There are transfer boards at the provincial and zonal levels. Both CTTU and SLITU are well represented at these levels and take part in the negotiations at the transfer boards. SLITU informs us that a union has to be

registered and represent at least 15 % of the teachers in the country, or have one full-time employee, to be represented at the transfer boards.

Like in other countries, it is sometimes difficult to get well-qualified, experienced teachers to teach in remote areas. For female teachers, of which Sri Lanka's primary schools have almost 80 %, it is often more difficult to work in remote areas due to cultural restrictions. Travelling alone on public transportation may be difficult, likewise living by oneself.

> (…) especially the lady teachers transferee. After the war teachers was transferred to remote areas, the gents are dead or they work other places because it was difficult to get a proper job here, so there is more responsibilities for the ladies. They can be placed as far as up to 90 kilometres from their homes. (CTTU interview, assistant secretary of finance)

The emphasis my informant put on this particular issue underlines how important it is for the organisation to be able to negotiate and solve transfer issues for their members. The union's strength at different levels within the education system may protect the member's rights, but also sometimes help them get a post which they themselves find more favourable. To use an example from another teacher trade union, also organising teachers from public schools: «Thanks to my union and their negotiation with the local authorities, I have been able to shift school. I am now working in a school closer to my home. I should have stayed two years at the other school, but the union was able to expedited my transferee» (meeting with union members spring 2015, female).

In addition to the constitutional change of 1987, the Public Service control came under the cabinet of the government in power in 1972. «This reduced the autonomy of public servants, including teachers, and increased their dependence on politicians for their appointments, promotions and transfers. 'Punishment' teacher transfers became common and attempts to reduce the 'interference' in them has largely failed (Little, 2011:503).

With the decentralised political structure of education in Sri Lanka, CTTU and SLITU need to have structures that can participate in dialogue at the different levels. Their representation at the transfer boards will give them access to the political sphere and create possible meeting points where dialogue may take place. Both organisations mention that they address issues like teacher training, curricula and syllabi, however it is beyond doubt that more dialogue is requested: «When they prepare the syllabus in school they do not consult the educated people,

the educated people are all teachers, so they must consult the union. They don't consult the union for anything even for the salary, why can they not try to get help form the union representative for the benefits of education?» (CTTU interview, assistant secretary of finance).

As mentioned, CTTU are more active at provincial and zonal level than at national level. The high-ranking officers in CTTU are not very occupied with the division level: «(…) at the division there are not much problems, the divisions do not have much power, they just distribute textbooks and uniforms, and the problems comes at zonal level» (CTTU interview, General Secretary).

CTTU has pushed for dialogue at provincial level for some time. According to my informants they used to send letters after letters to try to get invited. A shift came in 2013 when they were invited to a joint meeting:

> (…) at the meeting we were given a place to sit, not in the front and we were given five minutes to speak. Our delegation however took the front seat and asked to speak for at last 20 minutes, because it was so many issues to address. We were given 15, the speech was very well received and the meeting changed the minister's perspective on CTTU. (CTTU interview, General Secretary)

It is beyond doubt that all the organisations do some advocacy work, other than contributing at the transfer boards, towards both local and national authorities. CTTU has for example had meetings with the Governors of Northern and Western Provinces and the Chief Ministers of the UVA and Central Provinces. Furthermore they report that their meetings with Zonal Directors and High Officials have «[also] resulted in other Zonal Directors and High Officials at the Provincial level to give [sic] patient hearing to the teachers and CTTU and also act democratically» (Narrative Report to UEN 2012).

As mentioned CTTU is quite active trying to engage and inform the opinion, through their own web site and in cooperation with tamilcnnlk.com. They are also active in other media: «Transfer of teachers from one zone to another was made according to the whims and fancies of the authorities», CTTU said in a statement to Ceylontoday on 22 September 2014.

Political influence on national or provincial level is in other words something the trade unions strive to achieve. But while both SLITU and CTTU need, and have, the structure to influence

different levels within the administrative system of education, ACUT does not have and are perhaps not in need for a similar structure to influence education policy.

Political influence can roughly be divided into participation in political processes and political outcome. It is clear that the unions do participate in the political processes, but outcome is more difficult to actually find. Or as Education International's Asia Pacific Office puts it: «Despite the political involvement of trade unions in Sri Lanka, strikes for purely political purpose are not frequent and unions have never been able to influence the political process» (Project description to UEN 2013-2015).

5.2.2. Meeting the structures: Structures within the organisations

Unions have a different relationship with their members compared to other associations, seeing as they represent their members in a more governmental way. They speak on behalf of the workers and are able to make policy choices that affect them and negotiate contracts that bind them. Even if the organisations in Sri Lanka do not have the same possibilities as they would in a system of collective bargaining, they are in a position to present policy that might affect and negotiate contracts that might bind their members. The question of whether a union is democratic can be considered using at least four different criteria. First is the existence of formal constitutional requirements for election and protection for expression of members' views. Second the leadership turnover. Third the existence of an active opposition to the existing leadership, and fourth the rate of membership participation in votes (DiSalvo, 2014).

All three unions have constitutions that lay the fundament for democratic processes in the election of the union leadership. To better know their priorities and to see how politics are developed I have repeatedly asked for political documents and resolutions from the organisations, without any success. The Education for All goals are generally mentioned and they all tend to refer to their constitutions. However, Education International Policy Paper on Education is translated both to Sinhala and Tamil, and CTTU has issued a leaflet named: «Programme For School Improvement». There is also a strategy on how to influence and how to have a dialogue. In their Official News Bulletin "Aasiriyan" they state:

> CTTU solve [sic] its members Professional and Educational Problems by negotiating
> with the Political and Administrative heads at the Ministry of Education both at
> National level and Provincial level [sic]. ILO Convention on Collective Bargaining is
> not yet ratified for Public Sector in Sri Lanka. Thus we are left with only a negotiation

Process (Aasiriyan, no date mentioned, but with reference to the 37th Annual Convention)

When I ask about the agenda at the annual general meetings they mention narrative and financial reports and elections, and describe methods of working, but not any concrete political outcome. To my understanding the structure of how discussions are brought to the AGMs is democratic both within ACUT and CTTU (I am unfortunately not able to discuss this relating to SLITU, see chapter 4). However as there are few signs of actual debate about the future priorities of the unions, members and representatives do not have the possibility to participate in developing new policies.

Education International's Asia Pacific Office claims that: «In most unions, characteristics of union democracy are hardly visible and the leadership is naturally being held by an aging set of veterans who are not open for change or ready to accommodate young activists» (Project description to UEN 2013-2015).

Trade unions are political organisations whereby representative democracy is seen to be achieved through elections of leaders, checked by balances between the powers of elected executives and delegates and appointed officers which aim to ensure that the interests of all the members are met. In this regard, democracy implies equality. (Colgan and Ledwith, 2002:4)

One former General Secretary of ACUT literally died in office when he passed away in 1998, 83 years old, after being a GS for 32 years. In 2002 the first female GS of ACUT was elected (ACUT interview, the President). She is now the president and has been in the organisation's leadership for 13 years. It is not easy to confirm how long the sitting president of SLITU has been in position, but at least since 2008 (Woman Teacher, 2009). CTTU elected a new General Secretary in 2011 and is the union which has renewed their leadership most recently. It is fair to say that there are differences in the leadership turnover between the organisations. However it is not easy to predict the future and how long the sitting leadership will be in position, and hence if the unions will follow their past patterns or are in the process of becoming more democratic. Furthermore even if the AGMs generally are quite large, with many representatives, there is a need for actual alternatives and possible turnover in office bearer positions and future politics if the representatives shall enjoy full democratic influence.

5.3. Analysis: Participatory theory

The trade unions' ability to foster democracy through creating 'social capital' will, among other things, depend on how they include different representatives in their activities. To use participatory theory on national level and within tertiary organisations like a trade union may be to violate or misunderstand the concept of social capital. However if dialogue and creating understanding and trust is the backbone of a democratic society, reducing identified cleavages by working together can be seen as contributing to the members' social capital. As Putnam found, networks of organised mutual benefits and civic solidarity create trust, which is fundamental for a democratic society.

There are methodological constraints that need to be addressed especially in this chapter. As previously mentioned, I have not talked to 'ordinary' members; moreover information on how trade-union activities are conducted at local level is scarce. The following analysis will therefore be concentrated around the common work carried out within the Joint Sri Lankan Women Teachers Network (JSLWTN) at national level and the inclusion of women in the unions. Moreover; rather than being a full-fledged analysis, it will hint at what might be found.

5.3.1 Participation at national level

The Joint Sri Lanka Women Teachers Network (JSLWTN) originated as a consequence of the SAARC Regional Women's Network Workshop in 1994. In 1996 CTTU joined the network. Meetings are held every month with representatives from all six EI affiliates. Primarily the network has focused on getting more women to come forward within the unions; among other things they have pushed for constitutional amendments regarding women's quotas. Within the network there have been discussions around issues like child labour, girls' right to education, violence against women, sexual harassment in schools, the situation for women migrant workers and HIV/AIDS.

As a result of involvement in Women's Network Activities and Training programmes, the women teachers have come out of their shell and are more involved in social activities and are more confident than earlier when their participation was less. (Narrative report to UEN 2006)

The network has published leaflets and newsletters, had meetings with the Minister of Education and held joint meetings in different places in Sri Lanka. «The 6 EI affiliates in Sri

Lanka held school programmes in six different districts in the country, where a lady of repute who had been able to come up in life mainly through education (…) was invited to share her life experiences (Narrative report to UEN 2012).

The trade unions represent members from different groups in the Sri Lankan society. There are Buddhists, Hindus, Christian and Muslims, Sinhala and Tamils in the JSLWTN. All through the civil war the network was able to meet and discuss, addressing different issues and acting together to pursue shared objectives. Hence working together within the framework of JSLWTN has perhaps to some extent been bridge building and created relationships across differences. Contributions to stable democracy are created if lines of division are crossing rather than parallel.

As there have also been tensions, most visible through discussions on issues like where the meeting should be held and how often, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions. However the above example shows that the unions are able to overcome some cleavages, that the social capital of the members has perhaps increased, and that there are possibilities to further increase thick trust among the members.

5.3.2 Participation within the organisations: Gender

Generally many of the older trade unions have organisational forms that lack internal democracy, and they are often burdened with long-term leaders who resist releasing power to new movements that challenge their position. Even with a majority of female members trade unions have been male dominated especially in the office bearer and elected positions.

ACUT has approximately 80 % female members, but contradictory to the general tendency, women also constitute more than 80 % of the elected representatives. In the executive committee there are 13 women and 8 men, and both the President and the General Secretary are female. Hence there are more than 60 % women in the executive board. CTTU and SLITU are more in line with the general picture. In CTTU there are 19 persons at the executive board, 5 of them female. One of the women was elected to an 'open' seat at the last congress, something the organisation sees as a victory and a step forward. CTTU reports that they have approximately 60 % female members, and that they are in the process of setting up women's departments at local level (oral information at a meeting, December 2014). In SLITU 12 out of 49 members in the executive committee are women. Furthermore the president of SLITU is

female; «(…) we have a lady president, that helps and give [sic] confidence to the other women in the union» (SLITU interview, member of the education committee).

However if one compares, the unions may play a greater role in involving women and hence widen democracy, than other organisations. UNDP points out that women's political participation is extremely low at local level, at only 1.9 % (Pilapitiya). In the Parliament only 5 % of the representatives are women, and in the Bank Employees Union, only 6 % of the central committee are women (Benson and Zhu, 2008:187).

When discussing why there are so few women taking up positions in the unions generally, and as elected representatives especially, 'culture' is often used as an excuse. Women in Sri Lanka are often burdened with work and household duties, and especially after marriage and childbirth a third burden like union work is not possible. During my time working with the JSLWTN I have been introduced to some young, active female members. However, nearly all of them have disappeared soon after getting married or at least after having their first child. One male leader from an organisation in the network explained the difference in female and male activity like this: «When my wife and I get home from work, I can go sit in the chair and relax, she has to prepare dinner». It is worth noting that the women who are active in the organisations most likely have grown-up children or are not married.

The trade-union members are all very proud of the gender equality in Sri Lanka. They all refer to the laws. According to Sri Lankan law gender discrimination is prohibited and the country has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

As previously mentioned, it is difficult for women to participate in activities that may be seen as disrespectful. Staying overnight, staying late at meetings or travelling on public transportation may sometimes require the company of a man. I was told that it is ok for a group of ladies to have tea in a restaurant, but not appropriate to have dinner. Travelling on public transportation alone can also be difficult. Hence to participate in activities outside your neighbourhood requires a lot of effort and hampers women's possibilities to participate in trade-union activities.

There are training seminars held at the local level where one criterion is that at least 50 % of the participant shall be female. CTTU organises special trainings for newly educated teachers at local level. Both ACUT and CTTU conduct seminars at local level that include professional

and trade-union activities: «(...) there is a thirst from these teachers for professional development activities to further their future prospects and they are ever-willing to join the union and become active members when they are initially motivated by providing such opportunities» (baseline document to UEN).

When discussing the AGMs, CTTU was particular about mentioning that their members discuss these issues at local level. This implies that there are some activities at local level besides the ones arranged at national level. The union's inclusion of women both at national and local level creates meeting places, which is important for evolving social capital, for women who are not so involved in politics in Sri Lanka. Furthermore it may contribute to intersecting the lines between men and women. However, as mentioned, I am not in a position to draw firm conclusions related to the union's possible contribution to increasing social capital.

6 Conclusion sum up, perspectives

So, how do trade unions contribute to democratisation? And more specifically; how do the three teacher trade unions in Sri Lanka contribute?

Civil society is said to play a vital role in a democracy. Both institutionalists and participatorians somehow take into account the interdependency between the state and the society or the collective 'we'. While institutionalists focus on structures and the ongoing political manoeuvring, the participatorians focus on the thick trust created by face-to-face interactions.

With reference to the ILO conventions and the UN's Declaration of Human Rights, trade unions have a distinguished role in a society. «(…) the unions have generally failed to change the societies fundamentally, have failed to see wealth significantly redistributed (…) This is not to argue that the union struggle has been without victories, or has been in vain. Far from it: the unions have been vital to the development of the democracy that the advanced countries now enjoy» (Rigby, Smith and Brewster, as cited in Harcourt and Wood, 2004: 132-133).

In this thesis I have tried to see how the unions in Sri Lanka contribute to democratisation in a partly free country (Freedom House 2014 scores). I have used both institutional and participatory theory to frame the analysis. Based on my data the findings are more valid and

accurate within the institutional perspective. Drawing definitive conclusions within the participatory perspective is more difficult. Moreover there may be discussions on whether tertiary organisations contribute to social capital.

I have shown that the trade unions have relations towards the decision-making structures. They are represented in different forums, like transfer boards and the Public Service Commision where they have discussions and have possible impact on the education and trade-union policy in Sri Lanka. Even without the institution of collective bargaining the unions have some social dialogue. All the unions have dialogue with the Ministry of Education; two of the unions have regular meetings with the Ministry of Education and the Public Service Commission. Both CTTU and SLITU are represented at the transfer boards at the province and zonal levels. Considering the decentralised structure in Sri Lanka, these are important political players. Their representation gives them access to the political sphere where they take the opportunity to influence on the education and trade union policies. Furthermore the unions have, to a certain degree, democratic processes within their organisations. (I say 'to a certain degree' because they all lack formal procedures for policy developing and making). However, their constitutions, which are well known, regulate the Annual General Meetings and the election processes. The unions can be said to connect their members to the local community and to the society at large, and hence contribute to democratisation. The two unions that organise members from public schools have the largest membership, are more widespread, have a ladder structure of promotion, and have more dialogue than the one with members from private schools. Moreover the unions have been able to renew their leadership and have increased women's participation at the top level. Even if the majority of teachers are female, and more female representatives in the executive could have been expected, the relative huge participation of women in the executive boards is quite unique in the Sri Lankan context.

Taking the participatory approach, it is more difficult to determine the organisations' impact on democratisation defined as social capital. The data is scarce and only assumptions may be made. It is therefore, within a scientific work, not possible to draw any firm conclusions. I have suggested that the national network and the inclusion of females in the organisations may give some added value. Furthermore where activities are conducted and women's wings are established, increased communication will take place.

However, even if there are signs of trade unions' contribution to democratisation, the national context of Sri Lanka has a profound impact. On a structural level, the unions are denied their rights to collective bargaining, to hold strikes and to form federations. This hampers the possibility to take industrial actions and hence influence national policy. The decentralisation of education will also have an impact as the trade unions' representativeness and their ability to train and support their union cadres are important. Moreover the 'culture' has an impact on the possibilities for women to be active in non-proper activities, hence trade-union involvement may be difficult.

Sri Lankan unionism can be categorised into the politicised multi-union model. In Sri Lanka this results in a large number of teacher unions, and it is difficult to tell whether the unions are influencing the political parties or vice versa. Nonetheless, the model weakens their possible political strength. For a trade union, political impact is important. They need to show their members some results, either as a traditional bread-and-butter organisation, as a professional association or as a combination of the two. Simultaneously unions need the strength of a large membership to be able to negotiate these results.

The society is changing, also for trade unions. Globally there has been a decline in trade-union membership and an increase in political activity through other organisations. Trade unions need to be influential both externally towards the political establishment and internally towards their own members, both horizontal and vertical democratisation is needed. Trade unions may need to explore both.

Appendix 1: Possible questions trade unions in Sri Lanka.

First part, mapping the organisational structure – democratisation within the organisation

- o Number of members and organisational density (in relation to the potential in the sector)

- o Gender and age distribution in membership

- o Distribution in membership of other underrepresented groups, based on for example profession or type of school or sector, ethnicity, language, disabilities, sexual identity

- o Are there any legal (statutes), social, cultural or economical obstacles for equality and equal participation of men, women, young and old?

- o Are there structures, strategies and capacity for training of elected representatives?

- o Are there structures, strategies and capacity for training of members?

- o Do all elected representatives/members have the same opportunities to participate in the training?

- o If not all members have the same opportunity to participate – which are there obstacles for participation for certain groups or individuals? What plans/strategies are developed to overcome these obstacles

- Are the organisation's statutes democratic and are the statutes applied in practice?

- Do the statutes make specific mention of inclusion and equal rights of different groups within the organisation? (How often is congress arranged? Are meetings for the National Executive Council and other elected bodies held on a regular basis?

- Are meetings democratically conducted? Is everyone free to voice his or her opinion?

- Are budgets and financial reports available to members?

- Does the organisation have a culture of transparency and a disclosure policy regarding management of corruption cases, should such occur?

  -

  - What is the ratio of men to women in decision-making bodies compared to the corresponding ratio of membership in general?

  - Are elected leaders representative? Is there regular renewal of leadership? Are leaders knowledgeable regarding the situation of members and representatives at all levels of the organisation?

  - How independent, sustainable and self-governing is the organisation?

  - Does the organisation manage to prioritize the rights and interests of its members despite pressure from e.g. employers, the government, political parties', religious leaders or ethnic groups?

Trade unions political influence:

- Does the organisation have programmes and policies for important areas such as education for all, teachers' status, professional ethics and equality? Are these programmes and policies being implemented?

- Is the organisation involved in social dialogue? Is this social dialogue institutionalised?

- Does the organisation enjoy the fundamental rights as expressed in the ILO core convention Nº 87: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise?

- How do government representatives (for example, the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labour) define the organisation? Has it been legally recognised?

- Legal status of the organisation

- Does the organisation have the legal right to negotiate collectively at national level?

- Is collective negotiation at national level institutionalised?

- Are there alternative formal structures for negotiating teachers' rights?

- What issues are covered in formal negotiations?

- Does the organisation have effective negotiating capacity? Has the organisation been successful in negotiation?

- Does the organisation cooperate gainfully with political actors; does it lobby political parties?

- Has the organisation any policy documents? On what issues?

- Has the organisation made any impact on political issues– such as national education policies? Or – To what extent is the organisation an influential actor in development of national education policies?

- Does the organisation take a wider social responsibility beyond the traditional trade union issues

- Does the organisation belong to a national confederation or trade union centre? How active is it?

- Does the organisation cooperate with other unions in collective negotiation or social dialogue?

- Does the organisation take part in national or international campaigns?

- Are there forums or alliances related to the education sector? Does the organisation participate in these? What role does it take?

Appendix 2, list of interviewed persons

ACUT, the President, female

ACUT, the General Secretary, female

ACUT, pre-school teacher, member, female

ACUT, principal of a nursery, executive committee member, female

ACUT, executive committee member, male

CTTU, the General Secretary, male
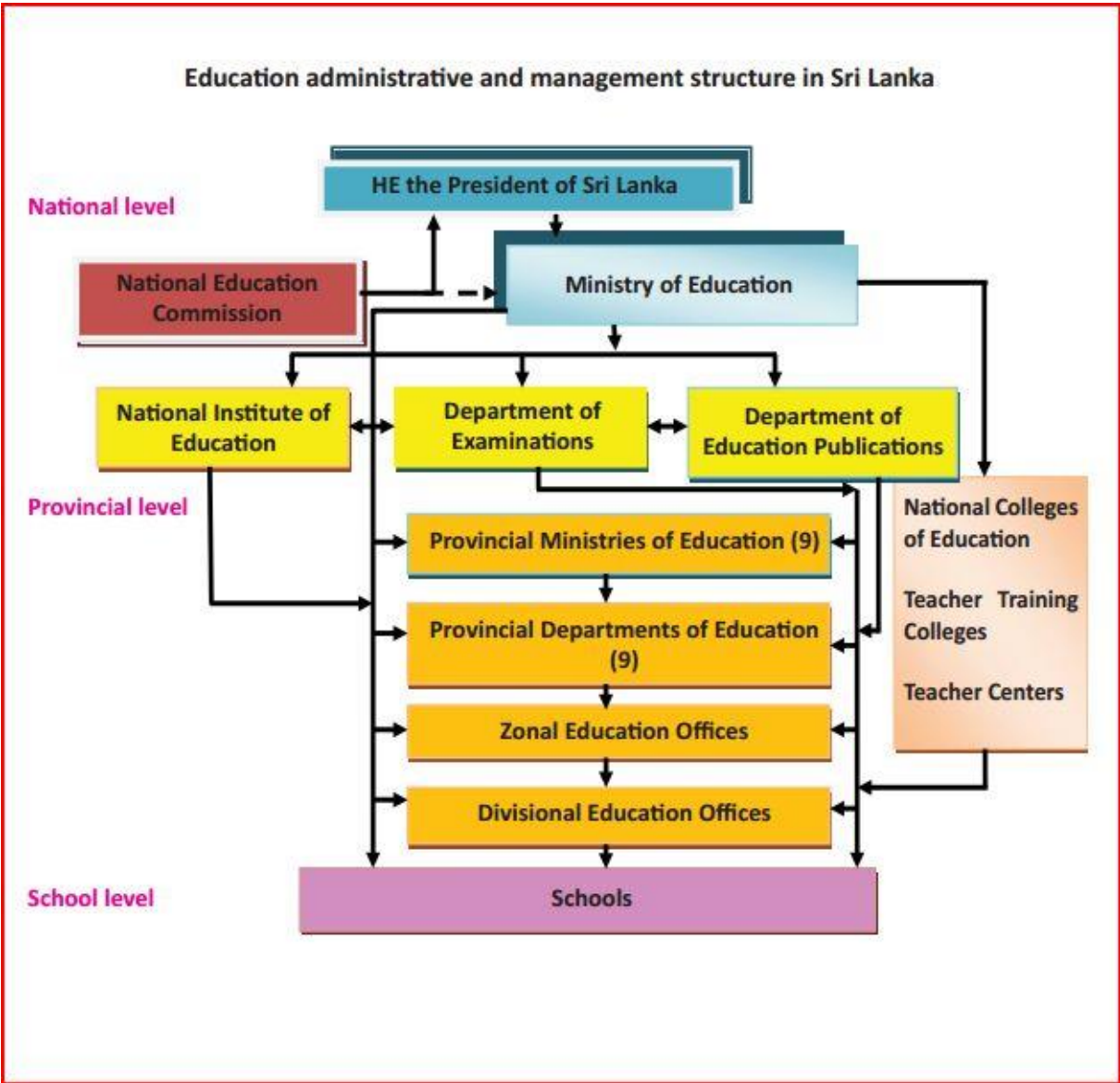
CTTU; assistant secretary of finance, female

CTTU, member, male

CTTU, executive committee member and district secretary, male

SLITU, the President, female

SLITU, leader of the organising committee, male

SLITU, member of the education committee, female

Appendix 3

Education administrative and management structure in Sri Lanka

Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka 2013: «Education First»

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