

**Labour-Centred Development and Decent Work:
A Structuralist Perspective on
Informal Employment and Trade Union Organizing in Uganda**

By

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Abstract

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By Tobias Gerhard Schminke

The labour-centred development (LCD) approach emphasizes that development can only be brought about through the collective struggle of the labouring classes. Supporters of LCD undergird their argument by referring to the developmental achievements of European trade unions for the working population in post-war Europe. Critics point out that the global conditions of labour in the current era, however, have become highly informalized and are more challenging to organize. This thesis tests the assumptions of the LCD approach and examines, in a structuralist tradition, how trade unions in Uganda can address the decent work deficit in the informal economy, which in most cases lacks enforceable contracts, adequate earnings, productive work, representation, secure employment, and social protection. It concludes that the “business unionist” organizing strategy limits Ugandan trade unions’ ability to bring about LCD. Also, the specific nature of government influence in Uganda over trade unions significantly inhibits the ability of trade unions to promote LCD.

December 9, 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Beate Schminke and Hans-Uwe Schminke, whose continuous support and encouragement have been with me throughout my academic career.

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Table of Content

Abstract	1
Dedication	2
Acknowledgement	3
Table of Content	4
List of Tables	5
Acronyms	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
Overview	8
Literature Review	13
Labour-Centred Development as the Expansion of Freedom	13
Decent Work: Development Indicator under Capitalism	19
Structuralism and Employment in the Informal Economy	32
Trade Union Organizing: Community and Business Unionism	37
Methods of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy	44
Benefits of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy	49
Challenges of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy	52
Research Focus	58
Design and Methodology	60
Chapter 2: The Context of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy in Uganda	72
Chapter 3: Trade Union Organizing in Uganda’s Informal Transport, Market, and Textile Sector	84
Trade Union Organizing in Uganda’s Informal Transport Sector	85
Trade Union Organizing in Uganda’s Informal Market Sector	102
Trade Union Organizing in Uganda’s Informal Textile Sector	113
Chapter 4: Conclusion	121
Recommendations	125
References	128
Appendix	144

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. Statistical and legal indicators for s	30
Table 2. Trade union organizing strategies	38
Table 3. Membership affiliation of trade unions included in the case study	60
Table 4. Membership information on the trade unions included in the case study	61
Table 5. Number of interviewees in different sectors and their degree of organization	62
Table 6. List of workplace visits during the research	67
Table 7. Special events attended for the case study	68
Table 8. Trade unions in Uganda’s informal transport sector addressing decent work	101
Table 9. Trade unions in Uganda’s informal market sector addressing decent work	111
Table 10. Trade unions in Uganda’s informal textile sector addressing decent work	119

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
CAD	Canadian Dollar
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
COFTU	Central Organisation of Free Trade Unions
EDT	Elite Development Theory
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HISTADRUT	General Organization of Workers in Israel
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LCD	Labour-Centred Development
LDC	Least Developed Countries
KCCA	Kampala City Council Authority
KOTSA	Kampala Taxi Stages Association

LMKS	Learn Mahila Kamgar Sanghatana
MBO	Membership-Based Organization
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOTU	National Organization of Trade Unions
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUDIKAWA	National Union of Drivers, Cyclists and Allied Workers
PLAVU	Platform for Vendors in Uganda
PSV	Public Service Vehicles
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UMEU	Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
USD	United States Dollar
UTGLAWU	Uganda Textile Leather and Allied Workers' Union
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Organizing
WORD	Women in Informal Employment Organizing Online Database

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Continuous economic growth and increasing international trade since the 1980s have not substantially improved the living and working conditions of the majority of the population in most developing countries. The absence of decent work - which includes the lack of enforceable contracts, adequate earnings, productive work, secure employment, and social protection - is widespread and especially prevalent in the informal economy. The informal economy includes “all economic activities by workers or economic units that are - in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements. ... they are operating outside the formal reach of the law or they are operating within the formal reach of the law, [but] the law is not applied or enforced” (ILO, 2002c). Decent work deficits are particularly prevalent in this section of the economy because labour laws and regulations are not enforced by the authorities or employers. This dissonance between law and practice is relevant for most of the working population globally.

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018, p. 13), in its first-ever worldwide estimation, showed that around 61.2% of the active global labour force outside the agricultural sector worked in the informal economy in 2017. In developing countries, this share is even higher and has been rising for the past four decades¹ (Becker, 2004, p. 52). While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact size of the unregistered and largely unmonitored informal economy, the ILO (2018, p. 91) points out that the rate of informal employment is exceptionally high in Eastern Africa. The estimates for the region suggest that the share of informal workers among the total non-agrarian

¹ No historical data on developed countries were available at the time of the research.

active labour force ranges from 87.9% in Zambia to 93.7% in Uganda (ILO, 2018, p. 91).

Structuralist thinking points out that neither governments nor employers have an interest in addressing the decent work deficit in the informal economy. Benjamin Selwyn (2016a, pp. 781-799) postulates under his ideas around labour-centred development that all informal, formal, and unemployed workers can organize and collectively pressure governments and capital to improve the situation for labouring classes². Through the power of collective struggle, trade unions, for example, can pressure governments to create and enforce legislation already on the books, which can help address the decent work deficit in the informal economy.

One significant barrier to collective action in practice is that trade unions only organize a small share of the informal workforce in developing countries. Through most of the second half of the twentieth century, trade unions in developing countries remained limited to the small and shrinking formal economy, and it was only in the 1990s that they began to integrate workers from the informal economy into their ranks (Birchall, 1999, p. 13; Bonner & Spooner, 2011, p. 87; Chen et al., 2005, p. 88; Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 5, 12). Throughout this organizing process, trade unions

² The global *labouring class* includes formal, informal and unemployed workers across economic sectors. ... Large labouring classes exist in the rural sector as rural wage labourers and unemployed workers, and as disguised workers within peasantries. The definition of labouring class used here illuminates workers' incorporation into and dependence upon the labour market for their social reproduction and the forms of employment and work undertaken following the sale or non-sale of their labour power (Selwyn, 2016b, p. 1036).

usually face external and internal challenges (Pearson, 2004, p. 138). Many unions lack the experience, skills, or resources to act as organizing forces in the informal economy (ILO, 2002b, p. 7). In other cases, national legal frameworks only allow formal employees to organize in trade unions, although informal workers linked to formal enterprises, paid domestic workers, family workers working in formal enterprises, casual wage workers, home-based workers, and self-employed workers are also part of the labouring classes in the informal economy. Limited resources possessed by the trade unions and informal workers and undemocratic and unrepresentative leadership within informal economy organizations pose further challenges to union organizing in the informal economy (Bonner & Spooner, 2011, pp. 88-92).

In Uganda, trade union organizing in the informal economy has been taking place for more than 15 years, but most academic literature continues to overlook the topic. Beginning in the 1980s, Uganda has implemented neoliberal development policies, which were recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. While promoted as measures to alleviate poverty and to grow the economy, these policies have failed to bring about development benefits for most Ugandans. For example, the prevalence of undernourishment in the population has risen from 24% in 2004 to 41% in 2016 (World Bank, 2019). The lack of decent work also reflects the unfortunate developmental situation of Uganda. For instance, almost all workers lack social security and written employment contracts or suffer from underemployment and unemployment. For these reasons, Uganda is an excellent case to examine trade union organizing in a highly informalized labour market and its impact on decent work, testing the assumptions of labour-centred development.

This chapter will lay the ground for this thesis and its central argument in presenting the core ideas of the labour-centred development (LCD) approach. It will

connect LCD to previous and current research on the informal economy, arguing that trade union organizing in the informal economy of developing countries faces context-specific decent work deficits that do not allow for universal conclusions. Instead, only a context-specific research focus helps to understand the obstacles that trade unions face in different cases.

As the core empirical contribution of the research, this thesis includes a case study that focuses on informal sector organizing by five Ugandan trade unions. The trade unions chosen for this case study were, in the transport sector, the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) and the National Union of Drivers, Cyclists and Allied Workers (NUDIKAWA); two trade unions with the same name in the market sector, the Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union (UMEU), and the Uganda Textile Leather and Allied Workers' Union (UTGLAWU) in the clothing sector. Chapter two will describe the methodology of the case study and introduce the context of trade union organizing in the informal economy in Uganda. Chapter three will examine which methods and strategies trade unions have used to address the decent work deficit in the transport, market, and textile sectors in the informal economy in Uganda, drawing on qualitative interviews with 12 trade union leaders, 56 workers, and five key informants, 14 workplace observations, and an intensive literature review on the history of trade unionism in the country. In the end, the fourth chapter intertwines theories and approaches presented in this thesis with the empirical findings from Uganda and offers recommendations for policymakers and trade union leaders. The section seeks to answer the research question: 'How can trade union organizing in the informal economy contribute further to decent work in Uganda?'

I will argue that trade unions in Uganda can address the decent work deficit in the informal economy on a technical level because they demonstrate that they can

organize, train, and educate the workers as well as improve the workers' access to credit, and guarantee workers' collective representation on a workplace-level. I will also argue that, at the same time, the lack of political organizing hinders the trade unions to challenge the elite-centred development paradigm, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficit in the informal economy in the first place.

Literature review

Labour-Centred Development as the Expansion of Freedom

The definition of and the policies towards *development* are highly contested among scholars and policymakers. Selwyn (2014b, p. 3) summarizes the dominant contemporary development thinking, promoted by major international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, as “neoliberal capitalist.” The neoliberal school of thought is based on selected ideas of Adam Smith, who envisioned “a natural and harmonious market society, in which the self-interested activities of individual entrepreneurs are mediated by the invisible hand of the market to ensure the optimal allocation of resources” (Wilson, 2014, p. 8). With government interference removed from markets, neoliberal thinking argues, market society would ultimately experience development, defined as rapid economic growth, mass consumption, and the general improvement in social and economic indicators. In modern-day developing countries, neoliberal policies to promote development are aimed at removing government influence from the economy (Wilson, 2014, p. 8), which can include economic liberalization³, macroeconomic stabilization⁴, and privatization of state-owned companies. Development in the neoliberal era is regularly measured as the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Wilson, 2014, p. 141). Recent neoliberal thinking

³ *Economic Liberalization* refers to the removal of fixed prices, tariffs, quotas, and licensing of trading firms as well as the legal basis for private property (Wilson, 2014, p. 8).

⁴ *Macroeconomic stabilization* includes cuts in subsidies, “devaluation of the exchange rate and subsequent currency convertibility, positive real interest rates, and restrictions on domestic credit expansion” (Wilson, 2014, p. 16).

goes beyond these indicators and acknowledges the importance of such things as improved literacy levels, health care and access to sanitary facilities. However, it continues to see the free market economy as the basis for development (Wilson, 2014, p. 143). Neoliberalism does not depict the free market itself as a real or potential source of problems, but instead identifies exclusion from the global market or internal governance problem (like authoritarianism, corruption, violent conflict, state interventions in the economy, or the low level of women participation in the labour market) as primary reasons for the lack of development (Giddens, 2000, p. 129).

In contrast, institutionalist thinkers like Ha-Joon Chang (2008, pp. 65-83) and Robert Wade (1989, p. 68) pose statist development thinking as an alternative to neoliberal development. By analyzing the catch-up development policies of East Asian countries in the second half of the twentieth century, the authors point out that development did not occur through unregulated markets. Instead, developing countries provided the right institutional and regulatory environment, so that domestic enterprises grew with the support of the government until they were able to compete with established foreign companies under the conditions of global capitalism. Therefore, statist thinking supports protective policies for native infant industries, including selected trade barriers, import-substitution, subsidies, government spending on research and development, and the establishment of parastatal enterprises (Chang, 2008, pp. 65-83; Selwyn, 2014b, p. 40), all of which would be critiqued by neoliberal thinkers as a distortion of the “harmonious market society.” Once infant industries have grown into competitive global market players, Chang (2008, 65-83) and Wade (1989, p. 68) argue, the country will profit from backward and forward linkages, initiating a positive cycle of economic growth and development.

While constructing his labour-centred development approach, Selwyn (2014, pp. 795-796) critiques the limitations of both neoliberal and statist arguments. Neoliberalism, he argues, ignores increasing social inequality, poor working conditions for the labouring classes, environmental degradation, and undemocratic class power relations; instead, neoliberalism considers welfare states, minimum wages, or labour laws as undesirable distortions of the natural market. On the other hand, Selwyn argues, statist development models based on the cases of East Asia often ignore the excessive labour exploitation, long working hours, and low wages that have been central to their economic success. Hence, Selwyn (2016a, pp. 791-792) concludes that, although development aims at improving the living situation of populations, both neoliberal and statist thinking alike paradoxically propose the continued or intensified exploitation of the largest sector of society for the sake of economic growth and capital accumulation. Selwyn (2016a, p. 785) summarizes these types of thinking as elite development theories (EDTs). Despite significant differences, EDTs have in common that they see the labouring classes as passive objects, which require development inputs from superordinate agents. At the core of the EDTs, Selwyn (2016a, p. 783) argues, is the conviction that those who require development do not have the agency⁵ and power to achieve development for themselves. Instead, they need the guidance of those who

⁵ Strathern (1986, p. 23) defines *agency* as “the means of exerting power and influence to bring about change, whether at the level of the individual, the household, or larger collectivities. Agency has to do with sources of influence and directions of power. Thus, the basic questions that need to be asked are: what mechanisms do people have at their disposal to influence others and to shape the everyday world around them? What capabilities do they have to affect their world and the actions of others?”

“introduce and impose conceptions of and strategies for achieving their development on the poor,” propagating EDTs as the “natural” way to achieve development (Selwyn, 2016b, p. 1036). Selwyn (2016a, p. 783) argues that the paternalist practises of elite development are unable to bring about genuine or just development for the labouring classes because elites are not interested in structural changes that would endanger their privileged position. Hence, he argues that instead of working towards meaningful development, the supporters of EDTs promote minor political reforms without altering the power-relations between labour, capital, and the state, which Selwyn (2016a, p. 784) considers essential for the development process. He concludes that EDTs are unable to address the development needs of the exploited labouring classes, who ultimately need to struggle for development for themselves (Selwyn, 2016a, p. 784).

Furthermore, Selwyn (2014b, pp. 162-164) opposes growth-focused development as it does not necessarily address the needs of the labouring classes. When proposing an alternative target for development, he draws on Amartya Sen and Robert Brenner. In *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) attempts to overcome statist and neoliberal growth-focused thinking and defines development as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (p. 3). He critiques neoliberal and statist ideologies that consider human development indicators such as health and education as mere tools for GDP growth and capital accumulation. Sen (1999) emphasizes that a life free from starvation, under-nourishment, escapable morbidity, premature mortality, political oppression, and illiteracy have an intrinsic value to human beings and reflect development, even if they do not contribute directly to GDP growth or capital accumulation. Selwyn adds to this the work of Brenner (1986, p. 45), who points to the unfreedoms of workers to sell their labour on the market and their subjection to the pressures of competition. The author shows that workers are not free but forced to sell

their labour to survive. Although he acknowledges that workers are free to choose their employer, he emphasizes that the freedom of the workers is limited to sell their labour to a few employers. Brenner (1986, p. 45) argues that these employers attempt to reduce labour costs and wages to remain competitive in the capitalist market. As the employers do not have an interest in changing these power-dynamics, Selwyn (2014, pp. 185-199) concludes from this that only class struggle can achieve better conditions and development for the labouring classes within, against, and beyond capitalism.

Based on Brenner's ideas, Selwyn (2014, p. 197) argues that development in the sense of Sen does not occur through market inclusion and capital accumulation as claimed by neoliberal and statist thinkers but is created through the labouring-classes collective action and organization. Selwyn (2016a, p. 783) argues, in opposition to the EDTs, that labour-centred development allocates the primary agency of development to the labouring classes. He differentiates that this development can either produce positive short-term, medium or long-term outcomes for the workers. Short-term outcomes include, for example, higher wages and better working conditions. Medium and long-term outcomes include the institutionalization of the representation of labouring-classes in decision-making processes. This institutionalization can occur either through trade unions, which Robert Morris (2002) defines as "an organization based on membership of [workers] in various trades, occupations and professions, whose major focus is the representation of its members at the workplace and in the wider society [seeking] to advance its interest through the process of rule-making and collective bargaining" (p. 8), or as institutionalized bureaucratic body within the state (Selwyn, 2014b, p. 6). This institutionalized power of labour, the author argues, can bring about positive developmental outcomes for labouring classes. Dan Gallin (2011, p. 1) undergirds Selwyn's (2014, p. 6) argument as he points out the developmental

achievements of the well-organized labour movement institutionalized in trade unions and labour parties after the second world war in Europe, such as the introduction of the 40-hour-work-week, weekends or social security systems.

One important point, considering different labour regimes globally, is whether the European example can be exported to contemporary developing countries like Uganda. For instance, Bridget Kenny (2011, p. 60) shows how the context of developing countries that underwent neoliberal restructuring of the labour market made trade union leaders often more careerist instead of political. Political in this context refers to challenging existing laws and regulations or the enforcement of such. The author explains this development with the fact that workplace restructuring required technical collective bargaining skills. This technical focus, as opposed to a political focus, of the trade union made highly educated and literate university graduates more fit for the role of trade union leaders than workers. Union officials became deal makers on the shop floor level (Kenny, 2011, p. 60), which is contrary to the LCD approach as it sees the trade unions as political actors representing workers' interest against governments and capital.

Hannah Arendt's (1958, pp. 13-25) ideas help problematize the LCD approach in developing countries like Uganda. She emphasizes that political agency can not operate in the realm of necessity because all energy and time are consumed for survival, not for political thinking or action. The poor do not have the time and resources to engage with politics critically. Kenny (2011, p. 62) supports Arendt's equation and points out that informal, casual workers in the South African retail sector, for instance, appeared, based on her case study, as "dependents," not "peers." Instead of actively shaping the face of the trade union politically, the informal workers perceived the trade union as an access point for resources. It is crucial, then, to address Arendt's concern,

which is specifically relevant in the informal economy in developing countries, where the conditions of labour are more precarious than in the formal labour market. In this context, the structural powers of powerful capital and government, on the one hand, and workers in the informal economy, on the other hand, are in imbalance to the detriment of the workers, which poses barriers for LCD. While Selwyn (2014, p. 1) critiques that decent work fails to depart from capitalist thinking entirely, he fails to present an indicator to reify the removal of unfreedoms of workers under capitalism.

Decent Work: Development Indicator under Capitalism

While labour-centred development points out that the agency for development is with those who require development themselves, it fails to provide a precise mechanism to measure, assess, and operationalize development. The concept of *decent work*, which is today part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), can help fill this gap in the area of employment, social protection, workers' rights and social dialogue. It sets several normative development goals with the conditions of labour as a central component of human development under capitalism. Decent work, according to the website of the ILO (2019), encompasses:

Opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for decent development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

The ILO presents 11 measurable indicators, which define decent work and can be used to assess the developmental situation of workers in the informal economy in the

developing world. The first dimension of decent work, employment opportunities, relates to the jobs available in the formal economy, the government's commitment to full employment, and the existence of unemployment insurances (ILO, 2013b, p. 14). Informal workers in developing countries *ipso facto* are not able or willing to find jobs in the formal economy (Brown and Lyons, 2010, p. 33; Chen et al., 2002, p. 14). Informal workers struggle to find an occupational niche because they lack the necessary infrastructure, customers, equipment, licenses, workplaces or materials to perform their economic activities (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 20-22). For example, Kwasi Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 5) reports based on his case study that informal workers in urban Ghana often lack the general infrastructure, environmental sanitation, essential tools, and marketing opportunities to perform their economic activity efficiently. In a literature survey, Chen et al. (2005, p. 21) conclude that street and market vendors in the developing world often lack sewage, water, storage, and shelter facilities, which makes it difficult or in some cases impossible to set up a workplace as an informal self-employed worker or find employment as a casual employee. Gunilla Andrae and Björn Beckman (2011, p. 19) report in another example about Lagos, Nigeria, where informal self-employed tailors engaging in small-scale operations have difficulties in getting access to the electrical grid, which they need for the operation of modern sewing machines. In another instance, Emmanuel Awuah (1997, pp. 412-413) describes in his case study how the negligence of public infrastructure impeded informal market vendors on the Kumasi Central Market in Ghana in performing their economic activities:

The drainage system, which involved provision of outlets for rainwater to flow out of the market, was not well maintained. The drains had been choked with wastes from the activities of traders, as well as sand which had washed into the

drainage system, resulting in offensive odors. The drains were blocked, and hence water could not flow out of the market. The traders suffered a lot of damage whenever it rained, and the market was flooded. Water entered the stalls and soaked the commodities packed in boxes. They filed complaints with the Market Manager, but very little was done about it. Thus, some traders were forced to hire the services of private workers to clear the choked drainage in front of their stores/stalls. Sanitation in the market was also in a terrible shape. Wastes included materials such as leaves, papers for wrapping food, and empty cartons. The high humidity experienced in the city promoted rapid decay of wastes when they piled up in the market.

This example shows how the failure by the authorities to provide the required infrastructure inhibits employment opportunities for informal workers (Awuah, 1997, pp. 412-413).

Many informal workers in developing countries experience short-term employment, unemployment or underemployment regularly (Mosoeta, 2001, p. 193-194). For example, Paula Kantor, Uma Rani, and Jeemol Unni (2006, p. 2097) report about Surat, India, where underemployment varies across different economic sectors and occupational groups within the informal economy. The case study shows that men experienced, on average, 66 days per year in unemployment. This number stood at 90 days per year for women, while the public unemployment insurance only covered the formal workforce (Kantor, Rani, & Unni, 2006, p. 2097).

The second dimension of decent work refers to adequate earnings and productive work (ILO, 2013a, p. 14-15). Chen et al. (2005, p. 5) and Sher Singh Verick (2006, pp. 6-7) identify in their literature surveys substandard and fluctuating incomes

in the informal economy. Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2095) find, for example, that in the case of 814 sampled informal workers from different economic sectors in Surat, India, the average income of men was at 2.28 Canadian dollars (CAD⁶) and of women at 0.69 CAD per day. Only 56.9% of the workers in the sample reported that they save regularly, which shows that the low incomes in many cases do not allow for saving for the future. Informal workers have low individual bargaining power with buyers, suppliers, and exploitive intermediaries when setting the price for a good or a service, which also negatively affects their net income (Chen et al., 2005, p. 21-22; Pearson, 2004, p. 145). Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 4) confirms in a case study that urban informal food traders, such as food sellers in the market, itinerant wholesalers and retailers, bakers, caterers, and cooked-food sellers, in Ghana have low incomes. Kenny (2011, p. 50) reports, based on her case study, that casual, informal retail employees in South African supermarket chains suffer from substandard wages.

The third dimension of decent work, decent work timing, is based on core indicators such as regulations concerning maximum hours of work, breaks and paid annual leave (ILO, 2013b, p. 15). Multiple literature surveys of case studies on the informal economy, such as Chen et al. (2005, p. 21) or Verick (2006, pp. 6-7), show that the informal economy in developing countries lacks the enforcement of work time regulations. Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2095), for example, find that in a case study on 814 informal workers from different employment statuses in Surat, India, 86.2% of the male workers and 44.2% of the female workers reported that they work more than 48 hours per week. A quarter of the respondents indicated that they would like to work more hours, which the authors explain stem from meagre wages and unpaid days during frequent periods of unemployment. Out of the 279 sampled informal

⁶ All currency exchange rates as of August 2019.

workers, no respondent had received paid holidays. 0.8% of the workers reported that they had received paid medical care. In another case study from Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Mosoeta (2001, p. 193) indicates that casual, informal footwear industrial workers have no fixed work hours, work from Monday to Sunday, and sometimes sleep on their premises to meet the demand from retail stores. Another case study by Marilyn Thomson (2009, p. 288) shows that Mexican informal domestic workers are not paid for overtime and not protected by labour law regulations, which limit the regular work time per day to eight hours.

In the informal economy of developing countries, laws and regulations around the fourth decent work dimension, combining work, family, and personal life, such as regulations on parental leave, night work, and income protection around the time of birth, are weakly – if at all – enforced. Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 4), for example, points out that Ghanaian informal workers lack maternity rights. Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2095) show in another case that out of 279 sampled informal workers in Surat, India, no respondent had received paid paternal leave. None of the 814 informal workers in the case study by Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006) reported that they take their children to nursing facilities. Instead, the informal workers need to turn to family or other forms of informal support systems for nursing and childcare. 48% of the female and 2% of the male informal workers in the Surat case study reported that they bring their children to their workplaces. In other cases, spouses, other children of the family, or other relatives cared for the children (Kantor, Rani, & Unni, 2006, p. 2095).

The fifth dimension of decent work, work that should be abolished, is reflected in the child labour rate, the ban of hazardous child labour and forced labour (ILO, 2013b, p. 15). Andrea Schapper (2009, p. 15) reports that hazardous child labour is often present in the informal economy of developing countries. Verick (2006, pp. 6-7) states

that a higher proportion of children are employed in the informal economy globally than in the formal economy. In another example, Salma Ahmed and Ranjan Ray (2014, p. 115) conclude from a case study in Bangladesh that most children in the informal economy lack protective clothing or equipment in dangerous workplaces, which makes the work extremely hazardous.

Regulations around the sixth dimension of decent work, stability and security of work, like the protection against arbitrary dismissal and legislation on hiring and firing, are not or only weakly enforced in the informal economy of developing countries. Kalyan Shankar and Rohini Sahni (2017, p. 246), for example, estimate that 420 million workers in the informal economy in India are without protection against arbitrary dismissal because they lack the relevant formal documentation to claim their rights in a labour dispute. Mosoeta (2001, p. 194) reports based on another case study that informal footwear employees in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, are replaced easily by unemployed workers because they lack the legal documentation to prove the employment relationship. These circumstances make it impossible for them to claim their labour rights with authorities, which were set up to protect the workers from managerial malpractice. Kenny (2011, p. 50) reports the same for casual, informal retail employees in South African supermarket chains. Another example is presented by Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 5), who states that urban informal workers in Ghana from different occupational groups suffer from job insecurity.

The seventh dimension of decent work, equal opportunity and treatment in employment for women, refers to the gender inequality within the economy but does not explicitly include racialized peoples or migrant workers. There is a broad agreement in the literature that the informal economy especially disadvantages women regarding remuneration, treatment, and status (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 5; Horn, 2010, p.

273; Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 70). Caroline Skinner and Imraan Valodia (2003, p. 433), for instance, point out that women in South Africa are overrepresented in the informal economy in general and, additionally, mostly found in the lower-income segments of the informal economy. Women in the informal economy, in most cases, lack safe and affordable daycare for their dependants, income protection before and after birth, physical security, protection from sexual harassment, equal income for equal value work, and access to higher-income opportunities (Chen et al., 2005, p. 21; Chen, Bonner & Carré, 2015, pp. 20-22).

The eighth dimension of decent work, a safe working environment, refers to the existence and enforcement of regulations on employment injury benefits and occupational safety and health. Work in the informal economy is frequently hazardous because governments fail to enforce labour laws and regulations. Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2094), for example, show in Surat, India, that the informal workers reported in only 55% of the cases that the health and safety conditions at their workplace are satisfactory. At the same time, 60.2% of male and 54.1% of female workers reported that their work has adverse health effects. Waste pickers, recyclers, miners, transport and sex workers are especially prone to unsafe working environments. Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 5), for example, reports that informal urban workers in Ghana often lack health care facilities, training on occupational health and safety, or protective clothing. Awuah (1997, pp. 412-413) shows in another example that informal market vendors on Kumasi Central Market in Ghana lacked equipment for emergency fire outbreaks, although fires frequently occurred in the market. One of them occurred in 1987, engulfing 120 stores in two sections of the market. The relevant market managers restored the stores and reallocated them to the informal own-account workers but did not pay compensation for the goods destroyed. Another safety hazard in this regard was related to broken gates.

Thefts stole goods from the workers during the night, but the market authority did not compensate the workers for their loss due to their unregistered status (Awuah, 1997, pp. 412-413). The case shows that the undocumented nature of their employment makes it difficult for the workers to claim rights or compensations when reaching out to the authorities.

Social security, the ninth dimension of decent work, include such regulations as old-age social security, pension benefits, or health and workplace injury insurance. Employment in the informal economy is undeclared and, hence, lacks, in almost all cases, social security (Gërxhani, 2004, p. 274; ILO, 2002a, pp. 64-65). Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2095), for example, demonstrate that out of 279 sampled informal workers in Surat, India, no respondent had received pension payments or disability benefits. Mosoeta (2001, p. 194) shows in another case study example that paid sick leave is not provided to informal footwear workers in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 5), in another instance, demonstrates that informal workers in urban Ghana lack social protection against income losses during sickness, annual leave, and maternity rights. Andrae and Beckman (2013, p. 197) point out in a case study that the 2004 "Pension Act and National Health Insurance Scheme" did not cover informal tailors in the Nigerian city of Lagos.

The tenth dimension of decent work, social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation, is reflected by the freedom of association, collective bargaining rights, and tripartite consultations. Dharam Ghai (2003, p. 132) shows that social dialogue is essential in a democracy because it enables different social and economic groups to settle their inevitable conflicts of interest with the public authorities peacefully and cooperatively. In the informal economy, social dialogue can take place at different levels: "between employers and employees in relation to terms and conditions of

employment; between the management and workers over the functioning of an enterprise; and between social partners and public authorities on social and economic policy”, between tenants’ associations and landlords over the terms of tenancy; it can extend to a farmers’ association with traders or marketing bodies about the prices for their products, or it can extend to negotiations of informal workers with banks over the terms of credit; organizations of home-based workers can conduct social dialogue with their suppliers; informal-sector employees can collectively negotiate with enterprise owners on their terms of employment. Organized own-account workers can negotiate with different levels of government or the business partners over issues relating to property rights, rents and prices.

Furthermore, Ghai (2003, p. 133) adds another concept to social dialogue, which includes the idea of economic democracy that expands the understanding of social dialogue to include giving workers decision-making power and direct democratic control over an enterprise or the state. In enterprises, workers can get decision-making power on governing boards and management committees, occupational health and safety committees, playing a role in the administration of training, and human resource development programmes. On the state level, economic democracy can relate to the participation of trade unions, employers’ organizations, and civil society in policymaking. Areas of interest for the representatives of different economic groups are, for example, macroeconomic management, government expenditure, taxation, interest rates, foreign trade, minimum wages, employment policies, credit, or training. Susan Hayter and Valentina Stoevska (2011, p. 3) point out that informal workers globally are, in most cases, not members of trade unions, less organized than the formal economy, and therefore often excluded from legally recognized institutions or social dialogue structures.

The eleventh dimension of decent work, social and economic context, is generally deficient in many developing countries and extends to an array of issues. The social and economic context could, for example, refer to training and education received during the work in the informal economy. Hart (1973, p. 67), for example, points out the positive effects regarding the skill acquisition of workers in the informal economy. Kantor, Rani, and Unni (2006, p. 2099), however, report from a case study on informal workers from different sectors in India, in which the training received in the informal economy on average was only a fifth of the training received in the formal economy. The small amount of time devoted to training raises questions of how systematic the teaching in the informal economy is and how well the workers retain the knowledge (Kantor, Rani, & Unni, 2006, p. 2099).

Another aspect that is relevant under the decent work, social and economic context, is the rule of law. The informal economy is characterized in many cases by the absence of the rule of law and low social standing for workers, which includes weak or no contract enforcement and property rights. In many cases, legally documented property rights are the prerequisite to access legal protection, private insurances, credits, and loan schemes. Adu-Amankwah (1999, p. 4), for example, reports in his case study that informal workers in the urban setting in Ghana lack the opportunities to access loans due to the lack of legal documents. The author describes that labour legislation in the areas of worker's compensation, labour inspection, annual and maternity leave mostly ignore casual, informal labour. Regarding regulatory institutions such as Public Employment Centres, Labour Inspectorate and Minimum Wage-Fixing and Monitoring Machinery did not exist or did not enforce the law (Adu-Amankwah, 1999, p. 4).

From a legal perspective, the absence of the rule of law makes workers in the informal economy highly dependant on the decisions made by governments and large

enterprises (ILO, 2002a, p. 3). Transport workers, sex workers, street vendors, market vendors, and women of all sectors suffer from harassment or abuse by the police, co-workers, employers, or customers (Chen et al., 2005, pp. 20-22). As workers in the informal economy mostly lack representation and do not have the same access to public infrastructure and benefits, they have less influence and resources than their formal market competitors, which also affects fair competition with formal economy competitors or in dispute with the police, co-workers, employers, or customers (Chen et al., 2005, pp. 20-22).

In summary, this thesis draws on decent work indicators and the labour-centred development approach as complementary. While the decent work criteria define measurable goals about what development can or should mean in the labour-context under capitalism, the labour-centred development approach describes in which ways this development can be brought about. Moreover, the cases illustrated strongly indicate that most income opportunities in the informal economy in developing countries such as Uganda are in practice characterized by low skill levels, low earnings, job impermanence, and low returns to education or experience, which means that they do not meet the standards set by the ILO for decent work. The structuralist school of thought on the informal economy theorizes about the ways the decent work deficits described come into existence.

Table 1. Statistical and Legal Indicators for Decent Work

	Statistical Indicators	Legal Framework Indicators
Employment Opportunities	<p>Employment-to-population ratio; Unemployment rate; Youth not in employment, education, or training; Informal employment rate; Labour force participation rate; Youth unemployment rate; Unemployment by level of educational attainment; Employment by status in employment; Proportion of own-account workers and contributing family workers in total employment; Share of wage employment in non-agricultural employment; Labour underutilization</p>	<p>Government commitment to full employment; Unemployment insurance</p>
Adequate Earning and Productive Work	<p>Working poverty rate; Employees with low pay rate (below 2/3 of median hourly earnings); Statutory minimum wage; Average hourly earnings by occupation group; Average real wages; Minimum wage as a percentage of median wage; Manufacturing wage index; Employees with recent job training (past year / past 4 weeks)</p>	<p>Government commitment to full employment; Unemployment insurance</p>
Decent Work Timing	<p>Employment in Excessive Working Time (more than 48 hours per week); Employment by weekly hours worked (hours in standardized hour bands); Average annual working time per employed person; Time-related underemployment rate; Paid annual leave</p>	<p>Maximum hours of work; Paid annual leave</p>
Combining work, family, and personal life	<p>Asocial / unusual hours; Maternity protection</p>	<p>Maternity leave (including weeks of leave, and rate of benefits); Parental leave</p>
Work that should be abolished	<p>Child labour rate; Hazardous child labour rate; Rate of worst forms of child labour (WFCL) other than hazardous work; Forced labour rate; Forced labour rate among returned migrants</p>	<p>Child labour (including public policies to combat it); Forced labour (including public policies to combat it)</p>

Table 1. Statistical and Legal Indicators for Decent Work (Continuation I)

	Statistical Indicators	Legal Framework Indicators
Stability and security of work	Precarious employment rate; Job tenure; Subsistence worker rate; Real earnings of casual workers	Termination of employment (incl. notice of termination in weeks)
Equal Opportunity and treatment in employment	Occupational segregation by sex; Female share of employment in senior and middle management; Gender wage gap; Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; Indicator for Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; Measure for discrimination by race / ethnicity / of indigenous people / of (recent) migrant workers / of rural workers; Measure of dispersion for sectoral / occupational distribution of (recent) migrant workers; Measure for employment of persons with disabilities	Equal opportunity and treatment; Equal remuneration of men and women for work of equal value
Safe work environment	Occupational injury frequency rate; Time lost due to occupational injuries; Labour inspection (inspectors per 10,000 employed persons)	Employment injury benefits; Occupational safety and health (OSH) labour inspection
Social security	Share of population above the statutory pensionable age (or aged 65 or above) benefiting from an old-age pension; Public social security expenditure (percentage of GDP); Healthcare expenditure not financed out of pocket by private households; Share of economically active population contributing to a pension scheme; Share of population covered by (basic) health care provision; Public expenditure on needs based cash income support (% of GDP); Beneficiaries of cash income support (% of the poor); Sick leave	Old-age social security or pension benefits (public/private); Incapacity for work due to sickness / sick leave; Incapacity for work due to invalidity

Table 1. Statistical and Legal Indicators for Decent Work (Continuation II)

	Statistical Indicators	Legal Framework Indicators
Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation	Trade union density rate; Employers' organization density rate; Collective bargaining coverage rate; Indicator for Fundamental principles and rights at work (Freedom of association and collective bargaining); Days not worked due to strikes and lockouts	Freedom of association and the right to organize; Collective bargaining right; Tripartite consultations
Economic and social context for decent work	Children not in school (percentage by age); Estimated percentage of working-age population who are HIV-positive; Labour productivity (GDP per employed person, level and growth rate); Income inequality (90:10 ratio); Inflation rate; Employment by branch of economic activity; education, training and lifelong learning; entrepreneurial culture; enabling legal and regulatory framework; fair competition; rule of law and secure property rights; Education of adult population (adult literacy rate, adult secondary school graduation rate); Labour share of Gross Value Added (GVA); Real GDP per capita (level and growth rate) C (additional); Female share of employment by economic activity; Poverty measures	

Note. Adapted from “ILO (2013b). *Decent Work Indicators. Guidelines for Producers and Users of Statistical and Legal Framework Indicators.* Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Structuralism and Employment in the Informal Economy

Historically, the colonial economies in the 1950s and the 1960s were conceptualized by contemporary economists as being divided into two different spheres: the “traditional” sector of the economy, which was characterized by pre-capitalist modes of production, subsistence agriculture and low productivity, and the “modern” sector of the economy, which was characterized by government regulation, standard taxation and bureaucracy (Hart, 1973, p. 68; Potts, 2008, p. 152). Dominant development thinking of the 1950s and 1960s predicted that the traditional sector would progressively disappear with economic growth and the expansion of capitalist modes of

production (Palmer, 2004, p. 3). Keith Hart's (1973) landmark study for the International Labour Organization "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana" was the genesis of the informal sector concept⁷. Hart (1973, p. 68) found that the traditional sector did not automatically disappear with economic growth and replaced the idea of a transient modern-traditional dichotomy with an informal-formal sector dichotomy as two independent economic spheres.

The structuralist school of thought on the informal economy emerged in the 1980s. It highlighted three central issues relevant to this thesis. Firstly, the structuralists introduced the notion that the informal economy needs to be understood as part of global capitalism and not as an independent economic sphere, which expresses itself in two different ways: First, the (growing) informal economy is a universal phenomenon, which is not just limited to developing countries, but is also present in and influenced by the economies of developed countries (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, pp. 40-48). Klarita Gërxhani (2004, pp. 269-293) emphasizes in this context that the historical, legal and political context shapes the informal economy in different ways in different areas of the world. As different countries and even subnational regions have differing social,

⁷ *Informal economy* excludes the criminal economy, such as illicit drug dealing or human trafficking, and the family care economy (De Soto, 1989, p. 11; ILO, 2014, p. 68; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 31). Synonyms used for informal economy: 'bazaar-economy' (Geertz, 1978, p. 28), 'unstructured sector' (Emmerij, 1974, pp. 199-200), 'unofficial sector' (Johnson, Kaufmann, & Shleifer, 1997, p. 159; Johnson, Kaufman, & Zoido-Lobaton, 1998; p. 387), or 'underground economy' (Schneider & Enste, 2000, pp. 9-10; Tanzi, 1999, p. 346).

historical, political and economic contexts, conclusions or policy recommendations for the informal economy ought to be case-specific.

Second, the structuralists argue that governments and capital under neoliberalism do not implement formalization policies favouring decent work unless they are pressured by organized labour to do so. Alejandro Portes and Saskia Sassen-Koob (1987, pp. 55-56) elaborate that poor working conditions and low earnings of the informal workers translate into low labour costs for the employer. Therefore, transnational enterprises have an interest in investing in an economy dominated by informal labour relations as labour is cheap. Also, enterprises can circumvent costly laws, regulations, and taxes (Haller & Portes, 2005, p. 409), which increases the profit margin of investors and makes the enterprise more competitive in the global capitalist system. Foreign investment, in turn, provides governments of developing countries with foreign currency reserves. As governments of developing countries rely on this income, they do not have an interest in fostering decent work as it may frustrate foreign investment. Hence, the structuralists conclude that governments give enterprises the freedom to opt-out of the formal economy to reduce labour costs and increase their competitiveness and profit (Mosoeta, 2001, p. 187). Gallin (2011) argues that trusting governments to formalize the informal economy under global capitalism gradually is “unrealistic and only fosters dangerous complacency” (p. 531) because they have the interest to work against and undermine their own formal decent work policies. The structuralist analysis about the roles of labour, capital, and government described here links to LCD: both conclude that not governments or capital, but labour is the only agent interested in bringing about decent work for the majority population under capitalism.

The second structuralist contribution to the informal economy debate is that not only employees qualify for trade union organizing in the informal economy. They

define informal workers as the sum of informal workers linked to formal enterprises, paid domestic workers, family workers working in formal enterprises, casual wage workers, home-based workers, and self-employed workers (Chen, 2012, p. 7; Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 3-7; Harding & Jenkins, 1989, pp. 103-149; Hussmanns, 2004, pp. 4-8; Pearson, 2004, p. 138)⁸. Portes and Sassen-Koob (1987, p. 37) explain that different non-employee employment statuses in the informal economy equate with subcontracted or out-put workers for the formal economy. Susan J. Schurman and Adrienne E. Eaton (2013, p. 8) elaborate that capital and neoliberal thinking only redefined workers in potential or former employee-employer relationships as self-employed workers or employers under neoliberalism. Governments gave employers the option to casualize employment relationships. In other cases, enterprises and subcontractors distanced or mediated potential formal employment relationships to save labour costs and increase the margin of profit. The structuralists argue that this redefinition has not changed the nature of the work itself, and informal workers continue

⁸ The occupational groups in the informal economy are diverse and mirror almost all occupations found in the private and sometimes the public formal economy. The informal service economy in developing countries includes wholesalers and retailers, health and sanitation workers, mechanics, graphic designers, audio-visual workers, hairdressers, barbers, sex workers, transport workers, shop owners, street and market vendors, shoe-shiners, garbage collectors, restaurant and hotel workers, food processors, domestic workers, rag pickers and other service providers. Outside the informal service economy, one can find informal construction workers, manufacturing workers, plantation workers (Adu-Amankwah, 1999, p. 4), miners (Benya, 2015, pp. 70-74) and many other occupational groups.

to supply fully registered companies or traders with their labour (Mosoeta, 2001, p. 202; Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 38). The examples for the hidden supply chains of informal labour to formal enterprises are numerous. Informal retailers and street vendors distribute products from the light industry to customers. Street collectors and garbage dump collectors supply formal recycling factories. Formal architectural firms subcontract informal construction workers. Western footwear companies outsource work to casual workers in developing countries. The structuralists infer from their conclusion that informal workers linked to formal enterprises, paid domestic workers, family workers working for formal enterprises, casual wage workers, home-based workers, and self-employed workers in the informal economy are, as part of the labouring classes, eligible for trade union organizing (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 38).

The structuralists elaborate further on the class components of the informal economy, which marks their third significant contribution to the informal economy debate relevant for this thesis. While previous schools of thought on the informal economy saw informal workers as one monolithic block, the structuralists divided the informal economy into two different classes (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 37). One class organizes and exploits informal labour and directly engages with formal capital. They constitute the capitalists of the informal economy, i.e. the owners of the means of production who do not participate in labour themselves. The other class position is the informal proletariat, i.e. the sum of workers who sell their labour to the owners of the means of production. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this proletariat does not just include employees, but also own-account workers or unpaid contributing family members. The earnings of the informal proletariat are much lower and insecure than the one of their formal counterparts, Portes and Sassen-Koob (1987, p. 40) argue. While the

income of the capitalists can be much higher than in the formal economy, they are, however, also more erratic. The structuralists conclude from this that the entry into the informal economy is for most people not a choice between formal and informal employment but a survival mechanism in the absence of decent formal employment opportunities (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 40).

In conclusion, the structuralists argue that trade unions need to organize the working class of the informal economy, which includes informal workers linked to formal enterprises, paid domestic workers, family workers working in formal enterprises, casual wage workers, home-based workers, and informal self-employed workers to pressure governments and capital to implement decent work-orientated formalization policies. Trade unions need to act politically to achieve this. The following theoretical debate will reflect on the necessary organizing strategies trade unions need to apply in the informal economy to achieve this goal.

Trade Union Organizing: Community and Business Unionism

The ILO emphasizes that the organization of informal workers in trade unions contributes to decent work (Justice, 2012, pp. 5-9). However, the decent work concept fails to describe the mechanisms of how trade union organizing results in decent work (Sehnbruch, Burchell, Agloni, & Piasna, 2015, p. 200). As described earlier, the LCD approach and structuralism see the agency for development with the informal workers in political trade unions. Standing (1997, p. 31) points out that weekends, the 40-hour-workweek, and other developmental accomplishments were achieved under a well-organized, politically powerful labour movement in large-scale factories. The author emphasizes that the conditions of employee-centred trade unions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differed to the situation from the informal economy of developing

countries today, which may impede the potential of trade unions as development actors. Kenny (2011, p. 47) emphasizes that the trade unions in the developing world must adapt their organizing strategies to the privatized, commodified, casualized cultural space of the informal economy under neoliberal capitalism to be able to facilitate informal worker organizing.

In practice, the national legal framework on who is eligible to join a trade union differs from one national context to the other and, therefore, defines strategies and methods of trade union organizing in the informal economy (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 10-12; Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 5). In countries where trade unions are only allowed to organize formal employees, trade unions can either collectively bargain to formalize workplaces or organize informal workers in affiliated workers' associations, cooperatives, or self-help groups (Bonner & Spooner, 2011, pp. 97-100; Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 12). However, the informal economy is, in many cases, already organized, for example in associations, saving unions, or cooperatives, before the trade union intervenes. Trade unions cooperate with and, in some instances, integrate those structures in the trade union framework when organizing the informal economy (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13). While trade union members enjoy full membership and voting rights, members in organizations affiliated with trade unions do not always have a direct electoral influence on the trade union bureaucracy or agenda-setting. In many cases, amendments to the constitution of the trade unions need to be undertaken to facilitate this process. In other instances, in which legal or financial thresholds prevent informal workers from becoming full trade union members, trade unions established special membership categories designed for informal workers (Bonner & Spooner, 2011, p. 97-100; Gallin, 2001, p. 540; Horn, Bonner, & Jonfes, 2008, p. 8). In some rare cases, workers' organizations from the informal economy

evolved into formally recognized trade unions. Trade unions also provide ad-hoc services for informal workers without organizing them in legal entities (Baah in Ryklief, 2012, p. 12).

Besides the national laws and regulations on trade union membership, the economic sector tends to determine the legal framework under which informal workers organize. In a literature survey, Martha Chen, Chris Bonner and Françoise Carré (2015, p. 17) point out that domestic workers tend to unite in formal-informal or informal workers' trade unions; transport workers tend to establish formal-informal workers' trade unions; home-based workers and street vendors set up informal workers' unions or non-union organizations; waste pickers tend to form non-union organizations; and agricultural workers tend to unite in trade unions and non-union organizations.⁹

It is unclear how many trade unions bring together workers in the informal economy on a global scale. In March 2019, the “Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing” (WIEGO, 2018) online database WORD showed 310 trade unions worldwide active in the informal economy.¹⁰ 99 (31.9%) of the trade unions organize informal workers in Africa, 98 (31.6%) in Asia and the Pacific Region, 61 (19.7%) in South America, 40 (12.9%) in Europe, six (1.9%) in the Caribbean, and another six (1.9%) in North America. 101 (32.6%) of these 310 unions organize domestic workers, 70 (22.5%) organize vendors, 40 (12.9%) organize transport workers, 28 (9.0%) organize home-based workers, 24 (7.7%) organize agricultural

⁹ The findings are not further contextualized or explained.

¹⁰ It is unclear whether this list includes all trade unions in the informal economy. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the degree or extent to which the trade unions listed are engaged in organizing activities.

workers, 11 (3.5%) organize construction workers, seven (2.2%) organize sex workers, and six (1.9%) bring together waste pickers. The membership of the organizations varies from a few dozen to more than one million members (WIEGO, 2018).

Standing (1997, p. 31) points out that different strategies of trade union organizing are more capable of improving the situation of informal workers than others (see Table 2). “Business unionism,” for example, uses the “servicing model” of trade union organizing, which does not need a lot of resources as it limits the scope of operation for trade unions to struggle with employers over wages and working conditions for their members. However, many workers in the informal economy do not have formal employers trade unions could bargain with (Ross, 2007, p. 16-17). Moreover, as described, many of the decent work deficits in the informal economy go beyond the workplace-level and need to be addressed through the struggle with governments and influential capital. However, as business unionism remains confined to the workplace, the leadership of a business union is most likely, technical and apolitical. Hence, business unionism is unable to address the needs of the informal workforce.

In opposition to business unionism, Standing (1997, p. 31) proposes “community unionism” for informal worker organizing, which is sometimes referred to as or includes social unionism, union-community coalitions, social justice unionism, citizenship movement unionism, social movement unionism, class unionism, One Big Union unionism, or syndicalism (Ross, 2007, p. 17). Community unions represent the labouring classes in the broader society, not just the employees of one enterprise. They engage not just in negotiations around wages and working conditions on the shop floor but also struggle with governments and influential capital to bring about development

for the broader society (Andrae & Beckman, 2011, 36-39; Lindell, 2011, p. 11; Webb & Webb, 1897, pp. 809-830).

Table 2. Trade union organizing strategies

Trade Union...	Community Unionism ("Organizing Model")	Business Unionism ("Servicing Model")
represents the interest of...	Working Class	Workers in one workplace
...preliminary bargains with...	Governments and influential capital	Managers
...bargains over...	Labour laws and regulations and the enforcement of such	Wages and working conditions
Nature of bargaining	Political	Technical
Scope of resources and manpower involved	High	Low

Marx (1867, pp. 623-633) supports community unionist thinking by arguing that unorganized and unrepresented unemployed workers function as an "industrial reserve army" of labour in the capitalist system. This industrial reserve army keeps down wages and labour standards by threatening employed workers with easy replacement (Amin, 1976, pp. 351-364; Faniel, 2009, pp. 137-138). Madhura Swaminathan (1991, p. 31) draws a comparison between the informal and unemployed, describing the informal economy as a reserve army of unemployed and underemployed workers for the formal economy capitalists. Informal workers threaten formal workers with easy replacement, which limits the bargaining power of formal workers with employers over better wages and working conditions even if they are organized in trade unions. Hence, the well-being of formal workers depends on the wellbeing of informal workers. Thus, Swaminathan (1991, p. 31) argues that trade unions need to represent the whole workforce, combining informal and formal workers. Friedrich Engels (1845, p. 151) argues that trade unions can organize workers in dualist labour markets based on a shared feeling of identity as a class, a so-called class orientation. Standing (1997, p. 31)

concludes that trade unions representing informal workers need to engage in the broader society as community unions to represent and advance the interest of their members (Standing, 1997, p. 31). In practice, business unionism and community unionism do not represent two distinct spheres but are the ends of a continuum, i.e. most trade unions reflect characteristics of both types of trade union organizing.

In the context of community unionism, Standing (1997, p. 31) warns of the effects expressed by the insider-outsider theory, whose core element is based on the idea of a “dualist labour market,” in which some labour market participants have more privileged positions than others (Lindbeck & Snower, 2001, p. 165). On the one hand, the privileged labour market participants constitute the “core constituency,” which is more powerful due to its more favourable employment conditions. On the other hand, the “peripheral constituency” consists of the economic actors outside of this core constituency and is in a weaker position. The insider-outsider theory argues that trade union strategies value the interest of the core constituency over the potentially divergent or opposing interest of the peripheral constituency (Hyman, 2001, pp. 30-31; Linders & Kalander, 2007, p. 117), which becomes especially evident in times of conflict of interest between the two groups.

The insider-outsider theory argues that the reason for the supremacy of the core-constituency is that it dominates decision making (Lindell, 2011, p. 8). The core constituency elects a strong bureaucracy from its ranks to engage in bargaining with managers and governments. This bureaucracy has executive decision-making power and is an access point for resources (Kenny, 2011, p. 61). Due to its desire to maintain and amplify this position of power in a democratic trade union system, where union leaders must concern themselves with mobilizing support from the core membership, the bureaucracy tends to be out of touch with the peripheral constituency issues (Lindell,

2011, p. 7; Standing, 1997, p. 30). Instead, it focuses on the needs of its core constituency electorate (Hyman, 1975, pp. 78-79). This focus on the issues of the core constituency, in turn, influences the trade union's agenda-setting and resource allocation of trade unions, often neglecting the needs of peripheral workers.

The insider-outsider theory has been applied to the informal-formal context and community unionism. If organizing the informal workforce takes place, insider-outsider dynamics in trade unions dominated by formal workers may occur to the detriment of informal workers (Standing, 1997, pp. 30-32). Aliem Yun (2011, p. 164), for example, reports how formal workers in a South Korean Hyundai Factory in a time of job cuts prevented informal workers from joining the trade union because they feared dismissals and that the trade union's agenda could neglect formal workplaces. Hence, the formal workers hoped that the unprotected informal workers would be fired instead of them because the informal workers lacked the protection of the union. If the informal workers joined the union, they would be more protected than the formal workers as their workplace benefits are associated with higher labour costs for employers. If both groups of workers enjoy union protection, the formal workers may be more at risk of dismissals than the cheaper informal workplaces (Yun, 2011, p. 164).

In summary, Standing suggests that trade unions must strategically position themselves as “community trade unions” – instead of “business unions” – if they seek to address the challenge the system of laws and regulations that produce and reproduce decent work deficits in the informal economy of developing countries. At the same time, the community unionist organizing needs to consider formal-informal divisions within the workforce. In the following, this thesis will examine which trade union methods are used to overcome the challenges of informal economy organizing.

Methods of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy

While the trade union strategies mentioned in the previous paragraphs define the scope and nature of trade union organizing, methods of trade union organizing define the procedures a trade union can employ to address the decent work deficit among informal workers. Chen, Bonner, and Carré (2015, p. 13) identify four standard core methods that are part of traditional trade union organizing in the formal economy. The first core method of trade union organizing is collective bargaining with employers or contractors. The ILO's C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154) defines collective bargaining as "taking place between an employer and employees to achieve a collective agreement, primarily around wages and working conditions." Collective bargaining with employers and contractors in the informal context differs from collective bargaining with employers or contractors in the formal setting for multiple reasons. Firstly, informal workers are not always employees in an employer-employee relationship. Many of them are self-employed or own-account workers and sometimes even employers, who, as the structuralists claim, in many cases work under the illusion of self-employment and are, in fact, out-put or subcontracted workers (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987, p. 38). Due to this hidden employment relationship, it is often difficult to identify and address all relevant bargaining partners in the informal context (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 18). Secondly, informal workers in many cases do not see themselves as workers eligible for trade union organizing or are perceived as such by others, which poses a further threshold to informal economy organizing by trade unions. Thirdly, informal workers, in most cases, lack legally enshrined collective bargaining rights or formal agreements with employers on how to conduct collective bargaining (Schurman & Eaton, 2012, p. 7).

The second standard core method of trade union organizing is to negotiate with dominant stakeholders other than employers or contractors (Kenny, 2011, p. 45). Potential negotiation partners are banks, private companies, governments, city councils, public servants, or other actors in the broader society. Chen, Bonner, and Carré (2015, p. 19) report that negotiations with informal workers often take place in ad hoc meetings, mostly in crises, or in consultative forums without statutory obligation on the part of the negotiation partner, and without legally binding agreements (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 19). Therefore, the enforcement of the negotiated agreement often depends on the goodwill of the negotiating partner and can be easily undermined.

The status of employment, the economic activity, the workplace, and the occupational group determine the bargaining or negotiating partner of workers in the informal economy. Chen, Bonner and Carré (2015, p. 19) report that unpaid contributing family workers bargain with suppliers, buyers, customers, or the head of the family firm or farm. Employers and self-employed workers in the informal economy need to negotiate with suppliers, buyers, and customers, while employees, subcontracted workers, and casual day workers need to bargain with their employers and brokers. Additionally, subcontracted workers need to bargain with lead outsourcing firms and their intermediaries (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 19).

The third standard core method of trade union organizing is the initiation, cooperation, and facilitation of mass mobilization campaigns to raise awareness about the issues of workers in the informal economy (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 21-22). With the support of a large number of informal workers, a trade union can organize strikes, demonstrations, or petitions to pressure governments or influential capital. In an example from outside of the developing world, the trade union “General Organization of Workers in Israel” (HISTADRUT) included the informal workers in a

legal labour dispute covering all types of non-standard employment in all sectors, which increased the pressure on the Israeli government in the context of the 2011 mass protests for social justice. The strike ended with the signing of two collective bargaining agreements aiming to “reduce or stop service contracting and to accord protection to existing service contractor and agency workers” (Serrano & Xhafa, 2016, pp. 6-8).

The fourth standard core method of trade union organizing is policy advocacy. Policy advocacy includes the influence of trade unions on law-making and the legislative process. As governments often reach out to trade unions in the course of policymaking, trade unions are aware of how to design a specific law to benefit the informal economy. Lawmakers who develop regulations for the informal labour market can rely on the expertise of trade unions that organize the informal economy. LMKS in India, for example, researched the issue of housing and presented its findings in negotiating with the government on affordable housing (Serrano & Xhafa, 2016, p. 16-18).

Additionally, Chen, Bonner, and Carré (2015, p. 13) identify four supplemental methods used by trade unions when organizing in the informal economy. The first is the provision of economic development services, including, for example, financial and marketing services by the trade union or the negotiation of exclusive deals with financial institutions to address the demand of informal workers for loans, mortgages, or credits (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13).

The second is the coordination of collective economic action, involving the pooling of financial interest and activity of informal workers. One example is the facilitation of the creation of cooperatives and saving unions of informal economy workers by trade unions. Collective economic action provides services of various kinds,

such as waste collection and the organization of producer groups, which do joint buying, selling, or marketing (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13).

The third supplemental organizing method Chen, Bonner and Carré (2015, p. 13) name is the provision of collective access to social protection to informal workers. Trade unions can negotiate with governments or private insurance companies about joint access to public or private social protection schemes (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13). The Nigerian Trade Union Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria, for example, negotiated with different levels of government to accept and extend the ILO standards for social protection to the informal economy (Andrae & Beckman, 2013, p. 197). The “recent presenting of the "Bill to Provide Social Assistance to Vulnerable Nigerians" to members of the National Assembly also suggests that the informal economy is becoming more salient as a constituency that has to be acknowledged by the politicians” through the trade union activities (Andrae & Beckman, 2013, p. 197).

Capacity building is another organizing method for the informal economy. Trade unions can provide education or training to informal workers (Adu-Amankwah, 1999, pp. 7, 13; Singh, 2000, p. 613). For example, trade unions can educate informal workers on how to collectively bargain, negotiate and advocate as well as train informal workers on how to manage the operations and finances of businesses, organizations or networks (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 25). Kenny (2011, p. 55), for instance, reports that the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union trains workers as HIV/AIDS peer educators, who, in turn, educate their fellow workers and bring together different organizations to host events on World Aids Day. Moreover, the trade union trained the workers, so they were able to negotiate agreements with their local employers or landlords over the provision of childcare facilities. Other trade unions mapped the needs, composition and geographical profile of their local informal

economy, which then allows for more effective interventions by the trade unions themselves or other actors. For example, the LMKS mapped 5,800 informal home-based workers, textile workers, domestic workers, waste pickers and street vendors in three districts of Maharashtra, India, which provided data required in the negotiations between the trade unions and local governments or for the strategic direction of the union (Serrano & Xhafa, 2016, p. 17).

Finally, international trade union federations, such as HomeNet South Asia, Latin American Waste Pickers Network, or the International Domestic Workers Network, which coordinate the work of trade unions and represent the labour movement on the international level, can address the decent work deficits of informalized labour in developing countries. These global trade union federations have their own set of organizing methods, which encompass information sharing, solidarity, and alliance-building around shared challenges, mutual support and learning for national advocacy, international advocacy, and global campaigning (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13; Lindell, 2011, pp. 12-13).

In summary, the organizing methods of trade unions in the informal economy include standard core methods of formal sector organizing like collective bargaining with dominant stakeholders, policy advocacy, and mobilization campaigns. These occur along with supplemental methods to organize the informal workforce such as capacity building, the pooling of economic activity, the provision of economic development services, or access to social protection (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13). Collective bargaining with dominant stakeholders like governments, policy advocacy, mass mobilization campaigns, education, access to social protection, and petitions are methods that go beyond the workplace and can challenge the system of laws and regulations that produce and reproduce decent work deficits. The following section will

look at the outcomes of the different organizing methods in the informal economy in developing countries in practice.

Benefits of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy

The previous chapters argued that community unionism and organizing methods on and beyond the shop floor could address the decent work deficit of informal workers in developing countries. The literature reports that trade unions in practice reached beyond their core-constituency in a community unionist tradition and acted as political agents of the working-class in the past. Sub-Saharan African trade unions reached out beyond their core constituency and, being closely intertwined with anti-colonial movements, supported the end of formal colonial rule in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s (Lynd, 1968, pp. 146-147). The organization of unemployed workers by trade unions in the nineteenth and twentieth century supported the creation of public and private relief systems for the unemployed in developed countries (Forrester & Ward 1986, pp. 46-48, 1990, pp. 387-388; Scruggs, 2002, p. 291; Western, 1997, p. 51). In the more recent history, community unionism contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa, with unions playing a central role through campaigning against institutionalized racism and uniting large parts of the labouring classes behind one cause by bringing together an anti-apartheid coalition made up of churches, the civil society, and trade unions (Masiya, 2014, p. 447).

Beyond these more general examples where trade unions reached out beyond their core-constituency, the academic literature provides examples that show that trade unions today can intervene on behalf of the informal economy. Trade unions in many of these examples, however, fail to challenge the political system, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficits among informal economy workers in the first place.

For instance, trade unions managed to assist informal workers in pursuing their economic activities in designated spaces. Adu-Amankwah (1999), for example, reports from a case study in Ghana where the transport trade union Ghana Private Road Transport Union “has been able to secure facilities to acquire vehicles for its members on credit, [which] bettered the income-earning capacity and economic security of some members” (p. 7). Gunilla Andrae and Björn Beckman (2013, p. 196) report from a case study in the Nigerian city of Lagos, where the Nigerian Union of Tailors negotiated on behalf of informal textile workers for spaces for production and the protection against harassment and highhanded collection of taxes.

In some cases, workers in the informal economy were included in collective bargaining agreements which addressed issues around improved work times, combining work, family, and personal life, the abolishment of child labour, and employment security, wages or business expenses (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 23). Serrano and Xhafa (2016, p. 20), for example, report that the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Union successfully included informal workers under a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), that limits the worktime to 40 hours per week. Concerning the decent work deficit *safe work environment*, trade unions campaigned successfully for occupational health and safety protection for informal economy workers (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 29). The Indian trade union LMKS, for example, helped informal workers to access medical support in case of injuries by negotiating with the employers on a case-by-case basis (Serrano & Xhafa, 2016, p. 16).

Concerning the decent work dimension of social protection, trade unions built mutuality structures and achieved improved social support systems for organized informal workers. These mutuality structures encompass schools, daycare and health care centres, and mobilizing assistance during shocks (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p.

23). For example, the South African Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union organized informal workers in the retail sector (Kenny, 2011, p. 55). In one case in Western Cape, the trade union negotiated that the management provided a space for a nursing facility, while the workers paid for food and a childcare worker. A few trade unions provided collective access to social protection in the informal economy through negotiating access to existing schemes, advocating for more inclusive schemes or introducing schemes within the trade union structure (Andrae & Beckman, 2013, p. 197; Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 13; Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 4). Trade unions in the informal economy in developing countries, in some cases, engaged additionally in providing financial services including savings, loans, insurances, housing and essential infrastructure services to the informal economy workers (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 14).

Regarding equal opportunity and treatment in employment, trade unions, in some cases, created internal structures to promote the participation and representation of women of the informal and the formal economy to accommodate their specific needs mentioned earlier (ILO, 2002a, p. 59). Trade unions also played a critical role in promoting social dialogue and workers' representation extending their services to workers in the informal economy. They encouraged and supported the creation and development of new member-based pro-worker organizations (Lindell, 2010, pp. 221-222). The organization by the unions improved the self-esteem of the workers and contributed to social and personal empowerment among workers in the informal economy (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 23). On the national and international level, domestic and home-based workers successfully pressured governments and international organizations to adopt legislation which defines them as workers with the same protections under labour laws and social protection schemes as formal workers

(Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 28; Thomson, 2009, p. 288). For example, the International Domestic Workers Federation pressured the 2011 International Labour Conference to recognize domestic workers as workers, which makes them eligible to be covered and protected by labour laws targeting workers.

In summary, the literature provides examples that show that trade unions can intervene on behalf of the informal economy. Most of these interventions, however, do not challenge the political system which produces and reproduces the decent work deficits in the informal economy in developing countries. At the same time, the historical experience of the trade union movement in developing countries shows that trade unions can also function as political actors advocating for workers outside of the core constituency.

Challenges of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy

While the previous sections introduce methods and achievements of trade union organizing in the informal economy, this section will show that trade unions, and more so those originating from the formal economy, face multiple practical challenges when organizing the informal economy. Trade unions, whether working with formal or informal workers, face standard challenges around building and maintaining organizations, including differences in language, culture, lack of funding, illiteracy, and organizing traditions (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 24). If internationally organized, these constraints can have negative consequences on the power-relations between trade unions from developed and developing countries. Ilda Lindell (2011, p. 14) warns that trade unions from developed countries may set the agenda for trade unions in developing countries if, for instance, financial support from the global North depends on the implementation of specific trade union strategies in the South.

Schurman and Eaton (2012, p. 70) note that, in addition to the standard challenges of trade union organizing, trade unions face several external and internal challenges that are specific to informal economy organizing. One major internal problem in informal economy trade union organizing, which can be directly linked back to the insider-outsider theory, is the often-troubled relationship between informal and formal workers. The labour movement globally remains divided over the question of whether to include all informal workers in trade unions (Bonner & Spooner, 2011, pp. 88-89; Gallin, 2001, pp. 531-532; Vyas, 2009, pp. 320-322). The skepticism stems from the fact that informal workers have a different position in the economic system than formal workers. Hence, informal workers have different demands for the trade union movement than formal workers, which may cause conflicts over resource allocations. Sigfried Eisenmeier (2018, pp. 5-7) reports, for instance, that formal taxi drivers in Mexico, South Africa, and Argentina protested the operation of self-employed Uber drivers, which all operate informally. The formal taxi drivers complained that Uber drivers did not have to acquire a transportation license, did not comply with annual car checks, worked below minimum wage and used workplaces legally not accessible for the formal taxi drivers due to legal restrictions. The Uber drivers, in opposition, wanted to preserve their competitive advantage over the taxi drivers. In these cases, the interest of the informal and formal workers clashes and it is difficult to imagine that the formal workers invite the informal workers into their trade union. The example links up with the insider-outsider theory: it is not always in the interest of formal workers to share the more favourable conditions of employment and the power over the trade union's resource allocation with the informal workers because the formal workers are afraid to lose out on resources, which can lead to exclusionary trade union behaviour against informal workers.

Moreover, the informal workforce is in a weaker position than the formal workforce due to its lower skill levels, low earnings, job impermanence, long working hours and low returns to education or experience (Lindell, 2011, p. 8; Mosoeta, 2001, p. 195). Hence, different authors argue, in line with the insider-outsider theory, that including informal workers within a trade union can leave them at a disadvantage because formal workers are able to dominate the trade union's allocation of resources to the detriment of the informal workers (Barchiesi, 2010, p. 72; Kenny, 2011, p. 44-69; Lindell, 2011, p. 12; Routh, 2016, p. 292).

Furthermore, some in the labour movement argue that trade unions should not organize informal workers because informal employment should be abolished and not valorized through trade union engagement (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 26). They claim that the rising share of informal workers measured as part of the overall workforce is a tool by capital and governments to split and weaken the workforce. Closely connected to this, it can be argued that the lack of recognition of the workers as *real* workers in the wider society, may affect the acceptance of the trade union as the democratic and legitimate representation of labour (Lindell, 2011, p. 9). The opponents of informal economy organizing define *worker*, in opposition to structuralism, as an employee with a single occupation, permanent employment, and a single employer to bargain with (Lindell, 2011, p. 9; Singh, 2000, p. 613). This employee-centred definition of *worker* excludes almost everyone in the informal economy. The critics are also concerned about the fact that informal workers differ by their status in employment and branch of economic activity from formal workers. They point out that it is challenging to organize employees, self-employed workers, or potentially even employers in one trade union due to their diverging interest (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 27). This diverging interest may result in conflicts, which could paralyze the

trade union movement. Closely connected to this argument is the point that different statuses of employment of informal workers engage with bargaining partners who are not relevant to workers in the formal economy. These include buyers, suppliers or different levels of government. Hence, trade unions, which formally only negotiated with employers in the past, would have to adapt to new bargaining environments and partners (Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 4).

Besides, inappropriate or hostile institutional, legal, or political environments impede trade union organizing in the informal economy. Existing laws, regulations, and policies in developing countries do not recognize informal workers as workers with statutory bargaining rights (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 26-27; Mosoeta, 2001, p. 201; Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 5). The legislative process to adopt trade union laws in favour of the informal workers is in many developing countries difficult due to inefficient, undemocratic, and corrupt administrative and governance structures (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, pp. 26-27). In some sectors in the informal economy, workers are reluctant about trade union organizing because of their dependence on the mafia or are vulnerable to political cooptation. In other cases, informal workers experienced police harassment or harassment by the authorities after they organized in a trade union (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 20).

Furthermore, trade unions have difficulties collecting membership dues from informal workers due to the lack of employer-provided check-off lists¹¹ and regular, trackable, decent incomes. Hence, the amount in trade union dues collected by the trade

¹¹ *Check-off lists* are a trade union due collection system whereby an employer regularly deducts a portion of an employee's wages and sends this portion directly to the trade union.

unions from the informal workers is usually low. David Spooner and John Mark Mwanika (2016, p. 3) demonstrate that this means that formal workers generally contribute more money per capita to trade unions than informal workers, which can cause frustration among formal workers because the trade unions fees they pay are used to organize the informal economy which may not directly benefit them in the form of higher wages or better working conditions. Also, low incomes require informal workers to work more hours than formal workers, which leaves less time for trade union organizing activities. Formal workers have hence more time and financial bargaining power to influence the trade union in their favour.

Spending time with trade union organizing can drain valuable time and result in workers in the informal economy losing much-needed income, which disincentivizes them to become members in trade unions (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 20). The lack of spare time for trade union activities is especially the case for women in the informal economy in developing countries. Recruiting women in the informal economy for trade union organizing poses a significant challenge due to the double burden of female workers: on the one hand, they are workers with a regular job in the economy; on the other hand, they care for the household, children, and other dependents. For this reason, there is often not much time left for women to engage in trade union work. Additionally, women in the informal economy in developing countries often work as home-based sub-contracted workers, domestic workers, and unpaid contributing family workers, which includes a status of employment-specific range of organizing problems, which will be elaborated on in the following paragraph (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 24).

Home-based workers, unpaid contributing family workers, and domestic workers often work in homes invisible to the eyes of trade union organizers. Moreover,

these statuses of employment make it difficult to identify those responsible for work orders, working conditions and pay. In the case of home-based workers, the trade union could address the immediate contractor, the supply firm that outsourced production, or the lead firm that governs the whole value chain, planning production, designing products or selling finished goods. Home-based workers who bargain for more secure work orders and higher pay rates risk that contractors cancel orders, reject finished products, or delay payments. In the case of unpaid contributing family workers, it is often unclear for trade unions whether they should bargain with the head of the family firm or farm, with suppliers, buyers, or customers (Schurman & Eaton, 2012, p. 8).

As they have no legal contracts with statutory bargaining rights, many informal workers are afraid to lose their work, suppliers, intermediaries, or buyers if they organize (Mosoeta, 2001, pp. 200-201). Domestic workers are especially vulnerable in this regard as they may find themselves homeless if their employer is dissatisfied with the worker's affiliation in a trade union. Children and illegal international migrants, who disproportionately often work in the informal economy, are afraid to attract attention from law enforcement through trade union activities, which makes it difficult for trade union organizers to locate, identify, and organize them (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 20; Lindell, 2011, p. 11).

Chen, Bonner, and Carré (2015, p. 27) point out that misconceptions and myths in developing countries about the informal economy make trade union organizing of workers more complicated. Informal businesses and their workers are, in many cases, perceived as illegal, tax evaders, and inefficient. Public administrations across the developing world tend to see evictions of informal businesses from their workplace as progress (Chen, Bonner, & Carré, 2015, p. 27). Further external challenges unions face when organizing the informal economy are the diversity of economic activities of the

informal economy, and the frequently changing location of the informal economy workers due to the lack of legal property rights (Schurman & Eaton, 2013, p. 13).

In summary, trade unions, especially those originating from the formal economy, face numerous practical challenges when organizing the informal economy. This difficult-to-organize nature of the informal economy could challenge the ideas around trade union organizing in the informal economy to bring about decent work through LCD.

Research Focus

Benjamin Selwyn (2016a, pp. 781-799) argues that the dominant elite-development theories (EDTs), like neoliberal and statist theories, do not address the developmental needs of formal, informal and unemployed workers. As an alternative, the author proposes labour-centred development (LCD). LCD states that additional freedoms for the majority population can only be brought about if an organized labour class pressures governments and capital collectively to implement labour-centred policies. The structuralists school of thought on the informal economy supports Selwyn's idea and argues that governments and transnational capital in a globalized neoliberal capitalist system do not have an interest in addressing the decent work deficit faced by informal workers such as low wages, the lack of social security and other government services. Instead, informal labour is cheap and does not include financial or legal commitments on the side of the employer, which increases the profit of investors. As cheap and unprotected labour attracts foreign investment, governments of developing countries, which need foreign currency and often only have limited democratic legitimacy, prioritize the interests of investors over the needs of labour. Selwyn (2016a, p. 794) and the structuralist school of thought describe trade unions as

institutions capable of addressing the decent work deficit of the informal workers because they can exert pressure on governments and capital through the collective labour struggle. In this context, Standing (1997, p. 31) shows the importance of the community unionist strategy to trade union organizing, which addresses the political system which produces and reproduces a decent work deficit in the informal economy.

Most of the existing research focuses on technical organizing in the informal economy and does not situate the research in the respective political system, which produces and reproduces a decent work deficit in the informal economy. Hence, many studies often conclude that trade union organizing fails because of the difficult-to-organize nature of the informal economy while ignoring the political system which produces and reproduces a decent work deficit in the informal economy and could hinder trade union organizing. This thesis combines both technical and political analysis to understand trade union organizing in the informal economy in Uganda. Almost no empirical research exists on trade union organizing and the informal economy in the East African country, although the conditions for a case study are favourable: trade union organizing in Uganda has been taking place for many years in a highly informalized labour market, but it remains unclear how trade unions manage or fail to address decent work deficits under the assumptions of labour-centred development and structuralist thinking. In the following, I will argue that trade unions in Uganda can address the decent work deficit in the informal economy on a technical level because they demonstrate that they can organize, train, and educate the workers as well as improve the workers' access to credit, and guarantee workers' collective representation on a workplace-level. I will also argue that, at the same time, the lack of political organizing hinders the trade unions to challenge the elite-centred development

paradigm, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficit in the informal economy in the first place.

Design and Methodology

As the structuralist school points out, it is impossible to draw universal cause-effect conclusions about trade union organizing in the informal economy, which is why I decided to focus on one national context in a case study approach. The case study approach offers the opportunity to understand and explain the relationship between decent work, labour-centred development, and trade union organizing through multiple types of data sources. The national context for this case study involves the existence of trade union organizing in a highly informalized labour market in a relatively stable political environment. Uganda, where more than 90% of the workforce labour under informal conditions facing a range of different decent work deficits, proved to be an ideal case study context. The field research examined the methods and strategies trade unions in Uganda apply to address decent work deficits in the informal economy. It contextualizes the findings in a historical, political and legal context.



Figure 1. Map of Uganda. The red crosses mark the research sites Kampala and Jinja.

The research investigates if and how the trade unions address the different decent work deficits. The answers to this ‘how’ are multifaced, political, legal and historical, which is why they do not allow of a quantitative approach. Laws and regulations on trade union organizing, trade union organizing strategies, the needs of workers, and trade union responses need to be understood and put into a relationship with each other. Hence, I chose a qualitative research approach, which provides data about the nature of the relationship between trade union organizing and the decent work deficit. To understand the scope and nature of trade union organizing, I collected data on union organizing strategies and methods. Their effects and history need to be followed to detect unsatisfying organizing results. Organizing results in this thesis refers

to the decent work indicators and how they change over time during the organizing process.

This thesis used the triangulation of data to ensure the validity of the information collected about trade union organizing in the informal economy (Berg, 2004, pp. 4-5). The triangulation of data involved an intensive review of secondary data, workplace observations, and open-ended interviews with individuals and groups on all organizational levels within the trade union structure as well as workers and key informants outside the trade union structure. I picked a cross-sectional study design over a longitudinal study because the latter would require additional capital and time. Moreover, the research tried to find out about the relationship between different variables (trade union organizing and decent work) at one point in time.

In advance to the field research, key informants pointed out three sectors in which trade union organizing among informal workers was advanced: the transport sector, the market sector, and the textile sector. I researched all trade unions organizing the informal economy in Uganda and, based on the organizational capacity of the trade unions, decided to follow the recommendation made to me by the key informants. The trade unions chosen for this case study were, in the transport sector, the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) and the National Union of Drivers, Cyclists and Allied Workers (NUDIKAWA); two trade unions with the same name in the market sector, the Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union (UMEU)¹², and

¹² In the past, ILO-led attempts were made to re-unify COFTU and NOTU. During these attempts, several trade unions shifted from COFTU to NOTU. UMEU split and one section stayed with and is legitimized by COFTU, the other section of UMEU shifted to NOTU. Hence, during the time of the research two UMEU trade unions existed. The

the Uganda Textile Leather and Allied Workers' Union (UTGLAWU) in the clothing sector (see Table 3).¹³ Within Uganda, my research focused on the urban settings of Kampala and Jinja because most of the trade union activities and headquarters are located in these cities (see *Figure 1*).

Table 3. Membership affiliation of trade unions included in the case study

Trade Union	Abbreviation	Trade Union Centre
Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union	ATGWU	NOTU
National Union of Drivers, Cyclists and Allied Workers	NUDIKAWA	COFTU
Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union	UMEU	NOTU
Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union	UMEU	COFTU
Uganda Textile Leather and Allied Workers' Union	UTGLAWU	NOTU

The sectors mentioned proved ideal for the research as the workforces of these three sectors turned out to differ from each other. The trade unions in the transport sector mainly organize male employees and own-account workers from the formal and the informal economy. ATGWU has a membership of 100,000 members; NUDIKAWA's

COFTU-affiliated UMEU (UMEU-COFTU) and the NOTU-affiliated UMEU (UMEU-NOTU) dispute each other's legitimacy.

¹³ Beyond the trade unions listed here, the National Trade Union of Theatrical, Domestic, and General Workers, the National Union of Creative, Performing Artists and Allied Workers, the National Union of Plantation and Agriculture, the Uganda Fisheries and Allied Workers Union, the Uganda Horticulture, Industrial Service Providers and Allied Workers Union, the Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers Union (HTS Union), and the Uganda Hospitality Leisure and Allied Workers Union are all affiliated with NOTU and organize informal workers (Interview V - Trade Union Centre).

operations in the informal economy are more limited, only reaching a total membership among formal and informal workers of 10,000. Female informal own-account workers and employees dominate the market sector. The respective trade unions, UMEU-NOTU, with around 4,000 members and UMEU-COFTU, exclusively organize informal workers. Women in the transport sector and men in the market sector represent a minority. The gender picture is more mixed in the leather and textile industry, where UTGLAWU organizes predominantly casual employees. The differences mentioned between the workforces confirmed my choice for these three sectors as these variances are especially relevant regarding the insider-outsider theory, potential gender dynamics, and the problems discussed earlier regarding the inclusion of non-employees into trade unions (see Table 4).

Table 4. Membership information on the trade unions included in the case study

Trade Union	Membership		Dominating Status of Employment	Dominating Sex
ATGWU	100,000	formal+informal	employees+self-employed	men
NUDIKAWA	10,000	formal+informal	employees+self-employed	men
UMEU-NOTU	4,000	informal	employees+self-employed	women
UMEU-COFTU	n/a ¹⁴	informal	employees+self-employed	women
UTGLAWU	5,771	formal+informal	employees	mixed

I interviewed 68 workers and trade union leaders in a convenience sample during the field research. Three ATGWU leaders and 15 ordinary ATGWU members, one NUDIKAWA leader, three UMEU-COFTU leaders, four regular UMEU-COFTU members, one UMEU-NOTU leader, three ordinary UMEU-NOTU members, four UTGLAWU leaders, and six ordinary UTGLAWU workers participated in open-ended

¹⁴ The trade union was not able to give a precise number of workers who pay their membership fees.

qualitative interviews. Moreover, I interviewed seven non-unionized transport workers in associations and nine transport workers who were neither part of a trade union nor part of an association. Ten non-unionized market workers in associations and two market workers without trade union or associational affiliation were interviewed (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of interviewees in different sectors and their degree of organization

	Transport Sector	Market Sector	Textile Sector
Interviews with trade union leaders	3 in ATGWU 1 in NUDIKAWA	3 in UMEU-COFTU 1 UMEU-NOTU	4 in UTGLAWU
Interviews with unionized workers	15 in ATGWU	4 in UMEU-COFTU 3 in UMEU-NOTU	6 in UTGLAWU
Interviews with non-unionised workers in associations	7	10	-
Interviews with workers without trade union or associational affiliation	9	2	-
Total	35	23	10

Furthermore, I interviewed three Ugandan trade union federation leaders and technical staff. Additionally, coordinators for informal labour trade union organizing in Uganda, one from the International Transport Workers Federation and one from IndustriALL Global Union¹⁵, were interviewed. Additionally, I interviewed five key informants in individual open qualitative interviews. Two of the interviewees are academics at Makerere University; one is a lecturer at the Labour College of East Africa. The NGO, which provided one of its experts for this research, is called Friedrich

¹⁵ *IndustriALL Global Union* is a global trade union federation working across the supply chains in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors at the global level.

Ebert Foundation Uganda (FES Uganda)¹⁶, a foundation originating from Germany promoting social-democratic ideas and research with offices around the world. The MBO worker, who contributed to this research, is in the leadership of Platform for Vendors in Uganda, an organization that organizes informal street vendors and was planning during the time of the study to register as a new trade union.

Through the interviews with the workers, I was able to map the decent work deficit in the three sectors and understand the nature of trade union organizing in Uganda. The decent work criteria were used as criteria of evaluation and operationalized as the 11 different dimensions of decent work described earlier - (1) employment opportunities, (2) adequate earnings and productive work, (3) decent work timing, (4) combining work, family, and personal life, (5) work that should be abolished, (6) stability and the security of work, (7) equal opportunity and treatment in employment, (8) safe work environment, (9) social security, (10) social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation, and (11) economic and social context for decent work. The interviews centred on asking the workers about which trade union activities they are aware of and through which organizing methods the trade unions meet their needs. The research investigated which kind of education, training and financial support the workers had received from the trade union. Furthermore, I asked the workers whether they were covered by collective bargaining agreements and how these agreements contributed to improvements in terms of rights, space and income. These data provided

¹⁶ *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Uganda (FES Uganda)* is located in Kampala and affiliated with the German centre-left Social Democratic Party of Germany. It financially supports trade unions across the globe and facilitates research on labour and development.

me with information about how political the organizing strategy of the trade unions is when engaging with the informal economy. Questions targeting social divisions within the informal economy or the existence of a political class conscience were included as well to learn about potential thresholds for political community trade unionism. I recruited the workers at trade union meetings or their workplaces. Also, I interviewed the non-unionised workers if they know about the trade union, how they know about the trade union, what they know about the trade union and, if applicable, why they decided not to join the trade union. The results should reveal potential thresholds to community unionist organizing in Uganda. Some women-only interviews were set up to make sure that women feel free to talk about gender-based discrimination, which could also hinder community unionist strategies.

The variety of trade unions allowed me to explore the different benefits and challenges trade union leaders saw in organizing informal workers. The trade union leaders reflected on strengths, limitations, and the political role of their union organizing strategies in the informal economy. I investigated whether workers in the informal economy held positions in the trade union leadership to see how the working class is represented in the trade union leadership and how careerist the trade union leadership is. Moreover, to assess the trade union organizing methods and strategies, I examined to which extent collective bargaining agreements cover the informal workers, which resources the trade union leadership allocates to the informal workers, which plans the trade union has in regard to training and education of the informal workers and how the political and legal system in Uganda shapes union organizing in the informal economy. It was essential to interview workers *and* trade union leaders to learn from the different perspectives of the participants and to confirm the information on trade union methods and strategies from both sides.

Key informants and international trade union federation staff were interviewed to confirm the data provided by the trade union leaders. Besides, their interviews were supposed to provide data about the organizing activities of all trade unions in the Ugandan informal economy. They were also interviewed to provide data on the political role of trade unions in Uganda's history and how trade union centres and federations on the national and transnational levels engage with the organization of informal workers.

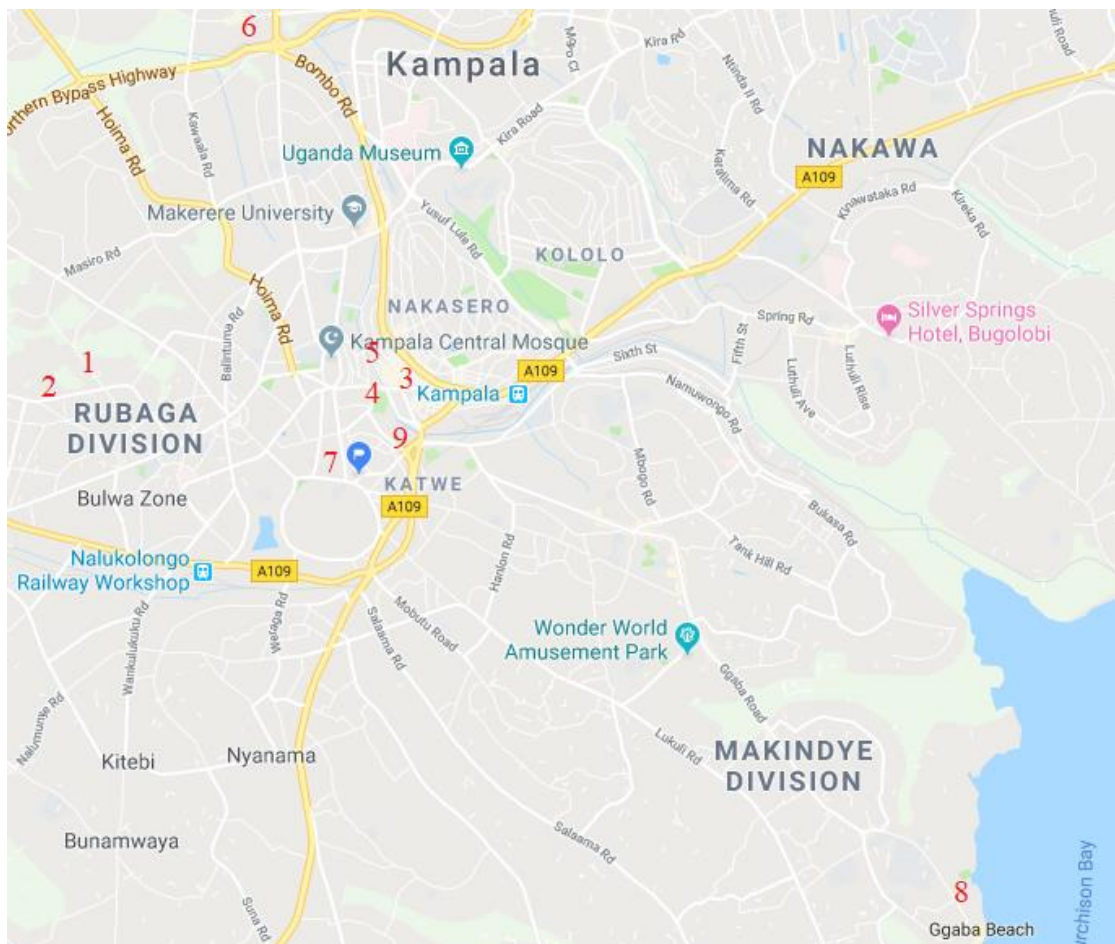


Figure 2. Red numbers mark the location of the research sites in Kampala: 1-2 Tuk-tuk Stages in Rubaga Division; 3: Old Taxi Park; 4: Tukulerewamu; 5: New Taxi Park; 6: Bwaise Industrial Area Carpenters and Joiners Association; 7: Owino Market; 8: Ggaba Market; 9: Five different boda stages in Central Kampala; for a more detailed map in Central Kampala see *Figure 3*.

In addition to the interviews, I visited the workplaces of the workers in the informal economy to find out more about their decent work deficits (see Table 6). The workplaces of the transport workers included two tuk-tuk stages in the Rubaga Division (Kampala) (see 1-2 in *Figure 2*), five motorcycle taxi ('boda') stages in the Kampala

worker-owned hiring application as a competitor to the investor-owned hiring applications Taxify and UBER. I attended the Ntete Boda¹⁷ Stage leadership election 2019, which was followed by riots caused by boda drivers who questioned the legitimacy of the vote. Moreover, I participated in the ceremony for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the tuk-tuk Owners and Operators Society Ltd. and ATGWU on 14 March 2019 nearby the Kabaka Palace (see Table 7). Attending the events allowed me to understand the nature of the messages trade union leaders spread among the workers. The messages could be political, radical, promote the class orientation of the workers, or address issues around informal-formal divides.

Table 6. List of workplace visits during the research

	Date	Sector	Note
Workplace visits at/in...			
Bwaise Industrial Area Carpenters and Joiners Association	12 Mar 2019	Transport	potential ATGWU members (general workers)
Tukulerewamu Market	15 Mar 2019	Transport	ATGWU members (general workers)
Tuk-tuk Stage I	16 Mar 2019	Transport	Tuk-tuk Drivers
Tuk-tuk Stage II	16 Mar 2019	Transport	Tuk-tuk Drivers
Old Taxi Park	19 Mar 2019	Transport	Minibus Drivers
New Taxi Park	19 Mar 2019	Transport	Minibus Drivers
Jinja Leather Factory I	19 Mar 2019	Textile	Employees
Jinja Leather Factory II	19 Mar 2019	Textile	Employees
Owino Market	20-22 Mar 2019	Market	Market vendors
Ggaba Market	21 Mar 2019	Market	Market vendors
Motorcycle Taxi Driver Stage I	25 Mar 2019	Transport	Boda Drivers
Motorcycle Taxi Driver Stage II	25 Mar 2019	Transport	Boda Drivers
Motorcycle Taxi Driver Stage III	25 Mar 2019	Transport	Boda Drivers
Motorcycle Taxi Driver Stage IV	25 Mar 2019	Transport	Boda Drivers
Motorcycle Taxi Driver Stage V	25 Mar 2019	Transport	Boda Drivers

¹⁷ A *boda* is a motorcycle which can be hired for transport of goods and passengers.

Additionally, the field research of this case study is contextualized, describing historical, legal and political developments in Uganda, which shape modern-day trade union organizing in the informal economy. The review of documents such as government documents, laws, studies, newspaper articles, ILO documents, trade union publications and other publications about trade union organizing in the informal economy was undertaken online and at the library of Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Uganda. The research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board of Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Canada.

Table 7. Special events attended for the case study

Name of the Event	Date	Sector
NOTU/ATWGU training session for informal workers in Masaka	7-8 Mar 2019	Transport
Memorandum of Understanding Signatory Ceremony between the Tuk Tuk Owners and Operators Society Ltd. and ATGWU	14 Mar 2019	Transport
Ntete Boda Stage leadership election; ATGWU attended the event	16 Mar 2019	Transport
Review Process of KAMBE app	18 Mar 2019	Transport
Workers' meeting discussing legal action against trade union leader	22 Mar 2019	Market
Collective Bargaining between the trade union and the employers including proposed strike action against employers	19 Mar 2019	Textile

Chapter 2: The Context of Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy in Uganda

Uganda is a Republic in East Africa and home to approximately 40,854,000 inhabitants (CIA World Fact Book, 2019). The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2018, p. ii) reports that the country has a total active labour force of 18,843,000. The ILO (2018, p. 91) estimates that 93.7% of the workforce outside of subsistence agriculture is in informal employment. More than half of the active labour force outside of subsistence agriculture are own-account workers (52.8%). Around one-third are paid employees (34.5%). 9.8% describe themselves as contributing family workers, 3% are employers. Most of the labour force, 42.4%, labours in the service industry. Another 41.2% work in the primary sector and 16.4% in manufacturing. According to estimates of the World Bank and the United Nations, 44% of the informal workforce outside of subsistence agriculture engage in different trade activities, 25% operate in the manufacturing sector, 16% work in the service sector (excluding transportation), 8% are in the construction sector, and 7% work in the transportation sector.

Alongside its eastern and southern neighbours South Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda is classified by the United Nations as one of the least-developed countries (LDCs), which means that they score low in several Human Development Indicators (HDI) such as life expectancy, access to clean water, or literacy. At the same time, indicators available show that life has been improving in Uganda in some areas over the past 40-50 years. Since 1970, the life expectancy at birth in the country has risen from 49 to 60 years (World Bank, 2019). Between 1980 and 2017, the infant mortality rate has declined from 126 per 1000 live births to 35 per 1000 live births. Some development indicators, however, have worsened. The prevalence of undernourishment in the population has risen from 24% in 2004 to 41% in 2016 (World

Bank, 2019), and the private consumption rate has declined since 2015 (UBOS, 2018, pp. 110-118).

The labour market reflects the unfortunate developmental situation in Uganda. The median monthly cash earnings for persons in paid employment on the main job currently stands at 68 CAD. The occasion of workplace accidents is high: The proportion of the employed population that suffer from injuries or open wounds at the workplace is 14.6%, with 41.7% reporting that they have been exposed to dust or fumes at their workplace (UBOS, 2018, p. ii). Social protection covers only 2% of the workforce (Ulandssekretariatet, 2016, p. 18). In the era of neoliberalism, public sector retrenchments and a generally high level of job insecurity led to a rise in self-employment, rural-urban influx, and the growing casualization of labour. Employers replaced regular permanent workers with non-regular, casual workers, who are, in most cases, unable to pay for basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, education, and health. The average working hours in urban areas is 47.6 hours per week, with up to 59.3 hours among workers in the areas of communication, transportation, and storage (UBOS, 2006, p. 15). At the same time, the Ugandan government repeatedly emphasizes that labour demands should be shelved in the short term to attract foreign investment with cheap labour. Trade unions, the government asserts, should cease any activities that could “scare off investors in all sectors of the economy” (Rutabajjuka & Kyomugisha, 2003, p. 105).

Furthermore, Uganda’s government is an authoritarian regime. Freedom House (2019) notes on their website on the situation in 2018:

While Uganda holds regular elections, their credibility has deteriorated over time, and the country has been ruled by the same party and president since 1986.

The ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), retains power

through the manipulation of state resources, intimidation by security forces, and politicized prosecutions of opposition leaders. Uganda's civil society and media sectors remain vibrant, despite suffering sporadic legal and extralegal harassment and state violence.

The poor performance of Uganda regarding political freedoms also reflects on the country's record on trade union rights. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) states that Uganda has "systematic violation[s] of trade union rights" (2019, p. 10). ITUC (2012) reports that trade unionism in Uganda is impeded by, in some cases, violent government or managerial oppression, the refusal of government and managers to acknowledge membership-based workers' organizations as trade unions and widespread denial of workers' and trade union rights. The organization reports that in some instances, trade union leaders were blocked by managers from meeting with workers. In other cases, the government actively interfered in some of the trade union leadership elections (ITUC, 2012). Also, only employees in an employee-employer relationship are *de jure* allowed to unionize in Uganda, which excludes most informal workers from unionization. The 2006 Labour Union Act refers to workers with the right to organize as "employees ... under a contract of service", but many workers in the informal economy do not have a contract and are self-employed or own-account workers instead of employees. Hence, trade union organizing happens under a legal framework that does not provide for a trade union in the informal economy. The trade union leaders reported that the government *de facto* tolerates the organization of non-employee workers into trade unions (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). This legal uncertainty, however, is a challenge for trade union organizing in Uganda because it

discourages trade unions to interact with the informal economy (Trade Union Leader II; Interview XV - Trade Union Leader, Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader).

The trade union density has been rising, despite the oppressive environment, from 3.2% in 2016 (Ulandssekretariatet, 2016, p. 1) to approximately 5% in 2019 (Interview V – Trade Union Centre). Trade unions in Uganda either operate independently or affiliate with one of the two trade union centres in Uganda. The trade union centre National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) manages 33 trade unions with a total of 927,799 recorded members¹⁸. Two of these trade unions only organize informal workers, four organize formal and informal workers, and 27 only organize the formal economy. By 2017, NOTU had 231 CBAs in place, covering 452,000 members (see Appendix 1: Data on Trade Union Membership in Uganda). Nine trade unions with a total of 30,733 members are affiliated with the Central Organisation of Free Trade Unions (Ulandssekretariatet, 2016, p. 1), of which two trade unions organize in the informal economy (see Appendix 1: Data on Trade Union Membership in Uganda). The independent trade unions represent 70,662 members in total. Trade unions in Uganda are organized by the economic sector rather than by trade.

The low levels of trade union density in the informal economy can only be understood when set in a historical context. Before the Second World War, the labour movement in Uganda was mostly insignificant because most of the workforce focused predominantly on subsistence agriculture. The few radical trade union leaders who

¹⁸ The NOTU records provided for this research shows the Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union with 400,000 members. The union said that the paying membership is only at 5,000 members, which would reduce the number of workers NOTU represents to 432,800 and the overall trade union density from around 5% to only around 2%.

challenged the colonial government were deported or imprisoned. After the Second World War, events in other British colonies, such as The Gambia or Kenya, where trade unions rebelled against the colonial government and capitalism, inspired the government to take legislative action. In a pre-emptive response, the Ugandan colonial government strategically curtailed the political influence of the labour movement. For example, the Trade Disputes Ordinance Act 1949-50 dictated that trade unions had to seek approval for an arbitration tribunal by employers and the government to address workers' grievances. At the same time, it was made illegal to strike without going through this institutionalized arbitration process. The 1952 Trade Union Ordinance Act discouraged the amalgamation of trade unions and promoted staff associations and workers committees (Barya, 1990, p. 77). Staff associations and workers committees can perform trade union services but are not covered by trade union legislation, which means that the employer is not legally bound to recognize them as representatives of labour. Both forms of labour organization focus predominantly on issues on the enterprise-level instead of the broader political sphere (IFPTE, 2019). Trade union education provided by Western trade unionists of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which promoted an apolitical and localized organization of labour, reinforced this type of labour organizing (Barya, 1990, p. 83). As a result, trade unions remained apolitical and localized. Political parties did not affiliate with Ugandan trade unions, and informal workers remained outside of trade union strategies until the early 2000s.

After independence, Milton Obote became the first Prime Minister on 30 April 1962 and President on 15 April 1966. During the rule of Obote, the Soviet Union and the United States tried to influence trade unions in Uganda, hoping to expand their influence in the context of the Cold War, further splitting and weakening the trade union

movement (Interview XVI - Key Informant). Concomitant, leadership struggles within the trade unions made it easy for the government to argue it was necessary to increase control over the labour movement. Legislation between 1962 and 1968 encouraged the merger of trade unions to larger trade unions, which made it easier for the government to control them through stricter trade union laws and direct intervention into trade union activities. New laws restricted the right to strike, encouraged tripartite consultations instead of political labour action, and excluded most public servants from unionization under the Public Service Act 1963. Existing trade unions needed to re-register under the Trade Unions Act of 1965 with stricter criteria on who is eligible to become trade union leader, harsher penalties for strikes lacking a dispute settlement process in advance (with up to one year imprisonment), and a plethora of legal options for the Ministry of Labour to decline the request for dispute settlement processes (Barya, 1990, p. 123). The law also provided that, if a trade union did not comply with the views of the government, the government could easily deregister the trade union. The Penal Order 1969 abolished the right to strike and banned opposition parties (Barya, 1990, p. 187). One year later, the 1970 Trade Union Act ended all remaining autonomy of trade unions and directly incorporated them into the government structure (Barya, 1990, p. 178). The dissent of political trade unionism against the regime was now brutally oppressed or muzzled through corruption. The Obote era set an example of how the government was able to coopt and control the trade unions directly through legal and illegal activity. The government and foreign actors instrumentalized the trade unions for their purposes – a phenomenon that would endure over the next decades and further deradicalize and depoliticize the labour movement. As the labour movement was now controlled by the government, the coopted trade unions were unable to organizing the informal economy.

A military coup-d'état led by General Idi Amin ousted President Obote on 25 January 1971. The coup was met initially with enthusiasm by the labour movement. To gain popular support for his reign, Amin enacted liberal trade union laws under the Trade Union Decree 1973. A new trade union centre, the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU), was created and 16 independent trade unions affiliated to it. Initially, trade union leaders openly supported the Amin government and called publicly against strikes, but the honeymoon between Amin and the labour movement did not last long. During the late 1970s, Uganda faced significant economic decline. Amin, now in disregard of the existing laws, encouraged the oppression of labour for higher productivity levels and longer working hours so that Uganda could export more goods in exchange for foreign currency to halt the economic downturn. The managers in cooperation with the army, the police, and the intelligence services crushed any form of workers' dissent. At the same time, the ILO continued education programmes in Uganda, promoting apolitical and localized unionism (Barya, 1990, p. 197-263), which resulted in a situation where the trade unions continued to ignore the informal economy and its potential for labour-centred development against an oppressive regime.

John-Jean Barya (1990, 263-332) points out that this apolitical labour movement prevented a labour party from emerging even after President Amin was removed from power by former President Obote on 17 December 1980. In fear of political opposition, Obote brutally oppressed all potential politicized segments of the labour movement during the following guerilla war. At the same time, Western trade union centres continued to promote the enterprise-focused apolitical unions in education programmes for the working class. Leadership struggles in NOTU, inducted by the power struggle of the US and USSR to include Uganda in their sphere of political influence embedded in the Cold War, further weakened the political force of the labour movement. Milton

Obote was eventually removed from power in a coup d'état, leading to the subsequent and short reign of General Bazilio Olara-Okello and General Tito Okello in 1985 and 1986 (Barya, 1990, p. 263-332).

President Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) gained power in a coup-d'état in 1986. After the economic collapse of the 1970s and 1980s, Uganda's economy was dependent on international aid and investment. The Bretton Woods institutions prescribed Uganda neoliberal policies in return for loans to roll over existing ones that the government could not service. The rapid liberalization of the economy and the privatization of parastatals in the 1980s and 1990s under the Museveni government resulted in a loss of unionized jobs (Konings, 2003, p. 362; Rutabajjuka & Kyomugisha, 2003, p. 103). Workplace restructuring and retrenchments required technical bargaining skills over issues like compensations or premature pensions from the union leadership. Hence, literate and skilled university graduates replaced workers in the leadership positions of trade unions, which further diminished the chances for a political worker-led trade union movement. In combination with the scarcity of employment opportunities for graduates, many trade union leaders up until today do not originate from the working class they represent as workers but are university graduates who understand the trade union leadership position as a career rather than a political role or call. This unionism dominated by apolitical careerists, again, aids in the unquestioned dominance of apolitical unionism in Uganda (Interview IV - Key Informant; Interview XVI - Key Informant; Spooner & Mwanika, 2016, p. 3). As argued earlier, this "business unionist" organizing strategy is incapable of organizing the informal labour force.

In 1996, the Museveni government established a system in which a few Members of Parliament (MPs) were designated as representatives of workers to secure

popular support by making concessions to the labour movement (Barya, 2017, p. 52). Up until today, the workers' MP-system allocates 5 out of 426 seats in the national parliament for workers, who are elected by an electoral college of workers organized under the trade union centres, independent trade unions, and local governments. Through this system, trade union leaders who are elected workers' MPs become members of parliament and even part of the NRM-led government (Barya, 2001, p. 8). As the ruling NRM party provides social capital and funding for its candidates, workers' MP candidates running on government-party tickets have better chances than opposition candidates to get elected to parliament. The access to social capital and funding is especially relevant in the political environment of Uganda, which *de facto* does not leave much space for political competition and success for opposition parties. Hence, key informants claimed that workers' MPs are more concerned about remaining part of the NRM Parliament delegation rather than representing workers' concerns (Barya, 2017, p. 52; Interview VI - Key Informant). After all, the access to parliament and government in a highly corrupt and authoritarian environment provides MPs with resources, networks, and social and economic capital for personal gain (Barya, 2010, p. 97). At the same time, multiple trade union leaders hold favourable views of the workers' MPs and emphasized that they provide access to funding for pro-worker projects and give the workers a voice in parliament and government (Interview XIII - Trade Union Leader, Interview XIV - Trade Union Leader). Leaders of all trade unions interviewed during the field research emphasized, in this context, that the trade union must maintain good relations with the national government. Key informants during this research argued that, instead of becoming political themselves, trade union leaders rely on the workers' MPs to voice the political concerns of the labour movement, ignoring their cooptation by the NRM and their numerical insignificance in parliament (Interview

XVI - Key Informant). It can be argued that this also impedes informal economy organizing as the trade union leaders rather rely on the political power of the workers' MPs instead of building political power for the trade unions through recruiting more workers.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, international organizations like the ILO recognized informal workers as part of the labour movement and started to provide funding for trade union activities targeting the informal economy. This external incentive, alongside the collapse of private sector trade unions, contributed to an internal conflict within the Ugandan labour movement. Some labour leaders and parts of the NOTU leadership argued for opening trade unions to informal workers. Opponents contended that the Ugandan law only recognized employees as workers eligible for trade union membership, which excluded most informal workers from organizing because many of them are own-account workers. The internal disagreement contributed to the formation of the Central Organisation of Free Trade Unions (COFTU), a small NOTU-split off which formed in 2003 (Interview XII - Trade Union Centre; Interview XVI - Key Informant). To gain legitimacy and funding, COFTU decided to tap into the informal labour market in disregard of the law. Once COFTU had accepted informal trade unions, such as UMEU, into its ranks, COFTU was able to get formal economy trade unions on board as well. The strategy of organizing the informal economy paid off and resulted in more power for COFTU. In 2006, NOTU followed the example of COFTU and opened its ranks to the informal economy (Interview XII – Trade Union Centre), but only a fraction of the trade unions organized under NOTU started engaging with the informal economy. Key informants argued that the split of COFTU and NOTU further weakened the collective voice of the labour

movement as both trade union centres spend time and resources on fighting each other instead of focusing exclusively on workers' interest (Interview VI - Key Informant).

The lack of political freedom and the dependence of the trade union leadership on the ruling NRM party continues to impede the political struggle of trade unions against the neoliberal government, which also affects the organization of informal workers. As of March 2019, several COFTU leaders, NOTU leaders or even workers' MPs were part of NRM (Interview VI - Key Informant, Interview XVI - Key Informant). Key informants claimed that central figures in the labour movement work in the interest of the NRM, some even as intelligence for the Government of Uganda (Interview VI - Key Informant, Interview XVI - Key Informant). All five workers' MPs elected through NOTU and COFTU are NRM members. One of them is the current State Minister for Sports and as such part of the government (Interview VI - Key Informant, Interview XVI - Key Informant). There are, however, trade unionists in the formal and the informal economy who have no ties to the governing party and President Museveni. Some of them in interviews denounced the government for trying to bribe them into loyalty to the ruling party (Interview III - Trade Union Leader). In most cases, however, trade union leaderships remain apolitical and do not challenge the national government directly.

In summary, the colonial and post-colonial legislation and decades of political oppression by governments, which sought to coopt and split the labour movement, have garbled any form of unionism which goes beyond the shop floor. The apolitical and technocratic ideology the trade unions internalized during education programmes and trainings provided by the ILO and other Western actors, "though to some extent helping the unions to preserve their autonomy, crippled their vision of both the economic structure and politics of the country, narrowed their self-conceptualization and limited

their capacity for positive self-transformation” (Barya, 1990, p. 20). This “business unionist” type of trade union organizing, legally established during the colonial period and internalized during the education seminars by the ILO over the following decades, also impacted the organization of informal workers because it sees itself first and foremost responsible for its core-constituency, i.e. the workers it already organizes, and not peripheral constituencies like informal workers. The historical experience of oppression under the Amin and Obote eras engrained trade unions to refrain from substantially challenging the government, which further explains the apolitical culture of trade unions in Uganda. Moreover, the continuous cooptation of the trade union movement, today symbolized by the workers’ MP system, further depoliticizes the labour movement.

Despite this challenging context, hundreds of thousands of informal workers have signed up to some of the trade unions in the country in recent years. Research on trade union organizing in the country, at the same time, has remained limited: Only Spooner and Mwanika (2016) examine in-depth the trade union organizing strategy of Ugandan trade unions in the informal economy, but their arguments do not question apolitical organizing strategies. Besides this, no detailed studies have been conducted on trade union organizing in the informal economy in the country.

Chapter 3: Trade Union Organizing in Uganda's Informal Transport, Market, and Textile Sector

During the time of the field research in March 2019, ten out of forty-four trade unions in Uganda serviced the informal economy. While some trade unions are willing to organize the informal economy but lack the capacity, it is reported by informal economy trade union leaders that some formal economy trade union leaders are hostile towards informal workers. The informal economy union leaders claimed that the formal economy trade unions refused to include the informal economy workers in its ranks, which forced, for example, the market workers to create trade unions of their own (Interview III - Trade Union Leader, Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader).

Key informants explained the fact that 34 trade unions did not engage with the informal economy with insider-outsider dynamics in dualist labour markets. They reported that careerist trade union leaders, who are primarily interested in the income opportunities the trade union generates for themselves, are comfortable in a position where they cater to a small formal workforce, which is satisfied with the status quo. If the trade union leadership delivers wage increases and better working conditions through collective bargaining for the formal workers organized in the trade union, the leaders can expect that the organized formal workers continue to support the incumbent trade union administration (Interview XVI - Key Informant). In cases where resources shift towards the difficult-to-organize informal economy, formal economy union leaders fear for their position if their formal economy electorate feels alienated (Interview 1 - Trade Union Leader). Hence, careerist trade union leaders favour the status quo instead of taking the electoral gamble of expanding the trade union membership and electorate to informal workers. The interviews with key informants

revealed that even some union centres used their close contacts to the government to block significant workers' associations from becoming trade unions because they were worried about the changing power dynamics within the trade union centre (Interview VI - Key Informant).

The trade unions examined in this research undertake the lion share of the trade union organizing in the informal economy in Uganda, sometimes with the administrative or financial support of the trade union centres and non-governmental organizations such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Many informal workers in Uganda also organize in non-union structures such as enterprises, self-help groups, cooperatives, workers' associations, or Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs)¹⁹. Instead of enrolling every single informal worker, the trade unions examined integrate these existing local, regional, and sometimes national membership-based organizations into their structures (Interview II - Trade Union Leader XXVI).

Trade Union Organizing in Uganda's Informal Transport Sector

The transport workers union ATGWU has been organizing informal workers within its structure since 2008. In February 2019, ATGWU had around 100,000 members, of which 20,000 were formal employees in 14 enterprises, and 80,000 were

¹⁹ A *SACCO* is a collective saving and lending institution established and run by informal workers on the local level. If workers contribute on a regular basis, they can access loans which they can use for investments in their businesses or for personal expenses.

informal workers organized in 11 workers' associations²⁰. The trade union did not recruit these informal workers directly. Instead, the workers individually signed up to become members of the associations. These associations, in turn, sign up for ATGWU membership. Once an association joins the union, the workers in the associations automatically become trade union members. Through this, informal workers can run for trade union leadership positions and benefit from ATGWU services. ATGWU receives a share of the fees the workers pay to the associations. Most of the affiliated associations only joined the trade union in the mid-2010s. This boom started after leadership changes within ATGWU, which opened the trade union to the idea of informal worker organizing on a larger scale. The decline in formal economy membership caused by newly introduced neoliberal labour laws and a lack of labour law enforcement contributed to this strategic shift. ATGWU does not offer membership options for owners in the informal economy who do not operate their vehicles themselves as the union considers them, in line with structuralism, the capitalists of the informal economy (Interview 1 - Trade Union Leader).

ATGWU addressed multiple dimensions of the decent work deficit among informal workers in Uganda's transport sector. At the time of the field research, the union had, for example, resolved problems around how the workers and associations made their issues heard with the government. Ugandan workers' associations outside of trade unions often maintain informal connections with influential figures in the country,

²⁰ A *workers' association* manages a workplace in the informal economy to ensure that conflicts between workers and with outsiders are avoided or solved. They also engage in collective representation with outside organization on behalf of the workers they organize in one workplace.

mostly well connected to the entourage of President Museveni and the NRM leadership. These connections come at a cost for the workers' associations as they often involve bribery and depend on the goodwill of their counterparts. Associations affiliated with ATGWU reported that partnering with a trade union had ended their dependence on the influential figures in government because they were able to address their needs to the government through the trade unions (Interview XI - Trade Union Leader). Trade union leaders claimed that President Museveni had pressured some associations to end their relationship with ATGWU, but these refused to follow the President's demand. The trade unions had the power to be able to break this patronage bondage between associations and influential figures in and around the government to the end the precarious dependence of the involved workers (Interview XI - Trade Union Leader).

Furthermore, informal workers reported in interviews instances of protection by the trade union against illegitimate or illegal behaviour by law enforcement agencies of the city government of Kampala. For example, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is the legal entity established by the Ugandan Parliament, which is responsible for the operations of the capital city of Kampala in Uganda. In many cases, the informal workers escape once they are aware that the KCCA conducts checks on licenses or work permits in their area of operation. The reason for this behaviour is that the KCCA frequently confiscates goods of informal workers or fines them because they work outside of designated areas for specific economic activities, because they do not comply with regulations, or because they lack the required licenses. As most of the economy in Kampala operates informally, the selection process of the KCCA on who to conduct checks on is perceived as illegitimate by the workers and has led to conflict with the city government in the past. The workers reported that they feel that they do not have any legal rights when engaging with the KCCA. Goods seized usually

disappear, which makes the workers assume that corrupt KCCA officials use the confiscated goods for themselves. The hide-and-seek of the KCCA and the informal workers has led, in some cases, to panic among the former, which caused fatal injuries in the past when informal vendors fell into a deep ditch while escaping from the authorities (Interview IV - Key Informant).

In another example, the trade union protected informal workers from the privatization of public land, which served as a workplace for transport workers. The KCCA had intended to privatize minibuses or “taxi”²¹ parks in Kampala, which had made the transportation workers fear that they would be more vulnerable to the decisions of investors such as higher rents for parking spaces. After the workers had reached out to the union, ATGWU pressured the KCCA to stop the privatization of minibus parks and threatened the city government with strikes (Interview X - Worker). One taxi driver reported during the field research:

Since [my association Kampala Taxi Stages Association] KOTSA joined [the] union, some things have changed. Before, everyone was thinking that they can come and take over [the tenurial of the taxi park]. But since we joined the union, we have become one voice, which has helped us to stand and others to fear to intervene in us. I appreciate [the] union for the great job. [Before the trade union organizing happened], you [as an investor were able to] come in today and say, me, I want to be the [owner] of [the] taxi [park]. [But I as a driver], I want to choose the [ownership of my taxi park].

Moreover, the trade union collectively bargains with different levels of government to create and protect legal spaces for the informal workers interviewed. The

²¹ Minibuses in Uganda are called *taxis*; passenger cars for hire are referred to as *cabs*.

field research revealed, for example, that tuk-tuks²² – which are mostly operated by unregistered self-employed workers – are by law not allowed to transport passengers in Uganda. This legislation is, in practice, ignored by the tuk-tuk drivers. For this reason, the drivers have been frequently persecuted and harassed by the authorities and the police. The 200 informal workers organized in the Tuk Tuk Owners and Operators Society Ltd. – out of 350 tuk-tuk drivers in total in Kampala – signed a memorandum of understanding with ATGWU in March 2019 to integrate their organization into the trade union. Before this, the tuk-tuk drivers had witnessed other cases where ATGWU managed to provide legal aid and protection to informal transport workers, which had made the tuk-tuk drivers hope that the trade union would be able to protect the workers from confiscations of their vehicles by the authorities (Interview XVII – Workers).

ATGWU collectively negotiated between informal taxi drivers and the aviation authority at the Entebbe International Airport in 2008 and threatened the airport management with strikes. During the negotiations, ATGWU successfully demanded to provide parking and office space inside the airport for the informal cab drivers organized in the AirPort Taxi Services Co-operation Society Limited, which gave the workers access to a safe and legal way to operate in after years of conflict with the airport management (Interview 1 - Trade Union Leader).

²² A *tuk-tuk* is three-wheeled motorized rickshaw.



Figure 4: Workplaces at Tukulerewamu craft producers and sellers on the parking lot nearby the Ghaddafi Mosque. Photo: Researcher (15 March 2019)

In another example, informal craft-producing workers in the Tukulerewamu association organized under the transport union reported during the field research about how the trade union had defended their workspace against private and government interest. At the time of the field research, Tukulerewamu had 500 members, of which 150 were unionized in ATGWU. Informal own-account workers who produce crafts from Saturday to Thursday at their homes and sell their produce as tenants on Fridays on a parking space near the Gaddafi Mosque in the Kampala Central Division dominate the association.

The women and men reported that they had been expelled many times over decades from their workplaces by private landlords and the city administration. Ever since they affiliated their association with ATGWU, they have been able to operate

without being expelled (ATGWU group interview II workers). One Tukulerewamu worker reports during the interviews:

In the market, we were working, but they were chasing us - the KCCA [Kampala City Council Authority]; without giving us notice. Someone told us that there is a trade union, so we joined their office. By the time we joined the office, the trade union stood up, came in and talked to the landlord and KCCA. Then afterwards we got our working place. Before the union, we were working looking side by side that [the KCCA was] not chasing us.

In this context, the Tukulerewamu workers emphasized that the trade union represents them on the local, national and international levels, which gives them a voice in the wider society. The workers stressed that trade union membership helps to solve conflicts between workers and external actors in a controlled and peaceful way (Interview X - Worker). The cases of the taxi park, the tuk-tuk drivers, the AirPort taxi drivers, and the Tukulerewamu workers show that the collective bargaining power of ATGWU altered the power relations between the city government, landlords, and the workers and gave the informal workers interviewed protection in the public sphere against the KCCA.

The trade union also assisted in bureaucratic exercises with the authorities to avoid conflict between the law and the workers. For example, own-account minibus drivers and own-account boda drivers named high costs as the primary barrier in accessing Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licenses, which are obligatory for all motorized vehicles used for passenger transport in Uganda (Interview IX - Worker). Many drivers in the boda sector operated at the time of the research without the PSV licence to avoid the associated fee, which put them at risk of getting arrested, fined, or having their

motorcycles confiscated by the police (Interview IX - Worker). The informal workers reported that the trade union had assisted in acquiring the PSV license by collectively approaching the authorities, opening opportunities for collective saving and credit, and being supportive in handling the legally required paperwork (Interview IX - Worker). In this case, the trade union offered technical services without challenging the existing laws and regulations.

In other cases, ATGWU addressed the decent work deficit safe working environment. The low incomes make it hard for the workers to cover the high cost for safety equipment, which encourages workers to use substandard materials. They often buy cheap safety gear, helmets with limited durability, or even lack helmets and safety coats entirely, which puts the health and safety of the drivers and customers at risk (Interview IX - Worker). In the past, the trade union trained the workers on the risks for drivers and customers of using substandard material but did not provide any direct financial assistance for the needed gear. In another example on occupational health and safety, the union organized volunteer workers of the organization of HIV/AIDS survivors Galima Fights HIV/AIDS Initiative (Galima) and facilitated them with contacts to risk groups within the informal transport economy (Interview X - Worker, Interview XI - Trade Union Leader). Galima educates truck drivers, who are in almost all cases informal, about the risks of sexual diseases, as these are especially prevalent among truck drivers who are prone to engage in sexual activities while away from home (Interview X - Worker, Interview XI - Trade Union Leader).

Additionally, the interviews revealed that ATGWU addressed the decent work deficit stability and security of work. Informal long-distance truck drivers in Uganda work for internationally operating haulage companies that usually do not provide the workers with written employment contracts. Hence, employers can undermine their

legal obligations easily and avoid social security contributions. The drivers do not know how much they earn until they get paid because they lack any form of a written formal agreement with the employer. ATGWU leaders reported in interviews that the transport enterprises hire and fire the informal workers as they wish (Interview XI - Trade Union Leader). In some instances, the workers do not get paid at all, as they get fired on their way back to the transport enterprise after delivering the goods. The workers only have limited individual bargaining power because the employers can replace them at any time with unemployed workers willing to work for a lower wage (Interview XI - Trade Union Leader). At the same time, new tracking technology in the trucks and busses gives employers more control and bargaining power in the employment relationship. ATGWU reports in interviews that the union educates the workers about the need for written work contracts, their rights, and the legal obligations of the employers.

Furthermore, the workers reported in group interviews that they had received training on leadership, negotiation, bargaining, and presentation skills by ATGWU. This was confirmed by the observations by the researcher during the NOTU/ATWGU training session for informal workers in Masaka and the material handed out during the meeting. The informal workers welcomed the initiative because they hoped that these skills could improve their poor relationships with their respective negotiating partners, such as landlords or local governments. They claimed that governments of all levels do not understand the transport sector and hence levy inadequate regulations, fees and high taxes (Interview IX - Worker). In interviews, own-account informal workers reported that they would like to pay standard taxes so that government recognizes and acknowledges them as legitimate economic and political actors, but they did not have the opportunity to do so because no regular tax-collection registration system for the informal economy had been set up in Uganda. In some cases, associations, like the taxi

association KOTSA, already facilitated the collection of taxes and fees during the research (Interview XVII - Worker). The trade union leaders pointed out the possibilities of improved legitimacy for workers in cases of negotiation with public authorities if the workers pay taxes regularly (Interview I - Trade Union Leader).

The ATGWU workers emphasized in the interviews that the membership in the trade union secures the right of assembly for the workers, which is *de jure* curtailed for the rest of the Ugandan population. Associations and other groups in Uganda can only meet with more than ten people if the police are formally informed about the gathering. The relevant legislation, the Public Order Management Act 2013, which was in place during the time of the research, however, exclusively exempts trade unions and affiliated associations. Trade union leaders claimed during the interviews that they had threatened the government with strikes when lawmakers had proposed the bill initially without exempting trade unions, which made the government free the unions from the law. The ATGWU informal workers emphasized in group interviews that the trade union serves as an open platform for the exchange of ideas (Interview IX - Worker). Protecting this potentially political space for the workers can be regarded as radical in an authoritarian and neoliberal environment.

At the time of the research, the Tukulerewamu workers addressed some issues which had not been tackled by the trade union. For example, Tukulerewamu sought to buy land because the association believed that a permanent and more visible workplace could improve the marketing of Tukulerewamu products (Interview XVIII - Workers, Interview XIX - Workers, Interview XX - Workers, Interview XXI - Workers, Interview XXII - Workers, Interview XXIII - Workers) (see *Figure 4*). Moreover, the workers mentioned in the interviews that they lack collective bargaining with their suppliers as well as standard quality and pricing of products to avoid price-dumping based on

internal Tukulerewamu competition (Interview XVIII - Worker, Interview XIX - Worker, Interview XXII - Worker). The interviews revealed that the workers also lacked access to international markets. They hoped that ATGWU could help address these issues in the future, but, by the end of the research, it was not clear yet whether the trade union would be able to do so (Interview XIV - Worker, Interview XVI - Worker).



Figure 5: Taxi drivers located at the Old Taxi Park in Central Kampala reported that they do not have enough space provided by the city to embark and disembark passengers and goods. Photo: Researcher. (19 March 2019)

The taxi drivers also reported in interviews that they do not have enough space provided by the city to embark and disembark passengers and goods (see *Figure 5*). Parking, loading, and unloading on the roadside is officially outlawed and includes risks around health and safety for drivers and passengers (Interview X - Worker). The workers claimed that this workplace issue is closely connected to the fact that the city had, during the time of the research, not designated or built additional parking spaces

in atover the past years, while the number of passengers and taxis had been growing. At the end of the research period, it was not clear yet how the trade union would be able to address this issue.

In general, informal transport workers frequently complained in the interviews about long working hours, low wages, and risks around health and safety at their workplaces (Interview IX - Worker; Interview X - Worker). A boda driver reported:

I think the average [working] hours [for boda drivers who operate during the daytime] are like ten hours because there are some guys who come at six in the morning, and they leave stages at midnight. For us [boda drivers who operate at night]²³, we can start working at around nine or ten [in the night] up to around four in the morning. And the reason for the long hours comes from the little income.

The informal transport workers interviewed reported that women face specific challenges in the workplace. In group interviews, women said that male workers forced women to remain outside the transport sector through sexual harassment and intimidation at the workplace because they were afraid of new labour competition (Interview IX - Worker). The interviews did not reveal how ATGWU addresses gender inequalities, low wages, and long working hours.

ATWGU faces problems in organizing the informal economy in cases where more than just one leadership team claims to represent a group of workers. For example, during the signature ceremony for the memorandum of understanding between the tuk-

²³ The interviewee reports that boda riders who operate at night usually also have other workplaces during the daytime.

tuk drivers and the union, a different group of tuk-tuk drivers showed up and claimed that those who signed the agreement with ATGWU did not represent the tuk-tuk drivers of Kampala. In another example, during the Ntete Boda Stage leadership election, tuk-tuk drivers and boda-drivers physically fought about their genuine stage leadership in the presence of the researcher and a trade union leader, which left one man injured in the hospital. The lack of authorized formal documentation in the informal economy impedes the verification of information, which is a threshold to the union in the informal economy.

Additionally, in a multilingual city like Kampala, the communication between trade unions and informal workers is impeded by language barriers (Interview IX - Worker) and a high rate of semi-illiteracy or illiteracy (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader). Organized informal workers complained in the interviews about the lack of trade unionists on the ground, who could speak their language (Interview X - Worker; Interview III - Trade Union Leader).

Furthermore, the leadership of the trade unions and trade union centres did, at the time of the research, not feature a proportionate number of former informal economy workers, which would have represented the share of informal workers in the trade unions. NOTU admitted in interviews that the integration of informal workers into the leadership structure of the labour movement poses a challenge. They claimed that informal workers were not yet sufficiently skilled to take up leadership positions. NOTU had started engaging with the informal economy in 2016, but only five out of 24 NOTU executive board members elected in the December 2018 NOTU leadership vote came from the informal economy, although half of NOTU's membership base is in the informal economy. This unrepresentative ratio was not significantly different in other trade union centres or trade unions at the time of the research (Interview 1 - Trade Union

Leader). Many leaders in NOTU, COFTU, or in the trade unions did not originate from the informal economy themselves and lacked knowledge about the informal economy. Moreover, they grew into their positions under the influence of the education programmes by ILO and Western trade unions, which promoted apolitical and technical trade unionism. Hence, the trade union leaders are often university graduates who used the leadership position as a professional opportunity and have no work experience in the jobs they represent (Interview I - Trade Union Leader).

ATGWU leaders reported that it is challenging to convince informal workers to stay part of the trade union for a more extended period. Where trade unions provided saving schemes, the workers often joined the union to access the loan and paid their trade union membership only until they obtained their credit, and then stopped paying membership dues (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). The short-term commitment of the workers poses challenges for the trade union in terms of financial planning and bargaining power.

The National Union of Drivers, Cyclists and Allied Workers (NUDIKAWA) is ATGWU's counterpart organized under COFTU and claimed to have 10,000 paying members from the formal and the informal economy in March 2019. In the informal economy, it focuses on casual, long-distance bus drivers and motorcycle taxi drivers (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader). The trade union addressed different decent work deficits in Uganda's informal economy but did so on a smaller scale and was less explicitly political than ATGWU. In the political field, the trade union became active when filing petitions in the Parliament of Uganda about the racial discrimination of Ugandan bus drivers in Tanzania. Moreover, the trade union leadership reported that it lobbied with the KCCA and the national government for safer roads and better traffic infrastructure.

NUDIKAWA formally complains about the low wages and poor working conditions of informal transport workers working for and with Taxify, Uber and other private hiring apps (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader). ATGWU went beyond this by creating a trade union-owned app themselves, the so-called KAMBE app. The KAMBE app performs the same services for the drivers that pairs drivers with hiring customers but, different from Taxify and UBER, does not deduct a share from the driver's salary. Besides, it offers an option for collective savings for the drivers, who often cannot save in a bank because they lack income, addresses, and work contracts.

On the workplace-level, NUDIKAWA achieved, in some cases of workplace accidents among long-distance bus drivers, compensations for informal workers from employers. For example, a trade union leader reported that one of the workers burnt his arm with hot water from the bus engine. NUDIKAWA managed to pressure the employer to provide an indemnity payment for the workplace accident. In other cases, NUDIKAWA successfully bargained with employers in the informal economy to facilitate the workers with written employment contracts (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader).

The NUDIKAWA leadership reported during the interviews that it is challenging for trade unions to find space and time to recruit, inform, or train informal workers for trade union activities because the workers are always on the move in search of customers. Also, many unregistered transport workers change their workplaces regularly. Even if the trade union recruiter educates workers about the trade union work on one day at one workplace, he or she may have difficulties to follow up with the worker at the same work if the worker gets a job somewhere else. The workplace observations showed that motorcycle taxi drivers were mostly on the roads and seldom for a long time at their stage, which would have allowed for trade union education and

recruiting (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader). The workers have to invest all their time to generate income, which supports Arendt's thesis that informed political activism is not possible in the realm of poverty. As workers in the informal economy do not have a lot of time for extra-work activities, NUDIKAWA has resorted to using radio programmes for information dissemination. The informal dissemination sessions educate the workers about their rights, such as the rights to create or join a trade union, and about NUDIKAWA trade union activities (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader).

Moreover, NUDIKAWA supports informal workers regarding financial management. The trade union encourages and trains the workers to set up SACCOs so that they can collectively save money and access loans, which they are often not able to do through the formal financial system. The trade union pushes informal workers and enterprises to register to pay taxes because this gives the representatives of the workers more leverage in negotiations with the government (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader). These negotiations can include disputes over whether workers can use a non-designated workplace for their operation or general issues around police harassment. The trade union facilitates sensitization programmes on road safety for boda drivers (Interview XXIV - Trade Union Leader).

Trade unions that organize formal and informal workers, like ATGWU or NUDIKAWA, face the challenge of factionalism between the two groups. For example, ATGWU leaders reported about the unease of some formal workers who had the impression that resources, they created through their membership dues, were allocated towards informal newcomers. This informal-formal division was exploited in trade union leadership elections and by external actors in the past. ATGWU attempted to address this challenge through additional communication efforts, more financial transparency, and a change in wording in official communication.

Table 8. Trade unions in Uganda's informal transport sector addressing decent work

	ATGWU	NUDIKAWA
Employment Opportunities	represents of workers against investors and government to prevent privatization of taxi parks	-
Adequate Earning and Productive Work	prevents theft of goods by government workers; creation of trade-union-owned hiring mobile application to avoid exploitation of the drivers by companies	critiques wages and working conditions of private hiring mobile applications
Decent Work Timing	-	-
Combining work, family, and personal life	-	-
Work that should be abolished	-	-
Stability and security of work	secures workspace for Tukulerewamu workers through negotiations with investors and the city government	-
Equal Opportunity and treatment in employment	-	files petitions against the discrimination against Ugandan informal transport workers in Tanzania
Safe work environment	trains workers on substandard (or complete lack of) safety gear and HIV/Aids	lobbies with government for safer traffic infrastructure
Social security	educates workers about need for written work contracts, legal rights or workers	pressures employers to provide workplace accident compensation and written work contracts
Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation	ends precarious patronage bondages between workers' associations and corrupt government officials; laws only provide for trade unions to gather without government license	conducts radio education programmes to educate informal workers on their right of association
Economic and social context for decent work	improves legal and regulatory environment for own-account tuk-tuk workers in negotiations with governments and investors; training on leadership, negotiation, bargaining, and presentation skills	-

One informal transport worker stated during the interviews (Interview IX - Worker):

After joining ATGWU, whether you are formal or informal, the training of ATGWU has told us that we are all equal. When we are equal, everything is run smoothly. Whether you come with your degrees, from me, I have no A level certificate; I can lead you. We are all equal.

ATGWU addressed, at the time of the research, all workers as “members,” “brothers/sisters,” or railway, road, or transport workers instead of “informal” and “formal” workers. One trade union official critiqued the focus of development organizations on the concept of “promoting the informal economy” when engaging with the trade union, as it deepens the informal-formal divide within the trade union further. Trade union representatives at ATGWU emphasized that recent trade union meetings and training included formal and informal workers to bridge the formal-informal gap (Interview II - Trade Union Leader).

Trade Union Organizing in Uganda’s Informal Market Sector

The Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union (UMEU) is affiliated with NOTU and states that it has around 4,000 paying members. The trade union organizes exclusively informal workers (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader, Interview III - Trade Union Leader). The workers in the trade union are predominantly own-account workers and employees at the market. The leadership of UMEU-NOTU reported that it organized informal workers through workers’ associations or - in cases where associations are unable or unwilling to sign a cooperation agreement with the trade union - through individual membership (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). The

trade union membership costs 12,000 Ugandan Shillings (UGX=3.50 CAD) per year, which is less than 1% of the annual income of most of the market workers (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). In return, the members receive a personalized trade union membership card. The workers interviewed at the trade union's office reported that police, when they ask the workers for bribes, often back off when they show their membership card (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader).

UMEU-NOTU attempts to offer services that traditionally would be provided by the government or private companies. For example, market workers generally have difficulties in accessing bank accounts and loans (Interview XXV - Worker), which makes it difficult for the workers to expand their businesses or finance personal investments such as housing or a motorized vehicle. Hence, UMEU-NOTU claimed to provide access to credit through collective savings under favourable conditions to the informal workers (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). Moreover, the trade union took up duties in the area of occupational health and safety traditionally performed by the government or private enterprises. For example, the trade union facilitates visits from doctors who do inspections of workplaces and disease treatment without charge at the market, which is relevant because many of the workers cannot afford to pay the fee charged in public and private healthcare facilities in Uganda, while, at the same time, the hygienic conditions at the market are frequently inadequate. For instance, the market lacks professional cooling facilities that prevent perishable goods from rotting. The climate is hot, and the density of workers and customers in the market is extremely high, which makes the local population vulnerable to fast-spreading diseases (Interview XXV - Worker) (see *Figure 6*).

In the Wandegeya market between Central Kampala and Kawempe, UMEU-NOTU tackles the decent work deficit of equal opportunity and treatment in

employment by setting up a daycare centre for ten kids of informal workers. Here, the parents contribute 3,000 UGX (1.07 CAD) per week to pay the full-time daycare worker, who is more affordable for most workers than the regular private nursery facilities (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader). Besides this, the union plans to build a solidarity fund that will protect the market workers against income-losses through sickness. The cases show that the trade union engages in providing services, which the neoliberal NRM government is not willing or able to perform. The trade union, however, did not report that it pressures the government to support the initiatives or expand government social protection. Key informants explained this, in part, with the fact that the trade union leader is an NRM party member and has a role in government as the Presidential advisor for markets in Uganda (Interview VI - Key Informant). The Presidential advisor is a member of the government and reports directly to President Museveni on the matters of markets in Uganda.

On the workplace-level, UMEU-NOTU reported that employers and employees on the market conflict because they are not informed about the existing labour laws. Hence, UMEU-NOTU continually attempts to mediate related disputes by educating the market employees and their employers about the Ugandan labour laws (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader).



Figure 6: Random sample of workplaces at Owino Market. According to UMEU-NOTU, Owino Market in Central Kampala is the stronghold of the trade union, but most workers interviewed did not know about the trade union. Photo: Researcher. (22 March 2019)

As described in the methodology section of this thesis, I also approached workers who were not organized in the trade union to see what they know about the trade union's activities. None of the non-unionised workers interviewed at the Owino market knew about the trade union, but all workers interviewed knew the name of the general secretary of the trade union, who is also the owner of multiple market stores at Owino Market and Presidential advisor on markets. All workers interviewed accused the trade union leader of harassment and violent abuse of the workers who failed to pay market dues and fees. Some of them suffered life-threatening injuries from thug attacks, which they believe were orchestrated by the leader of the trade union. They reported that a SACCO sponsored by the market workers disappeared overnight, which was

managed by the trade union leader and held millions of US dollars for market development projects.

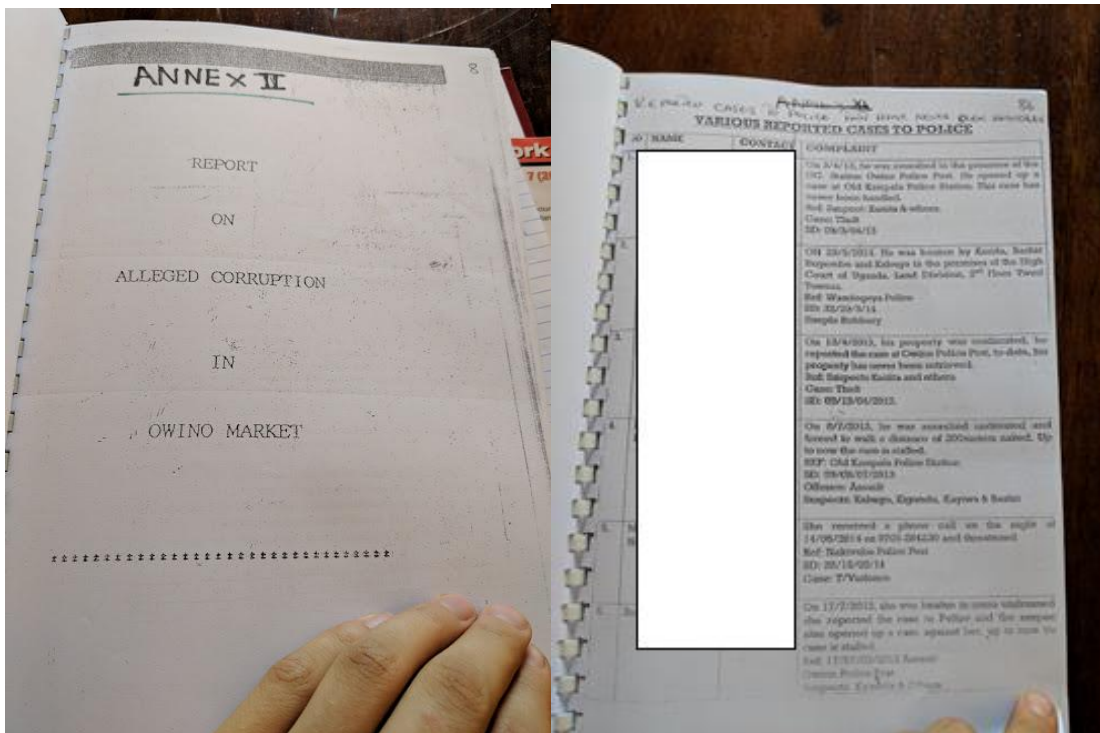


Figure 7: Two selected sample pages from 157 pages of collected evidence: hundreds of market workers accuse the UMEU-NOTU trade union leader and his thug gangs of violent and corrupt behaviour: One of the hundreds of cases reported reads, for example: “On 8/7/2013, he was assaulted undressed and forced to walk a distance of 300 metres naked. Up to now, the case is stalled.” Photo: Researcher. (22 March 2019)

The claims of the workers were backed up by a 157-page document in which the workers collected evidence accusing the UMEU-NOTU trade union leader and his thug gangs of violent and corrupt behaviour. The workers have a list of sexual assault and theft reported to the police. One example reads: “On 17/7/2013, she was beaten to coma undressed she reported the case to Police and the suspect also opened up a case against her, up to now the case is stalled.” Other cases report on different occasions of theft, behind which the workers suspect the trade union leader: “On 11/2/2013, Katenda, Masabo Kiyimba & Ssebalu invaded her stall, confiscated her handbags, a sum of 800,000/= [284 CAD] and her mobile phone, up to now the case is stalled.” None of the workers I interviewed was organized in the trade union, although the trade union claims

that Owino Market is their stronghold (Interview XXVII – Worker) (see *Figure 7*). Key informants also pointed out in interviews that it is unclear how many of the services the trade union claims to provide *de facto* exist.

Poor leadership and a lack of democracy in the trade union, as attested by key informants and workers, leaves space for the union structure to be used as a tool by corrupt officials, management, and government to access funding for personal enrichment. Some of the market workers organized in an independent association to tackle the problem, but they do not have the power to take radical action, for example, setting up a party or going on strike. Instead, during the time of the research, they were challenging the trade union leader in court but were facing significant difficulties in doing so. For example, the organizers behind the association received death threats and were pressured by the trade union leadership to stop their legal actions (Interview XXVII – Worker). Moreover, the court case is costly, and the informal workers believe that the trade union leader bribes the judges to shelf the lawsuit. The example shows how an authoritarian and corrupt environment can hinder trade unions in organizing the informal economy for labour-centred development and decent work.

In the market sector, COFTU has the Uganda Markets and Allied Employees Union (UMEU), which claims to represent 50,000 members. The trade union did not specify when asked how many of these 50,000 workers pay their membership regularly. The trade union organizes exclusively informal workers, predominantly through SACCOs (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader, Interview III - Trade Union Leader). The workers in the trade union are, in most cases, market stall owners, market employees, burden bearers, and street vendors (Interview VIII - Trade Union Leader).

The trade union leaders reported that the main challenge the trade union faces when organizing the informal economy is the lack of funding (Interview VIII - Trade

Union Leader; Interview VI - Key Informant). The UMEU-COFTU leadership and trade union leaders from other sectors reported that the lack of check-off lists in the informal economy impedes the collection of trade union membership dues, not just because the workers lack a documentation of income but also because most of them are either own-account workers (Interview III - Trade Union Leader, Interview VI - Key Informant). For example, the affiliated associations paid membership dues to the ATGWU, but membership collections per capita in the informal economy remain low. Moreover, UMEU-COFTU leaders reported that it is difficult to access international funding due to a highly competitive environment, while at the same time, members or associations are not contributing regularly (Interview III - Trade Union Leader; Interview VI - Key Informant). Like other informal workers, the COFTU market workers set up SACCOs, but they complain that the financial capacity of these member-funded financial institutions is too limited to bring about meaningful change in the life of the market workers.

The informal market workers face a myriad of decent work deficits which they would like to see addressed by the union, but UMEU-COFTU, in most cases, lacks the required funding. On the enterprise-level, vendors of second-hand clothes, for example, complained about the poor packaging of the goods delivered. Moreover, they complain about the lack of health and business insurance, which is vital as fires regularly destroy goods and stalls in Ugandan markets. Besides, the lack of proper cooling storage facilities limits the lifespan of perishable products, which inflicts financial loss on the market vendors. The value-addition involving the processing of products on the marketplace is very limited, which keeps the income of the informal workers and their potential for investment low (Interview VI - Key Informant). Besides, the workers would like to see a nurse in their markets so that diseases do not spread so easily

(Interview XXVIII – Worker). In general, the workers would like to know the government services in the areas of occupational health and safety, and security in their markets increased (Interview XXVIII – Worker). COFTU workers and the leadership reported in the interviews that the union conducted training for workers on leadership, business and financial management, sanitation measures, and HIV/Aids, but during the time of the interviews, the last training had taken place six months ago.

Beyond the workplace-level, it is even more difficult for the union to address the needs of the market workers. The workers reported that in some markets in Kampala, vendors operate from roads or railroads because the government has not extended the regular marketplace infrastructure for decades although the number of workers grew, which has, in some instances, led to fatal accidents with bypassing trains or motorized vehicles (see *Figure 8*). Accidents also happen frequently around Ggaba Market and other markets on the shores of Lake Victoria due to unsafe boats, which transport customers, workers, and goods to the markets. Due to the poor infrastructure, workers get hurt or fall ill at their workplaces. This lack of workplace safety is not, formally, addressed by the Workers Compensation Act 2000, as it excludes workplace accidents involving informal workers. The Act was designed to provide compensation to employees for injuries and diseases incurred in the course of their employment but only applies to workers with written work contracts, which most workers in the informal economy do not possess. The act also disregards self-employed and own-account workers. Another problem relating to health the UMEU-COFTU market workers reported is the weak drainage systems in the markets, combined with the lack of waste management. If markets flood, waste floats around in the market and causes diseases. Therefore, the general sanitary situation in the markets is weak. The unfortunate sanitarieness exists, although the informal workers on the markets pay in many cases

taxes to local authorities or other levels of government. Despite their financial contribution to the public, the workers are still forced to pay fees for public services like public toilets or electric infrastructure.

Child labour is another issue the UMEU-COFTU market workers discussed during the interviews. The phenomenon of child labour has flourished since the 1980s because parents with HIV/AIDS died or were too sick to work, so they sent their children, sometimes as young as eight years, to the markets to sell goods. As the workers lack social protection, the parents were not able to rely on these during the disease.



Figure 8: Photo material provided by UMEU-COFTU shows market workers operating on train tracks on the line between Tororo and Gulu, which is used by commercial freight trains. (21 March 2019)

While the lack of funding makes the union largely impotent, the UMEU-COFTU workers emphasized that inner-union democracy provides a governance structure that allows them to choose their leadership with their interest at heart. The KCCA, in opposition, appoints civil servants as market managers without democratic consultations with the workers on the market.

Table 9. Trade unions in Uganda's informal market sector addressing decent work

	UMEU-NOTU	UMEU-COFTU
Employment Opportunities	-	-
Adequate Earning and Productive Work	provides collective saving opportunities	-
Decent Work Timing		-
Combining work, family, and personal life	provides trade-union owned daycare centre	-
Work that should be abolished	-	-
Stability and security of work	-	-
Equal Opportunity and treatment in employment	-	-
Safe work environment	facilitates free doctors	trains workers on sanitation measures and HIV/Aids
Social security	-	-
Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation	-	-
Economic and social context for decent work	educates employees and employers about existing labour laws	represents workers against local governments; union conducted training for workers on leadership, business and financial management

The workers concluded that, while the trade union is unable to provide decent work to its members, it at least guarantees a democratic representation when interacting with different levels of government.

The financial weakness makes the trade unions also vulnerable to cooptation. Key informants report that the COFTU market union remained affiliated with COFTU and has not yet shifted to the more prominent and more active trade union centre NOTU because the leadership of COFTU paid the medical bills for one UMEU-COFTU leader after he had a severe accident (Interview VI - Key Informant). Closely connected to this corrupt behaviour of trade union leaders is that workers in the informal economy lack trust in organizations and institutions. Interviews with workers showed that even trade union members believe that trade union leaders are primarily concerned about personal gain. Organized and unorganized workers claimed that trade unions are not transparent enough about what happens to union dues and complain about the small scale of benefits trade unions deliver to them. Informal workers interviewed were concerned about the national government and political parties corrupting the trade unions.

The trade union leader of UMEU-COFTU identified the lack of knowledge about trade unions in the general population as a significant obstacle when organizing the informal economy (Interview III - Trade Union Leader). In interviews with the workers during the field research, it was challenging to find unorganized workers who can explain the concept of a trade union. The roles and functions of trade unions are unknown - even among organizers and trade union members. Informal workers who are members of workers' associations affiliated with trade unions were in interviews not aware that their associations are affiliated with a trade union and did not know about the concept of trade unionism. One ATGWU trade union leader explains this ignorance about trade unionism in the labouring classes with the business unionist history of

Uganda. Business unionism did not see the labouring classes as a target point of trade unionism, but collective bargaining for formal workers with their employers. As the number of registered employee-employer relationships in Uganda was limited throughout the decades and decreased in the past forty years even further, most trade unions serviced a small share of the population. Consequentially, most of the informal workers do not know about trade unionism today (Interview 1 - Trade Union Leader). The fact that most of the population lives in extreme poverty perpetuates the resulting apathy towards trade unions further. In line with Arendt's ideas on informed political participation, there is *de facto* no time left for workers to educate themselves about trade unionism or political community unionism, which is a prerequisite for labour-centred development and the organization of informal workers in strong trade unions as time and capital are consumed to support survival.

Trade Union Organizing in Uganda's Informal Textile Sector

The Uganda Textile Leather and Allied Workers' Union (UTGLAWU) is the only trade union in Uganda for textile workers. It claimed a membership of 5,771 at the beginning of 2019, which reflects a rise of 2,700 workers within the past four years and correlates with a new, more proactive trade union leadership. Estimations by the trade union leadership assume that there are 80,000 workers in Uganda working in the textile industry, of which the lion share works in casual employment (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader). In total, ten leather factories operate in Uganda; four of them are in Jinja. Three of the factories are Chinese-owned and only tan the skins so they can be exported and manufactured further in China. Relevant value-addition in Uganda only takes place in the locally owned enterprise, which operates informally (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader).

In 2007, UTGLAWU started to organize casual employees in a leather factory in Jinja in Eastern Uganda. UTGLAWU's organizing strategy for the factories is labelled "joint action," which involves the trade union cooperating closely with local authorities, community leaders and other trade unions to organize the informal workforce in the leather factories. The goal of this inclusionary approach is to promote trust among the different stakeholders. Team recruiting with various trade union leaders also ensures that the organizers reflect the numerous languages spoken in the workplace. While coordinating and cooperating with leaders amongst the informal workers, the trade union communicates in local languages to win the trust of the workers in Jinja, Uganda (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader). Beyond the casual factory workers, the trade union has failed to reach out to other forms of informal employment, like small-scale, home-based, own-account textile producers and unregistered textile vendors. The trade union leadership explains the slow organizing process with workplaces, which are often hidden from the public eye and difficult to identify. Moreover, the workers outside of the leather factories do not organize in associations, which requires the union to sign up every individual worker, which is more time-consuming than negotiating an agreement with an association or enterprise (Interview VX - Trade Union Leader).

The case of UTGLAWU demonstrates how hostile employers pose a critical threshold to trade union organizing in Uganda's informal economy. The first organizing efforts in Ugandan leather factories took place in 2007, but it took ten years for the trade union and the Chinese management to sign a recognition agreement. The trade union explains this extended period with managerial resistance against the trade union intervention. The enterprise owners spread false rumours about the trade union among workers, outlawed interactions between workers and the trade union on the factory compound, and threatened trade union leaders (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader). In

one incident, the managers claimed that the factory would be closed and moved to another country if the trade union disrupted the enterprise through strikes or higher labour costs (Interview VII - Trade Union Leaders). The eventual defeat of the managerial resistance shows that the trade union managed to shift the power relations between managers and casual, informal employees.

UTLAWGU's organizing strategies focus on the shop floor. For example, the informal workers report in interviews that Chinese and local managers alike ignore labour laws and workplace regulations. The workers face significant occupational health and safety deficits in the workplace. Chemicals and machines have, in the past, mutilated the body parts of workers (see *Figure 9*). The trade union was able to pressure the managers to pay compensation in one case where a workplace accident incapacitated an employee. As a result of the conditions faced by informal workers, substance abuse is often high among them. There are also beliefs among workers that alcohol protects them against chemicals used at work. The trade union was able to lower the abuse of drug and alcohol consumption through sensitization and education (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader, Interview XXIX - Worker).



Figure 9: One of the machines used to process leather in the leather factories in Uganda. The workers report from cases where arms got mutilated in the scalding and dehairing machine and other machines in workplace accidents (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader, Interview XXIX - Worker). Photo: Researcher. (19 March 2019)

In another example, the trade union pressured the employers to issue identity cards in English - instead of Chinese as it previously had been the case - and written employment contracts, which give the informal workers evidence for their employment at this factory when dealing with local authorities. The English IDs were of importance for the workers because in court cases or police investigations, they were able to prove that they have been working at the company (Interview XXIX – Worker).

During the time of the research, there was a rumour among the factory workers about imminent layoffs. The workers confronted the Chinese managers about the issue, who told them that from the next day on, production would halt for a few months due to a decline in demand for leather products. In these cases, workers do not receive any compensation and no notification about the dismissal in advance. Tensions rose until

one of the Chinese managers slapped one of the most vocal workers in the face. The trade union leader intervened and calmed the situation, listened to the workers' needs and represented them in the manager's office later during the day. The informal workers reported that the employers used to cane workers, but since the trade union has been active in the factory, caning has not occurred anymore as the trade union threatened the managers with strikes (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader, Interview XXIX - Worker).

On the enterprise-level, the managers hire and fire informal workers on a day-by-day basis. The workers do not have days off or holidays and - depending on the demand of international business partners - can work non-stop from 7 am until 10 pm. This kind of precarious work poses a challenge to UTGLAWU because the trade union does not offer many short-term services to members. If a worker loses his or her job after paying the trade union membership fee, the member may not benefit from the trade union services because only employed workers can access these (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader). Many workers, facing dismissal at any day, are hence hesitant to join the trade union and pay the associated fee.

Many decent work deficits of the workers remained unaddressed by UTLAWGU. For example, the informal factory workers and the trade union leadership reported that the Chinese managers drain their toxic waste and by-products into the nearby Lake Victoria instead of using the local waste management system. The claims of the union are backed up by Heinz Leuenberger and Reinard Bachofen (2008, p. 91-92), who find that the tanning industry in Uganda pollutes Lake Victoria with sodium sulphide, chrome cake, lime sludge cake, and fleshings. The alleged activities of the Chinese investors endanger millions of people who rely on the freshwater and fish provided by the lake. The trade union had, at the time of the research, not managed to change the situation by either pressuring the management to change its behaviour or

forcing the government to enforce environmental laws. If the informal workers have lunch breaks, the managers only provide them with posho²⁴ and beans. They drink untreated tap water, which in Jinja poses a significant health risk due to the pollution of the local water sources (Interview VII - Trade Union Leader, Interview XXIX - Worker). Also, the wages in the factory are as low as 3,000 UGX per day (1.07 CAD). Besides, the informal workers report in group interviews that rape of workers by the Chinese bosses has occurred. If women get pregnant - through rape or consensual sex - they abort secretly because the employers threaten the workers with immediate dismissal if they find out because they want to avoid female workers claiming any forms of maternity rights. The workers report that they know about the abortions because they have found dead fetuses in the area around the factory. The trade union has not successfully addressed these decent work deficits yet, also because the employers threaten the workers with easy replacement with unemployed workers or factory relocations to other countries. The government does not enforce existing labour legislation to address the mentioned decent work deficits. As mentioned earlier, the national government even threatened the union leaders if they challenge the foreign investors.

In summary, this research finds that trade unions partially address decent work deficits in the informal economy in Uganda, applying predominantly apolitical and technical methods of trade union organizing. The trade unions focus on the negotiation with dominant stakeholders, the provision of economic development services, coordination of collective economic action, and capacity building. In cases where the

²⁴ *Posho* is a meal with (in this case) no other ingredients than water, maize flour, and a bit of salt.

trade unions engage in the wider society, they rarely challenge the neoliberal and authoritarian government party NRM. Hence, the trade unions hardly address underlying political reasons, which enable and perpetuate the existence of a decent work deficit in Uganda’s informal economy in the first place. ATGWU stands out in this regard as it managed to break informal patronage-bondages between the workers’ associations and government, which weakens the influence of government in the labour movement, which is an essential pre-requisite for labour-centred development.

Table 10. Trade unions in Uganda’s informal textile sector addressing decent work

	UTGLAWU
Employment Opportunities	-
Adequate Earning and Productive Work	-
Decent Work Timing	-
Combining work, family, and personal life	-
Work that should be abolished	-
Stability and security of work	
Equal Opportunity and treatment in employment	
Safe work environment	reduces physical abuse by employers; education on occupational health and safety targeting substance abuse
Social security	forces employers to provide workers with written employment contracts (in English)
Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation	Provides unionization under employers and government hostile to workers’ organization
Economic and social context for decent work	-

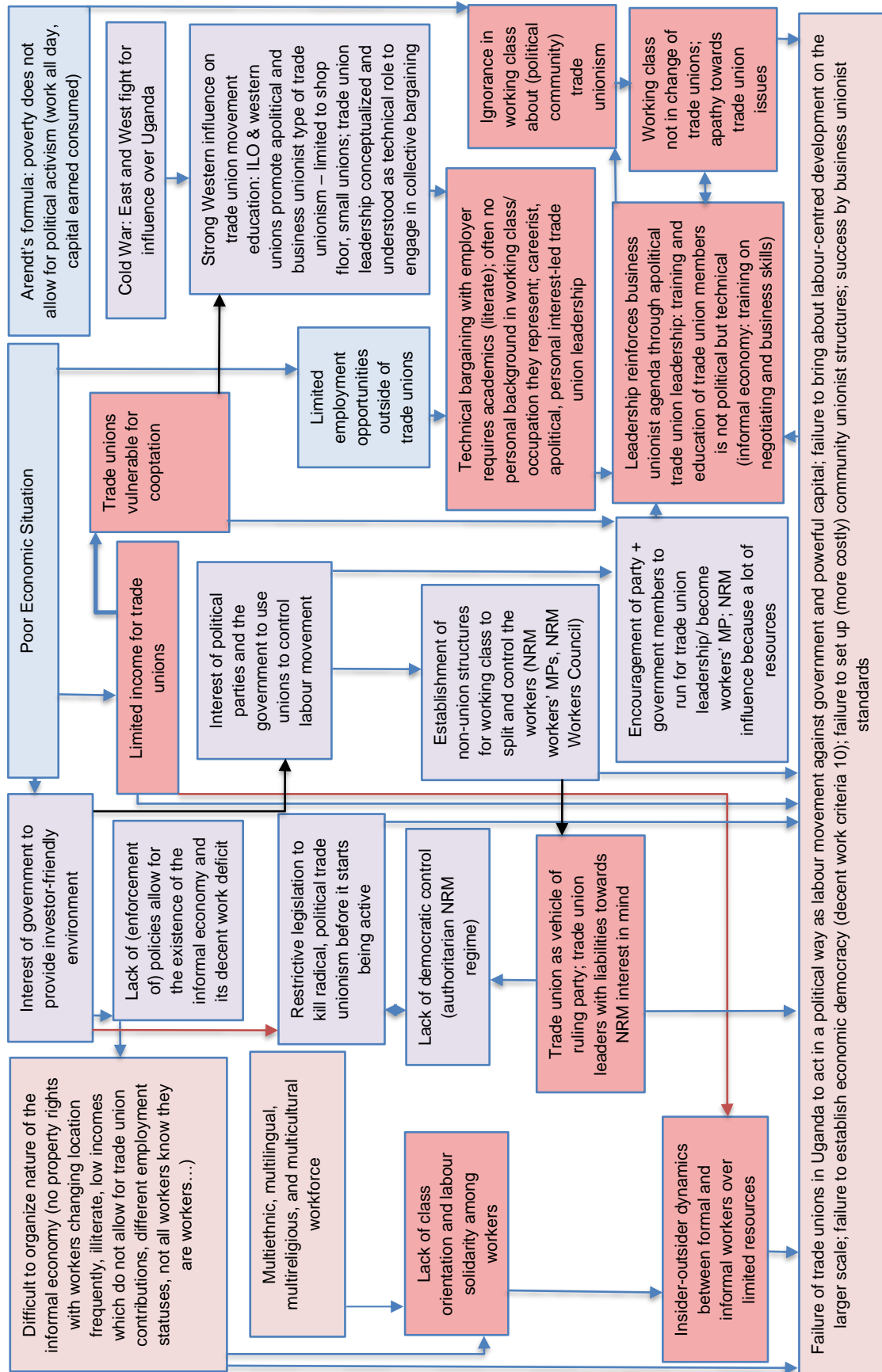


Figure 10. Structuralist Analysis about Barriers to Trade Union Organizing in the Informal Economy of Uganda (different colours used for arrows to make connections more visible). Source: Researcher.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

More than 90% of the labour force outside of subsistence agriculture in Uganda work under informal employment, which is characterized by various decent work deficits. This research has shown that informal transport workers in Uganda get in conflict with governments about property rights and regulations, suffer from an unsafe work environment and low incomes. Informal market workers lack a sanitary work environment, daycare facilities for their children, and collective negotiation with buyers, suppliers, and customers. Informal textile workers in Uganda suffer from abusive managers, illegal dismissals, and low wages.

This thesis argued that trade unions in Uganda could address the decent work deficit in the informal economy on a technical level because they demonstrate that they can organize, train, and educate the workers as well as improve the workers' access to credit, and guarantee workers' collective representation on a workplace-level. It also argued that, at the same time, the lack of political organizing hinders the trade unions to challenge the elite-centred development paradigm, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficit in the informal economy in the first place.

The argument outlined was mainly confirmed. Answering the research question 'How can trade union organizing in the informal economy contribute to decent work in Uganda?' it can be attested that trade unions in Uganda can contribute successfully to decent work through training a large number of workers on financial literacy, marketing and business skills, communication and negotiating skills; the trade unions can contribute to addressing decent work deficit in collective negotiations about workspaces and legal rights with different levels of government. For example, ATGWU's organizing efforts in the informal economy centre mostly around the negotiation with

dominant stakeholders other than employers or contractors, the provision of economic development services, coordination of collective saving, and capacity building. The trade unions educate the workers about their rights within the existing legal frameworks and help the workers to comply with the laws to avoid fines, for example, in the case of acquiring the required PSV licences. UMEU-NOTU, for example, provides different services to the workers, such as collective saving and daycare facilities. UMEU-COFTU democratically represents the workers in the wider society. UTGLAWU, as another example, educates the workers about their legal rights and collectively bargains with employers. The union has, against the opposition of the national government, successfully pressured Chinese managers to accept unionization and better working conditions in the textile and leather factories. Most of the examined trade unions successfully educate the workers regarding labour rights or business skills or represent the workers in situations of conflict with the authorities or management. In doing so, the trade unions overcome ethnic and informal-formal worker divisions, as well as the difficult-to-organize nature of the informal economy.

Moreover, this thesis concludes that none of the unions substantially and openly challenges neoliberal policies and the authoritarian government, which are structurally responsible for the decent work deficit in the informal economy. The reasons for the inability of the trade unions to not act political are multifaced and contribute to the discussion on how viable labour-centred development is under the capitalist and authoritarian conditions Uganda faces. The difficult-to-organize nature of the informal economy makes recruiting workers for trade union purposes complicated because workers frequently change their workplaces, lack check-off lists, and have low incomes, which do not allow for the payment of standard trade union fees. Moreover, most workers in Uganda do not know about the concept of trade unionism, while

multilingualism and illiteracy make education difficult. Trade union leaders report informal-formal divides within the trade unions in a few cases, which reflects on the arguments of the insider-outsider theory.

It can be argued that the findings support arguments of structuralist and labour-centred development. For example, decent work and development can only be brought about *by* the labouring classes *for* the labouring classes. The government and influential domestic and international capital show in the Ugandan context that they exploit the labouring classes with low wages and poor working conditions. Efforts by trade unions to address the decent work deficit of the informal workers are ignored or, in some cases, torpedoed by government or capital. For example, decades of political oppression by governments, which sought and seek up until today to coopt and split the labour movement, have garbled any form of unionism which goes beyond the shop floor. Besides, the power of international and domestic capital, as shown in the case of the Chinese textile factories or the oppressive presidential advisor for markets who is also trade union leader and owner of most market stores, hinders trade union organizing in the informal economy. Governments and international and domestic capital manage to do so because, supporting Arendt's argument on poverty and political activism, the labouring classes in Uganda do not have the time and resources to become politically active in their interest. Besides, the long history of trade union education by Western trade unions has perpetuated business unionist thinking in Uganda's trade unions, which makes it hard for trade unions to bring about the necessary institutional and ideological change to act beyond the shop floor. Additionally, the fact that only employees in an employee-employer relationship have the explicit legal right to unionize in Uganda poses a legal threshold to trade union organizing in the informal economy.

Against all the odds, ATGWU's success proves that it is possible to overcome all obstacles to trade union organizing by increasing its membership from only 5,000 to 100,000 within less than two decades after opening to the informal economy. The example shows that unions can increase their membership through affiliating with existing networks in the informal economy, such as workers' associations. The increase in membership gives the union more bargaining power and the potential to challenge the legal and political system in place, which produces and reproduces a decent work deficit in the informal economy. Hence, the increased membership could explain why ATGWU took a slightly more political stance and engaged more in the broader society than the other trade unions. For example, ATGWU ended corruption and the precarious situation of workers' associations by breaking patronage bondages between associations and influential government figures. Besides, they successfully pressured the government not to privatize communal lands against capital's interest. Also, they challenged laws deemed illegitimate by the workers against the interest of landlord, capital, and governments. This action does not challenge the political system which produces the decent work deficit as a whole, but could be a sign of the fact that this trade union has started to question "business unionist" thinking, as promoted by the ILO in the twentieth century, careerist leaders, and the political reliance on and cooptation by workers' MPs. A large number of workers organized additionally gives the trade union more power to act politically. The trade union managed to change the power balance between governments, landlords, and labour, which structuralism and LCD deem as essential to address the decent work deficits in the informal economy.

In summary, the Ugandan example supports the structuralist argument that trade union organizing in the informal economy does not only face thresholds from the difficult-to-organize nature of the informal economy and technical issues within the

trade unions, as widely reported in other case studies on the topic. Instead, to bring about decent work through trade union organizing in the informal economy, the historical, political, and legal context of each trade union needs to be analyzed to identify thresholds as well.

Recommendations

The support for the structuralist and LCD arguments of this thesis leads to three major lessons for development thinkers and trade union organizers. Firstly, to address the situation in the informal economy, trade unions need to be politically powerful and recruit as many members as possible – which in the context of informalized labour markets in developing countries includes the organization of the informal economy. The strategy of ATGWU to affiliate with existing structures, such as associations, has proven efficient. To achieve this goal, trade union organizers need to challenge conservative or careerist trade union leaders who refuse to reach out to the informal economy because of fears based on insider-outsider dynamics. Trade union organizers need to affiliate with associations and other groups to break the precarious and corrupt dependency between workers' organizations and different levels of government. In addition, trade union organizers must be critical of ILO and Western trade union education, as it perpetuates “business unionist” thinking in the Ugandan labour movement. Secondly, once the trade union organized the informal economy, the trade union organizers must address the decent work deficits of the workers in the informal economy, which includes action on the technical level and the political level. On the technical level, trade unions must radically shift the power-relations between managers and the workers about some minor issues even under extremely precarious conditions, as shown by UTLAWGU organizing leather factory workers. On a political level, the

trade unions must challenge the legal and political system in place, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficit in the informal economy. The case of UTLAWGU supports structuralist and labour-centred development thinking in the sense that even trade unions which are successfully fighting for informal workers' rights on the shop floor, may fail to address the decent work deficit of the informal workers if they do not challenge the existing legislation, which produces and reproduces the decent work deficit in the informal economy. The trade unions must not rely on the few workers' MPs in representing the labour movement politically as this system has largely proven inefficient. While Ugandan trade unions have a relatively low membership, mass mobilization campaigns based on cooperation between different trade unions could be a tool to pressure the government to address the decent work deficit in the informal economy. A collaboration between various trade unions, in the Ugandan context, also includes that the division of the labour movement between COFTU and NOTU, for example, in the transport or market sector, should come to an end, which leads to the third recommendation. Organizers must overcome the cooptation of the trade union movement by members of the government party NRM and also depart from the "business unionist" ideology imposed on the trade unions through education programmes by the ILO and Western trade unions in the past. Business unionist practises, like business skill training and communication training, do not make the working class realize that they have the power to challenge oppressive laws through collective struggle and confrontation with the neoliberal government and influential capital. Therefore, the education of workers in Uganda needs to be politicized by the trade unions. Future community unions need to fight for formalization, income security, social regulation, meaningful capital redistribution between the elite and the labouring classes, economic democracy, direct taxes on influential capital and the struggle for a

welfare state to fundamentally address the existing decent work deficits among informal workers. These efforts would require the support of foreign trade unions and NGOs, which are willing to present an alternative view to the business unionist agenda promoted by the International Labour Organization. If the workers are trained to think more politically, they can elect more trade union leaders who are independent and hence able to struggle against the interest of capital and the neoliberal government. A politically informed labour movement could trigger the creation of a labour party that could challenge, alongside the trade unions, the ruling NRM government, to bring about decent work for the informal economy in Uganda.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Data on Trade Union Membership in Uganda



Trade Union data in Uganda

National Organization of Trade Unions

Table 1.

Trade unions in Uganda (2017)	
Number of trade unions (NOTU)	33
Number of trade union COFTU	9
Number of Trade union not affiliate to NOTU	9
Total members in COFTU	-
Due (median)	-
Total Members in NOTU	927799
Trade union members share of workers	
Trade union members to waged workers	
Female member share of trade unions	N/A
Members of affiliated trade unions from the informal economy	Two informal Unions and 4 formal unions organizing informal economy.
Number of CBAs (NOTU) (2016)	231
Workers covered by CBAs	452,000
Share of workers covered by CBA	N/A
Labour force (2013)	15,041,000

Trade Unions in Uganda

	Trade Union	Affiliation To national trade union centre	Total Members (2017)	Dues	No. of CBAs
	Unions Affiliated to NOTU				
	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU)	NOTU	101 350	2% Salary	9
	Uganda Beverage Tobacco and Allied Workers Union	NOTU	3962	2% Salary	8
	Uganda Building Construction, Civil Engineering, Cement & Allied Workers' Union	NOTU	6000	5.5% salary	14
	Uganda Government and Allied Workers' Union (UGAWU)	NOTU	5300	2% salary	1
	National Union of Clerical, Commercial, Professional and Technical Employees	NOTU	213	4% Salary	6
	National Union of Education Institutions	NOTU	6400	3% salary	2
	Uganda Medical Workers Union	NOTU	6000	2% Salary	1
	National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Work (NUPAWU)	NOTU	120000	3% Salary	12
	Uganda Communication Employees' Union	NOTU	221	2% Salary	3
	Uganda Public Employees Union	NOTU	5050	5% Salary	1
	Uganda Electricity and Allied Workers' Union.	NOTU	920	2% Salary	6
	Uganda Railways Workers Union	NOTU	300	2% Salary	1
	Uganda Hospitality Leisure and Allied Workers Union.	NOTU	32	2% Salary	2
	Uganda Media Union	NOTU	814	2% Salary	4
	Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union	NOTU	5000	2% salary	1
	Uganda Fisheries and Allied Workers Union	NOTU	1500	2% Salary	1
	Uganda Horticulture, Industrial Service Providers and Allied Workers' Union	NOTU	1000	2000 flat fee	3
	UNATU Uganda National Teachers' Union	NOTU	160000	1% Salary	1
	National Union of Co-operative Movement Workers' Union	NOTU	3545	2% Salary	6
	Uganda Mine, Metal, Oil, Gas and Allied Workers' Union	NOTU	1760	3%	6
	National Union of Theatrical, Domestic and General Workers	NOTU	17500	2% salary	8
	Uganda Textile Lather and Allied Workers' Union	NOTU	7000	3%	6
	Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism and Allied Workers Union (HTS Unio)	NOTU	50000	2%	150
	National Union of Infrastructural, Civil Works and Wood Workers	NOTU	2929	3%	8
	Uganda Journalists Union	NOTU	1000	2%	1
	Uganda Markets & Allied Employees Union	NOTU	400000	-	-
	Uganda Private Teachers Union	NOTU	500	2000 flat figure	3
	Uganda Bottling, Bakers, Millers and Allied Workers Union	NOTU	10005	2%	8
	Uganda Local Government Workers' Union	NOTU	1200	2%	1
	Uganda Civil Society Organizations Workers' Union	NOTU	1214	2%	2
	National Union of Creative, Performing Artists and Allied Workers	NOTU	755	-	-
	Uganda Printers, Paper, Polyfibre and Allied Workers Union	NOTU	1329	3%	5
	National Union of Government and Allied Workers	NOTU	5000	-	1
	Total		927,799		282

Unions Affiliated to COFTU					
1.	Agro Based Workers Union	COFTU	-	-	-
2.	Uganda Artisan & Allied Workers Union	COFTU	-	-	-
3.	Uganda Courier and telecom Union	COFTU	-	-	-
4.	Uganda Parastatals, Statutory Authority and Judicial Workers' Union **	COFTU	680	-	-
5.	Uganda Scientist, Researchers and Allied Workers Union **	COFTU	510	-	-
6.	Uganda Chemical, Petroleum & Allied Workers Union	COFTU	-	-	-
7.	National Union of Drivers Cyclist & Allied Union Workers	COFTU	-	-	-
8.	University Professionals and Academic Staff Union	COFTU	-	-	-
9.	National Union of Micro Finance Savings & Credit Organization Workers	COFTU	-	-	-
Sources: NOTU and LO/FTF Council					
**) Trade union applied for affiliation to NOTU. Yes but among of them is accepted with red color					

Source: NOTU and LO/FTF Council