An Alternative Socio-ecological Strategy? International Trade Unions' Engagement with Climate Change

Romain Felli

Please refer to the definitive and edited version of this article as

Abstract

In the context of a global ecological crisis, it is an important move when trade unions turn to environmentalism. Yet, the form that this environmentalism takes is often overlooked. This is especially the case with international trade unions. Based on an empirical study of international trade unions' engagement with the climate change issue, this article argues that international trade unions follow three different (and partially conflicting) strategies. I label these strategies as 'deliberative', 'collaborative growth' and 'socialist', and I examine each in turn. I argue that such analysis is important if we want to identify the potential for transforming the social relations of production that are at the root of the current climate crisis, and for identifying an alternative socio-ecological strategy.

1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the major political challenges of our time as it encapsulates all kinds of crises: economic, social, environmental. Fundamentally, it raises the question whether, collectively as human beings, we are able to agree on some broad global principles for the future of humanity and implement them. Correspondingly, climate change can be said to be a major indictment of capitalism as a global ensemble of social relations. For Marxists, as well as other critical scholars, the climate crisis is directly related to the expansionary dynamics of capital and its disregard both for the satisfaction of human needs and for the viability of socio-ecological relations (Saurin 2001; Vlachou 2004; Storm 2009; Tanuro 2010; Brand and Wissen 2012). It is predicated on the continuous exploitation of labour and the growing accumulation of capital on a global scale (Harvey 1996; Smith 2008; Taylor 2009).

Consequently, theIn this perspective, the transition to a society which would enable sustainable socio-ecological relations entails the transformation of the social relations of production (and property). But in order to avoid a purely utopian critique of capitalism, the possibility of such a transition must be grounded in the social dynamic of these very relations of production: what kinds of contradictions exist between economic growth and ecological sustainability? And how do social forces perceive these contradictions and act upon them? This is where the study of trade unions, especially at the international level, becomes interesting. These organisations are potential sites through which a political vision on climate change at a global level can be developed, which could explicitly challenge the existing socio-ecological relations and develop a coherent alternative vision. Although international trade union institutions (ITUs)[i] are not directly organising workers, but are merely representative institutions of the various national workers organisations, they have to express, to some degree, the perspective and policy preferences of their constituent members, and contribute, in turn, to shaping them.

Yet trade unions and climate change may not appear as immediately related entities. All around the world, there are numerous examples of trade unions siding with management in order to preserve polluting industries (and thus the jobs and livelihood of their members) against environmental regulations (the so-called "jobs versus environment" debate).

Similarly, there are countless examples of demands and actions from the environmental movement which do not take into consideration the possible negative social and employment effects of greater environmental protection. Furthermore, the capacity of trade unions to act as political agents may be questioned because of their decreasing membership and influence (Bieler 2012a), at least in industrialised countries (there are evidences pointing towards a counter-movement in newly industrialised countries).

On the other hand, the very important role of trade unions in the development of environmental policies in industrialised countries during the last century should not be forgotten. This history is often omitted in bourgeois accounts of environmentalism, but it is being increasingly documented (e.g.: Burgmann 2000; Bécot 2012; Sklair 2001, pp.198-254). Trade unions' interest in "health and safety" issues in the workplace can spill over into broader demands for environmental justice and into alliances with community based movements. In this sense, the contemporary interest of ITUs in environmental issues is not so much an expansion of trade unions' sphere of interest (and even less a form of competition with NGOs) but rather a renewed engagement with a broader political understanding of the role of trade unions in society.[ii] Indeed, trade unions develop green or ecological policies when they have the opportunity and the political will to think and act beyond mere "pay and conditions": that is, when trade unions overcome the "business unionism" model. Interestingly enough, scholarly and strategic debates on the so-called "trade union renewal"[iii] develop alternative models of organising and advocate stronger alliances of trade unions with other progressive social movements, especially around issues such as the environment. Yet, it should be noted that climate change is also an issue which directly affects the "core business" of trade unions when environmental regulations (or the lack thereof) affects wages, conditions and the level of employment in specific industries.

Therefore, although this phenomenon has been largely overlooked in the literature, it shouldn't come as a surprise that, over the last few years, ITUs have produced various documents and resolutions, organised conferences and written reports, dedicated resources (material and human), and taken part in international negotiations on climate change. These elements seem to point to the fact that trade unions, at least at the international level, are increasingly concerned with the issue of climate change. Yet, in the context of "climate mainstreaming in world politics" (Methmann 2010) and of the "neoliberalization of nature" (Castree 2008), the simple turn to a language of environmental concern cannot be taken as a

"progressive" commitment (Hajer 1995; Swyngedouw 2010). Hence, the need to assess the *kind `f envir`nmentalism* promoted by ITUs.

Indeed, important differences may exist between trade unions regarding their understanding of (and, hence, their commitment to) environmental issues. These differences can be explained as differences between individuals and their values (e.g.: Räthzel and Uzzell 2011). Yet, I believe it is important to also consider them as *p`litical* differences, resulting in different strategic choices (Gough 2010). For instance, Nugent (2011) has shown how, at the national level, in Canada, trade unions alternatively support what he calls "ecoliberalism" or "green new dealism" in responding to climate change, thereby reinforcing or partly contesting the hegemonic capitalist treatment of the climate issue. In other words, in order to assess the possibility for ITUs to promote a global, alternative socio-ecological strategy, we need to raise the fundamental question of "what is the *p`litical* character of contemporary labour internationalism?" (Hodkinson 2005: 38). My aim in this paper is to give a theoretically informed account of ITUs involvement with the issue of climate change. More precisely, I want to explain how, beyond a general commitment to tackling the issue of climate change, ITUs follow three different strategies, and how these strategies reflect broader political differences between them. These differences offer opportunities, and constraints, for trade unions' engagement with other social forces, alliance building, and the definition of a scale of action.

In the first part of the paper, I will discuss some theoretical elements on which the following analysis will be built. Then, I will give an overview of what appears to be the dominant form of global labour's climate strategies. This will allow me to present and discuss a three-fold typology of these strategies, and underline their differences, but also their internal features and contradictions.

2.   Trade unions, international political economy and strategies

Labour's environmentalism has become a well established topic in the scientific literature examining the relation between trade unions and the environment in various national configurations (e.g.: Obach 2004; Mayer 2009; Nugent 2011). However, it is still rarely discussed in the context of global or international politics (for exceptions, see Silvermann

2006; Räthzel and Uzzell 2011; Stevis 2011). This is all the more so as "workers are virtually invisible in the study of International Political Economy" (O'Brien 2000: 514). On the other hand, the stimulating "new international labour studies" which take seriously the role of labour at the global level (Taylor 2010) have scarcely directly integrated environmental concerns into their debates. This article thus seeks to contribute to these two fields of research, by drawing attention to the international/global dimensions of labour's environmentalism on the one hand, and to the increasing interest of environmental concern for global labour on the other.

Of course, studying ITUs is not equivalent to studying "global labour", because these institutions are confederations of national trade unions, and, thus, are not directly organising workers (except, maybe, when they negotiate international framework agreements with transnational companies). Nevertheless ITUs are the only organisations, on a global scale, which indirectly represent workers as workers and have a democratic representative structure (mediated by national and regional organisations). This is markedly different from global NGOs, which are merely speaking "on behalf" of others which they do not represent democratically. Yet ITUs are quite weak organisations in relation to their constituent parts, in terms of resources, staff and power. They merely act as coordinators and facilitators of demands from national trade unions, especially the most powerful amongst them. They retain nevertheless intellectual and technical capacities which allow them to influence the debates within the international trade union movements, especially when it comes to issues, such as climate change, which are not historically central to organised labour's concerns.

This article draws on geographical historical materialism (Harvey 1996, 2006; N. Smith 2008) and on Marxist value theory in International Political Economy (Bonefeld 2008; Burnham 1994; Clarke 1991; T. Smith 2009). Such analyses seek to explain the historically specific form that social relations take under capitalism and how these relations exist in space and time. Building on Marx's analysis of capitalist social relations, they pay attention to the fundamental contradictions which arise out of capitalist social relations and to how these contradictions play out at different levels of abstraction.

For instance, the study of ITUs needs to take into account the contradiction between capital and labour (e.g.: how do trade unions relate to management? cooperation? conflict?), but also those between different capitals (e.g.: how do trade unions organising workers in different economic sectors react to environmental regulations?), and between the world market and

national social formations. This last contradiction is of paramount importance in assessing the situation of trade unions regarding internationalist versus nationalist perspectives. As "labour geographers" have long argued, this contradiction is absolutely central to trade unions' "geographical dilemmas" (such as defending jobs and conditions within a specific place against other places; cf. Castree *et al.* 2004: 233-251).

It should be stressed that the expression of these multiple contradictions is mediated through political ideas, themselves moments of the social life (Harvey 1996), and expressed in political strategies. In other words, one cannot simply derive the analysis of political strategies from the supposedly "objective" position of the actor considered (in this case, trade unions) in the relations of production. Rather, it is necessary to understand how actors develop political strategies based on their *understanding* of the context in which they find themselves (Hay 2002 Jessop 2001) — that is, how they internalise, reproduce and transform these contradictions. In order to get a full dialectical picture of the situation, one would thus need to also reconstruct the "strategically selective" context in which ITUs find themselves, as well as the competing strategic calculations and action of the other pertinent actors (for instance, states, companies and NGOs, but also the national trade unions movements, etc.) This is clearly beyond the scope of this article. Yet, by reconstructing the strategic calculations of one actor (in this case, ITUs) one has to reconstruct how these institutions understand their context and, thus, *internalise* the strategic actions of other actors as well as the structural constraints and opportunities (for instance, in terms of possible alliances). The lengthy description of trade union strategies is thus necessary not only because very little literature is available on these issues, but also because it will allow me to explain the divergences between unions. Indeed, we will need to ask whether specific trade unions strategic calculations are trying to reshape the socio-economical context in which they are articulated, or whether they merely seek to adapt to the existing context, a highly political choice (Hay 2002).

The material used in this article has been gathered from three sources. First, I have conducted an in-depth collection and analysis of the policy and strategy documents published or made available by international trade unions (for reasons of space only a small fraction of this literature is quoted in the article). Second I have conducted, between May and December 2011, half a dozen semi-structured interviews (of one to two hours each) with experts on the field, mostly ITU officials in charge of "sustainability". These interviews were used to clarify some elements or processes and were not intended as the basis of a discourse analysis.

Therefore, it was agreed that interviewees, where quoted, would be so anonymously. Third, I have taken part in trade union-related activities at Durban's climate negotiations in December 2011 (the 17th Conference of the Parties [COP] of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], known as "COP17"). This ethnographic gathering of information has taken place within the UNFCCC's precinct, but mostly within the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC's) so-called "World of Work Pavilion", where about 20 events (seminars, presentation, etc.) had been organised. I have also taken part in the International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF) and the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) conferences on climate change which were simultaneously organised in Durban during the same period of time and previously in another ITU conference ("Quality Public Services") held in Geneva in October 2010.

3. On the Overlapping Strategic Consensus of International Trade Unions

The detailed history of the incorporation of environmental questions, and especially climate change by ITUs, is not the focus of this paper (for elements, see Silverman 2006; Stevis 2011). Rather, I wish to identify within the recent history of these organisations specific political trends and reconstruct them. These strategies have therefore to be understood as "ideal types", and they do not strictly correspond to one specific organisation or one specific policy document.

Therefore, before proceeding to their exposition, three points have to be made. First, while my analysis necessarily tends to emphasise the differences between the organisations, I will begin my exposé by discussing some of their common features which distinguish them from other discourses on climate strategies. Second, although some elements are highlighted in just one case, they may well be found across the spectrum of strategies. Third, precisely because institutions are themselves contradictory they never express in reality such clear-cut distinctions, which are nevertheless made here as a heuristic device. Indeed, within the same document, or by comparing the documents produced by the same organisation across departments or across time, one can find conflicting views and claims.

It would be absurd to deny that some of the organisations mentioned earlier are closer to one model than the other. However, this would erase the very real internal differentiation of these organisations and their own partly contradictory positions. Furthermore, it would negate the

dynamic evolutions of the positions over time.[iv] Therefore these different strategies really need to be understood as conflicting tendencies which are at play within international trade unions and which are separated here for analytical purposes.

The existence of a broadly shared position is testimony to the efforts by some individuals and institutions (mainly the ITUC, the Trade Union Advisory Committee [TUAC] to the OECD and Sustainlabour)[v] to create a progressive consensus on climate change in the international trade union movement (Stevis 2011). The most important commonality is that ITUs are unanimously committed to the "science" of climate change, meaning that they take for granted the results of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and the overarching goal of the necessity to decrease the global level of greenhouse gas emissions. The second Congress of the ITUC, held in 2010 in Vancouver, adopted a resolution on "combating climate change through sustainable development and just transition", which associates the climate, food, energy and jobs crises with "a socially unjust, environmentally unsustainable and economically inefficient model incapable of providing decent work and decent lives to millions of people. This model makes wealth creation dependent on environmental degradation and generates unacceptable inequality" (ITUC 2010). This agreement by ITUs of the existence of man-made climate change and of the necessity to struggle against it does not preclude the fact that trade unions in various countries and in various industries have different (and even radically contrasting) positions on this issue. Yet the perceived opposition of trade unions to environmental regulation should not be overemphasised. For instance, in the conference that led to the ITF advocating quite radical measures for the reduction of greenhouse gases, only one member union voiced an opposition to the ITF's position in the debates.[vi] As we shall see below, the differences between trade unions, at the international level, are between the course of action which should be taken (strategy, alliances, content of the policies, scales of action…), not on the existence of the problem of climate change and the need to tackle it.

ITUs are generally committed to an agenda of social justice, economic growth and redistribution, and to the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in climate change, meaning, broadly (and with strong limitations), a support for southern countries' perspectives in climate negotiations. It also commits them to supporting progressive solutions to the question of financing climate change adaptation (such as, for instance, the introduction of a financial transaction tax). Furthermore, this commitment to social justice is framed in

strong opposition to "neoliberal" policies, to the pro-business reorganisation of the role of the state, and to deregulation.

ITUs are also generally committed, though not exclusively nor principally, to "technological fixes" to the climate crisis. In this sense, they broadly tend to fall in line with the proponents of the ecological modernisation thesis[vii]. There are, however, differing positions, within the trade union movement on contentious propositions such as the promotion of "carbon capture and storage". Some issues, such as nuclear energy, are however thought to be so divisive that they are rarely if ever openly debated.

These general common positions have been translated into two strongly related concepts: a "just transition", and "green jobs". Possibly it also entails the notion of "green growth" and that of a "green new deal". These concepts are important as they are supported by all "Global Unions" and thus define the common horizon of the international trade union movement.[viii] "Just transition" has been at the centre of tactical debates and advances with regards to the union's involvement in the UNFCCC process (for an account, see Rosemberg 2010). Basically, it amounts to the idea that the consequences of a transition to a low-carbon economy should not be paid by the workers and their communities (especially in relation to economic sectors which will be negatively affected by environmental regulations): compensations, retraining and reskilling of workers should be part of any transition planning. During the Cancun COP (COP16), "just transition" was introduced in the negotiating documents and thus became part of the broader framework of climate governance. As with other concepts found in (global) environmental politics, "just transition" owes its success to the fact that it has somehow become an empty signifier, through which conflicting visions can be expressed without, however, having to expose their disagreements. As such, this principle often remains underdetermined, and conflicting contents can be put within it by different actors. Demands to be more specific about the meaning of "just transition" are recurrent. In its most watered-down version, "just transition" appears as a concept demanding workers' (and more often trade union officials') involvement in discussions over the implementation of environmental or climate-related measures. In its most radical articulations, "just transition" is equated with Trotsky's transitional programme or even with "revolution" (Interview with a former international union's officer, December 2011). Furthermore, a lot of work remains to be done in order to implement this concept in international and national policies.

The notion of "green jobs" has gained traction amongst trade unions, and it has also been championed by international organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Indeed, the UNEP has early acknowledged the need to develop research and policies on labour and the environment and was instrumental in organising in January 2006 the first "Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment" in collaboration with institutions from the international trade union movement as well as the ILO (for a report, see UNEP, 2007; for other contributions, UNEP 2008, 2011; ILO 2008). A report, written in common by the UNEP, the ILO, the ITUC and the international employers' organisation (IOE) has received widespread publicity. It defines "green jobs" as "work in agriculture, industry, services and administration that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment" (UNEP 2008: 5). It further argues that green jobs "reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors, ultimately to levels that are sustainable".

The idea behind green jobs is to create jobs in the so-called "green" economy or "green" sectors (those that supposedly make a positive contribution to sustainability) and to "green" jobs or workplaces in other sectors. It relies fundamentally on a "win-win" perspective, associated with ecological modernisation, whereby the transition to a "green" economy creates not only ecological but also economical and social sustainability. The social aspects of green jobs are mainly expressed through the idea of "social dialogue" and the need for green jobs to be also "decent jobs" (according to the ILO's conventions).

To sum up, ITUs share a strategic commitment to the objectives of reducing greenhouse gases emissions and to social justice. This double commitment is translated into the notion of a "just transition" whereby the transformations necessary to achieve ecological sustainability are to happen in a context in which workers and their communities should not be negatively affected. The means to achieve this just transition are essentially related to an increase in public investment (Keynesianism) in order to develop the "green" sectors of the economy and to "green" the other sectors, thereby creating or securing jobs and achieving economic redistribution, but also to compensate workers (when negatively affected) for this transition and retrain them.

This very broad notion of a green Keynesianism framed in an ecological modernisation perspective, and coupled with demands for a "just transition", is the overlapping strategic consensus of the international trade union movement. Unsurprisingly, it is a consensus which

deals essentially with the processes of value redistribution, but which, apart from the promotion of "green" sectors, has little to say on the very social relations of property and production which are at the heart of the growth imperative and the climate crisis. In this sense, we are not dealing at this level with a strategy aimed at changing the context or the broader political economy. However, it is important to recognise that the existence of such a green Keynesianism expresses the more radical perspectives that have been articulated since the 2008 economic crisis (Interview, former ITU officer, December 2011). Beyond this overlapping consensus, markedly different strategies can be identified within ITUs, to which we now turn.

4.   Three Strategies on Climate Change

There are essentially three strategies that ITUs have taken on climate change:

- the deliberative strategy

- the collaborative growth strategy

- the socialist strategy.

The "deliberative" model presented below constitutes the dominant strategy within the international trade union movement, and it is the one which most informs the institutional actions of its representatives (within international climate negotiations, for instance). However, this hegemonic position coexists with two other strategies. On the one hand, the "collaborative growth" strategy, although it broadly expresses a traditional social-democratic vision, is also specific to sectors which have most to lose from the implementation of stronger environmental regulations. As such, although it has its own internal political coherence, it is very much a sectorially based contestation of the dominant strategy. On the other hand, the "socialist" strategy, although it is most vocally defended by representatives of a specific sector (namely transport) is more of a political contestation of the dominant strategy. Table 1 below summarises the differences between the strategies, and each are then examined in turn.

< Insert Table 1 about here >

4.1. The Deliberative Strategy

In the first strategy, struggle against climate change is presented as an essential feature of the organisation. It expresses the struggle of a united humanity against an external (non-social) menace in the form of "climate change" and ultimately aims at "saving the climate" or "saving the environment". This vision is associated with a non-conflictual understanding of social relations which translates into a "deliberative" perspective. Such perspective is fully compatible with—and indeed foundational to—the post-political rhetoric made of human rights, ecological sustainability and social justice (Swyngedouw 2010).[ix] An example is given by the General Secretary of Education International, an ITU, when he writes: "Solving the climate and economic crises requires unprecedented cooperation and bold leadership by governments worldwide, with the active support of an enormous range of social actors including the international trade union movement, which is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the struggle to save the environment" (Fred van Leeuwen , in CGU 2009: 7).

Both in its ideological references and in its understanding of actions, the deliberative strategy is fairly similar to that of large environmental or human rights international NGOs. On the one hand, trade unions ally with "civil society" organisations (other NGOs) and produce ritualised "contests" within the broad frame of the climate negotiations, such as mass demonstration, protests, etc. On the other hand, they must take part in international negotiations and influence "political leaders" through lobbying aimed at making progressive demands within the parameters of the international climate negotiations (the adoption of a fair, ambitious and binding agreement; funding for adaptation; voices for poorer people and countries, etc.).

This strategy very much believes in a deliberative frame of analysis and actions in which different social voices need to be heard and in engaging in "meaningful dialogue" with other actors notably political "leaders". Trade unions, and workers, are presented as repositories of "expertise" which should be mobilised in order to fight climate change. As argued by the then General Secretary of the ITUC (who has since become the Director General of the ILO), "the labour movement needs to be given the possibility to engage in, and help develop policies on, climate change." (Guy Ryder in CGU 2009: 15).

But, ultimately, this strategy locates the power of social transformation within the "will" of politicians to act. In this sense, it internalises the social description produced by the very form of international relations, one in which sovereign states are formally the only constituent

parts, and in which specific "stakeholders", which constitute the "civil society", are allowed in as observers. The agenda of the international trade union movement on climate change (as well as the framing of the issues) is thus dictated by that of international negotiations, conferences and summits.

This expertise and advocacy role leads to a strategy of collaboration with—and, if possible, of integration to—international organisations. Two of them are particularly targeted (and are themselves keen on producing this kind of collaborative framework): the ILO and the UNEP. An example of this continuous engagement of the ITUC with international organisations, and also with the employers' confederation (IOE), has been the production of a report written in common on "green jobs" (UNEP 2008). Similarly, SustainLabour has co-written with the UNEP a training manual for workers (Sustainlabour/UNEP 2008). The preface of the "green jobs" report (co-signed by the leaders of the ITUC, the ILO, the UNEP and the IOE) states that:

> trade unions, employers' organisations, the private sector and the UN are natural allies in this quest. Each has a critical role to play, not least in the areas of boosting efficiency in the use of energy and raw materials through better work organisation and of retraining and retooling the global workforce to seize the new opportunities and to master the transition to green production and consumption. Certainly there will be winners and losers, so support for workers and enterprise adaptation will be key. (UNEP 2008: VIII)

Ultimately the deliberative strategy, in spite of its claims to reject neoliberalism nevertheless accepts fundamental elements of the flexibilisation of the workforce and does not contest more specific market-based policy developments (which might be related to a form of neoliberal governmentality (Lemke 2001)). First, the acceptance of market solutions to the climate crisis is central to this strategy. In spite of the vocal critiques against deregulation and the retreat of the state, this position does not contest the core principle of market environmentalism, enshrined in the Kyoto protocol. Market-based solutions to climate change, including emission trading, carbon markets, REDD mechanisms and PES (payment for environmental services), may be criticised for specific problems, for bad overview or regulations, but are not rejected as such (e.g.: ITUC 2009: 24; ICEM 2009, 36).

Secondly, and most importantly, the governmentality perspective can be traced in the understanding of "just transition" put forward by some proponents of this model. The core

rationale is the emphasis on "adaptation" to change. Workers have to be made adaptable (notably through training and re-skilling) and also "resilient" (notably by the institution of a social safety floor) to the consequences of climate change. This strategy has led towards accommodating the worse consequences of climate change for workers in a situation in which fundamental property relations are left unchallenged. It does so in the language of vulnerability, resilience and adaptation. In this sense the social institutions of the (northern) welfare state are to be transferred, in a reduced form, into poorer regions of the world in order to increase individual's or communities' "resilience" to the socio-ecological disruptions brought about by climate change. Proponents of this approach insist on promoting so-called "active" labour market policies. The ITUC, for instance, writes: "Active labour market policies must also be part of this 'transition package', in order for workers to 'fit' a changing labour environment" (ITUC 2009: 15). The "green jobs" report explicitly frames this strategy in terms of "flexicurity" (UNEP 2008: 291-292) whereby the flexibilisation of the workforce is traded against an increase in social protection. This strategy, therefore, is likely to increase the precariousness defining current employment relations, something which might prove self-defeating in terms of union membership, and more broadly in terms of labour decomposition on a global scale.

The "deliberative" strategy has an abstract egalitarian content, as it relies on a cosmopolitan perspective. However, as it ignores the capitalist form of current social relations, it is led to a non-conflictual understanding of society in general and of the causes of climate change in particular. As such, it is not aimed at changing the balance of power, or the socio-economic context, and risks confusing the interest of labour with an apparent general interest of humanity. It may not therefore seek to organise workers against capitalist social relations and may merely deflect mobilisation into pressures on international negotiations or international organisations.

4.2. The Collaborative Growth Strategy

The second strategy is essentially related to trade unions representing workers in economic sectors whose growth is expected to be negatively affected by climate or environmental policies, although it recognises the potential for creating or securing "sustainable" (rather than "green") jobs in the industrial sector. As such, these unions have been active for a longer time on climate change (for an early example: ICEM 2001). This strategy is less enthusiastic about environmental regulations, but recognises the need to plan for them. It is often critical of the

"deliberative" perspective which does not sufficiently (in its views) take into account the potentially very damaging effects on employment of climate policies: the "win-win" attitude of the deliberative strategy leans too much towards environmentalists and accepts too readily the promises of the "green economy" without sufficiently defending workers (and jobs) in the non-green economy. In the words of an ITU officer, "neither business nor environmental groups are concerned with workers. We are the only one speaking for workers" (Interview, May 2011). It is the strategy which is the most vocal on the need for a "just transition", understood as a package of compensation (including retraining) for workers and their communities in the event of the implementation of regulations destroying existing jobs (ICEM 2009: 33-35). Similarly, it expresses more acutely the necessity for workers not to be "blackmailed" with environmental regulations.

It thus insists on labour's defining its own position, autonomously from environmental groups, as well as from employers' interests (e.g.: ICEM 2001: 29; ICEM 2009: 3). The sectors represented are those with the strongest and oldest traditions of unionisation. Indeed, industrial and extractive industries workers, at least in the North, are heavily unionised and have been instrumental in the development of the labour movement and the progress of democratisation during the XXth century (Mitchell 2009). This has historically translated into specific institutional arrangements, such as the European social-democratic compromise, and is institutionally explicit in the tripartite frameworks that structure European social models, as well as the ILO. These institutional arrangements still figure at the (symbolic) centre of international trade unions' organisation models (Hodkinson 2005; Stevis and Boswell 2008; Munck 2010).

The collaborative growth strategy expresses the contradiction between different capitals (or different sectors) under capitalism. Indeed, as Global Union federations organise workers along broad sectorial lines, it means that they are, partially, tied to capital in these sectors. As an ITU officer put it to me "we are sympathetic to environmental groups but we are dependents on employers" (Interview, May 2011).[x] They may mount, at times, highly conflictive strategies against capital in their sectors (against specific multinational companies for instance), and take defiant positions against states. For instance, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) demands that mining companies be compelled to pay for the "perpetual care" of the sites they are exploiting, that they stop considering "communities that grow up around mines to be temporary conveniences", and that they "plan or build for the longer term—beyond the life of

the mine" (ICEM 2009: 6). However, trade unions in these sectors simultaneously feel compelled to promoting the growth of their particular sectors. In this perspective, although social differentiations, and even social classes, are readily acknowledged, the strategy centres on the delivery of a continuous economic growth, which is understood as the only way to maintain the number of jobs and to produce a surplus which can then be distributed. Social and political struggles take place over the allocation of the surplus value extracted. This perspective recognises some fundamental contradictions of capitalist social relations but proposes a strategy through which these contradictions can be managed, under the aegis of the state and social dialogue institutions, or even displaced. "Growth", therefore is not only an ideology (although it certainly is an ideology: Stevis 2011: 154-155), but a necessity which stems from this specific organisation of social relations.

Congruent with its strong orientation towards economic growth, this strategy incorporates elements of a "weak" ecological modernisation perspective, such as the prominence given to technological fixes to the climate crisis (e.g.: ICEM 2001: 14-16). One typical element of this perspective is thus the promotion of "clean coal" or of "carbon capture and storage" technologies (e.g.: ICEM 2009: 7-9, 38). It argues that because of neoliberalism, and the consequent disinvestment in public research and development, these technologies have not received the funding and attention they deserve. Simultaneously, it is keen on promoting market-based solutions to the implementation of climate regulations, such as emissions trading because they allow for "flexibility" in the implementation of climate regulations (e.g.: ICEM 2001: 19-21) or REDD mechanisms (ICEM 2009: 14, 36).

In this perspective, the current economic and climate crisis derive from the excesses of neoliberal capitalism (associated with the so-called retrenchment of the state and the growth of socio-economical inequalities), and the domination of finance over industrial production. The solutions put forward amount to a very strong return of the state's involvement in the management of the economy, notably through aggregate demand, and the public provision of welfare benefits (including retraining for workers) (e.g. : ICEM 2009: 21-22). It also suggests that "sustainability is a 'soft' issue on which we can engage a company and enter into talks that would not take place on most other issues" (ICEM 2009: 18). Labour and management cooperation can produce fruitful results in terms of energy efficiency and thus in improving competitiveness (e.g.: UNEP 2008: 27-28).

This strategy is essentially focused on the national social formations (or the European Union), and often reveals a strong bias towards "Northern" (European, North American, Japanese and Australian) trade unions' interests. It assesses the constraints of climate change essentially in terms of the costs and benefits associated with climate policies, notably the employment effects of the losses and gains of national competitiveness due to climate regulations. Its nationally based competitive framework for assessing employment relations is congruent with the economic policies constituting what Hugo Radice (2000) has aptly named "progressive nationalism." The collaborative growth strategy thus incorporates a fundamental contradiction, that of "competitiveness", as it rests on the association (even partial and contested) of labour with the growth of a particular company and/or a particular sector, and/or a particular state. It uses a rhetoric of cost-cutting through energy efficiency and other environmentally friendly measures, and also offers hope for the growth of "green" companies and sectors. Yet, competitiveness presupposes competitiveness *against* others (including other workers). In other words, competitiveness, when defended by labour, necessarily implies a nationalist (or regionalist) strategy which unwittingly reinforces (international) competition (Smith 2009: 86-126) and the expansion of capital accumulation.

This question is made more complex by the fact that in some (mainly European) countries, the labour movement has been instrumental in the development of nationally based "social models", centred on the Welfare State. In these countries, the combined pressure of the labour and of the environmental movements has translated into social and environmental regulations which relatively raise the cost of production of the commodities and services. Notwithstanding extremely differentiated base conditions (in terms of wealth, education, democratic rights, etc.), this situation renders the states that have more "progressive" regulations comparatively less competitive. Eventually, as the neoliberal policies that have been implemented over the last thirty to forty years have freed some capitals from more nationally based regulations, the possibility exists for capital to relocate in a more "competitive" country (a form of "capital flight"). Even more important, as critical human geographers have shown (Wills 1998), it allows some capitals to *threaten* to relocate and thereby obtain the dismemberment of social or environmental regulations. In the field of climate change, this very process is known as "carbon leakage": the fact that constraining regulations may lead to industries relocating (from the "North" to "emergent" economies) in countries that have weaker regulations, and thus end up ultimately increasing the amount of greenhouse gases released in the atmosphere. Therefore, trade unions' demands for "border

adjustments" and greater regulations of world trade are not simply mercantilist demands (although they may well be so, as some NGOs have pointed out) but express broader political visions which include concerns for workers and the environment.[xi]

This situation is summed up in the following statement from the international, and European, confederations of workers in industrial sectors:

> We are concerned that international regulation on carbon emissions unless binding and applied evenly will lead to carbon leakage […]. Climate change legislation must contain strong provisions dealing with international competitiveness in order to ensure that nations that lack a strong emissions programme do not receive an unfair advantage. […] The alternative will see facilities shut their doors in one country and re-open in nations where they can operate under cheaper and dirtier conditions, which will only exacerbate the problem of global warming. One way to ensure that developed and developing economies act immediately to curb emissions is to ensure that international competitiveness provisions including border adjustments, go into effect simultaneously with the implementation of carbon pricing or cap and trade systems in that country. (IMF, ICEM, EMF, & EMCEF, 2009: 4)

By emphasizing "competitiveness" as a strategic vision, trade unions are caught in a "geographical dilemma" (Castree *et al.* 2004: 233-251) and reinforce processes of uneven accumulation, where they are led to siding with some (nationally based) segments of the capitalist class against other segments of the capitalist class and other workers, elsewhere. The strategic attempt at working at the international level should not be confused with internationalism. Indeed, what this strategy asks is that a certain form of international law organises "fair" competition between national economies.

The collaborative growth strategy, on the other hand, recognises the existence of capitalist social relations, and some of the contradictions which structure them. It seeks to improve workers' conditions within these relations, but does not contest the content of the *use* values produced. In other words, it is not about re-organising the social production of commodities on the basis of social and ecological needs. Appeal to the state as a regulator and as an investor does not amount to a strategy of socialisation of production. Rather, it is expected that the state can be a more "rational" capitalist, favouring industrial capital over financial capital, and ensuring better the overall conditions of reproduction of the workforce (in terms of retraining for "green" skills, but also social protection and benefits), but also more broadly

of the "environmental" conditions of production. It may thus be led to advocating perspectives which will reproduce these relations in an extended way, thereby maintaining economic growth and therefore most probably aggravating the climate crisis. This strategy seeks to alter the balance of power within nationally based social formations. It therefore can be said to be a context-changing strategy in political-economic terms, without however questioning the broader context of capitalist accumulation within fragmented national territories.

The promotion of competitiveness, furthermore, reinforces the uneven and combined development of capitalism on a world scale (Smith 2008), thereby dividing workers along national/regional lines. Such a strategy would essentially express the interest of those workers who are organised in formal (often industrial) employment and surrounded by the bi- or tri-partite institutions and Welfare State benefits. In other words, by defending workers who are at the (symbolic and material) core of the union movement, this strategy risks displacing the contradictions of capitalist relations into workers outside these formal (and northern) forms of employment and onto the natural environment by maintaining or increasing uneven capitalist growth.

4.3. The Socialist Strategy

Proponents of the socialist model are quite explicit in locating the origins of environmental destruction in the contradictory nature of wealth production in capitalism. This leads them to the conclusion that the solution to the climate crisis lies with a transformation of the social relations of productions and not just the implementation of new or stronger public regulations.

The ITF's report, prepared by Cornell University's Global Labor Institute in collaboration with the ITF working group on climate change, is representative of this tendency. In its first part, named "The Challenge: Science, Politics and Transport" (ITF 2010: 8-19), it puts forward not only a critique of "global capitalism" but also of the "growth imperative". Indeed, it argues that the failure to act on climate change should not be understood as a lack of "political will" but rather as a "systemic problem" due to the nature of the economic relations which are determined by "growth, profit, competition and consumption." It advocates replacing the current economic system although it falls short of actually describing, and naming, the alternative system.

It most differs from other ITUs' documents by explicitly and strongly criticising the proponents of "green capitalism" and of "ecological modernisation", which it associates with neoliberal market environmentalism. It further rejects "market solutions" to the ecological crisis and the idea of possible technological fixes supposedly leading to the "decoupling" of economic growth and environmental destruction. Real and sustainable technological transformations can happen only through social transformations. Therefore, a new approach is needed that is "grounded in the primacy of social and environmental priorities over the imperatives of private profit" (ITF 2010: 18).

The solutions offered by the ITF report focus on the transport industry and are based on the "reduce-shift-improve" (RSI) model (ITF 2010: 20-38). As the name indicates, the strategy to mitigate greenhouse gases emissions is first based on the notion that there should be a reduction in the demand for transportation, which can be obtained by better land use and urban planning, but also by the (re)localisation of economic activities. Second, it refers to the need to "[shift] movement from high-carbon to low-carbon modes of transportation", which implies three modal shifts, from private transport to public transport, from air travel to rail travel, and from road freight to rail (and waterways). Finally, the notion of improvement is essentially linked to technological improvements. Let us note, however, that this part is actually very much focused on "consumption" strategies (planning, urban transit, etc.) and not really on "production" strategies (which would imply workers' involvement or control, reduction in working time, etc.).

The last part of the document focuses explicitly on political strategies and delineates three areas of interventions, namely, the industry, the "policy world" and social movements. Indeed, it is quite aware that such a movement for climate justice is not central to contemporary trade unions at the grassroots level (and even at the national or regional level). Yet, it argues for building a political movement on climate change within and through the unions. The report itself is clearly aimed at trade unionists rather than at participants in international negotiations. Regarding the policy process, the ITF document is opposed to mainstream market environmentalism by advocating social and democratic ownership of industries that produce emissions. As a reformist perspective it suggests that a regulatory framework should be enforced, but that "the ITF should regard such regulatory network as not an end in itself aimed at making private markets more efficient, but as a first step in a longer term project to introduce democratic direction over all levels of the economy—from the community level on up—as part of a multidecade transition to a sustainable society." (ITF

2010: 45). On a tactical level, the report advocates actions and alliances at the local and the national levels, from the bottom up. However, it suggests that alliances should be sought with organisations that share the unions' struggle against neoliberalism (and criticises historical allies like social democratic parties that have promoted neoliberal policies). It mentions, as examples of possible alliances, the climate justice movement, but also the struggles for food sovereignty which try to build a reterritorialised and relocalised production of food. It is therefore the only strategy which explicitly resembles the model of social unionism, advocated by the proponents of a new labour internationalism (Moody 2001; Munck 2010).

Hence, the enactment of the socialist strategy is predicated on the development of a *p`litical* consciousness amongst workers and their social environment, one which makes it possible to imagine the existence of alternative relations of production oriented towards the satisfaction of human needs and sustainable socio-ecological relations. Whereas such consciousness is made possible by the lived experience of the multiple contradictions of capitalism (unemployment, poverty, exploitation, ecological destruction, etc.) the trade unions' socialist strategy necessarily relies on workers' political education, which implies linking the climate crisis to the nature of capitalism.

The socialist strategy breaks away from the two others by emphasizing the *p`ssibility* and the *need* to submit economic production to democratic control. This position is quite different from one which stresses the need for economic redistribution through the state. Here, the socialist model opens the possibility not only of changing the condition of the extraction of surplus value, but of politicising the very production of *use* values. In other words, it raises the fundamental questions of *what, h`w*, and *h`w much* to produce and demands that these questions be answered through mechanisms other than that of the price—that is, by non-market institutions. The possibility of organising democratic control over the economy is the essential element distinguishing the socialist from other strategies. This element makes the socialist strategy the only strategy which truly aims at changing the broader political economic conditions and does not satisfy itself with piecemeal transformations and redistributive demands.

This is why the socialist model introduces a break away from the productivist perspective which informs the deliberative and the collaborative model. Although this is not necessarily acknowledged (and may even be contested by some of its proponents), the suggestion that economic production be submitted to democratic control is incompatible with the capitalist

logic of accumulation for accumulation's sake. Hence, is it possible to introduce demands for the reduction of working time. But more fundamentally, it introduces the possibility of advocating the "degrowth" of some activities which have negative social and environmental impacts, as a recent policy paper produced by the European trade union confederation's think tank has argued (Coutrot and Gadrey 2012).

Yet, the content of the socialist strategy, as expressed within international trade union organisations is not detailed on workplace-based rank-and-file militancy. Whereas the workplace is sometimes mentioned as a locus of trade union's action on climate change, this has generally to do with cooperative practices such as energy-saving initiatives. The possibility of building climate strategies directly from workers' knowledge and class-based experience—such as the one presented by Randall and Hampton (2011) —is essentially ignored. More generally the socialist strategy still has the flavour of a top-down approach. This is also the case with the other two strategies, but as they put less emphasis on political mobilisation "from below", this is less of a contradiction for them.

5. Conclusion

Based on an empirical analysis of international trade unions' strategies on climate change, this article has argued that ITUs have developed a comprehensive vision of climate change and of how to overcome the challenges posed by it. This incorporation is essentially beneficial and is testimony to the continuous importance of the trade union movement in the furthering of progressive causes (Stevis 2011).

Nevertheless, the incorporation of climate concern within union strategies is not unambiguous. I have shown that there are in fact three forms of international trade unions' environmentalisms, which reflect differing political strategies. For analytical purposes, I have underlined the differences between these strategies (rather than their commonalities), but these differences represent real tendencies. Ultimately, these different strategies express different trade unions' perspectives on how to deal with capital's fundamental contradictions, as linked to the specific issue of climate change. As such, this article contributes to a more nuanced understanding of global labour's environmentalism and possibly to the broader understanding of trade unions' incorporation of environmental concerns. Räthzel and Uzzell's claim that ITUs' variegated discourses on climate change "are not mutually exclusive since they all imply a re-invention of unions as social movements" (2011: 1222) needs to be qualified. In my typology, only the socialist strategy seriously implies a union renewal

towards social movement unionism. This poses a broader challenge which is related to the democratisation and re-politicisation of the international labour movement (Moody 2001; Hodkinson 2005; Stevis and Boswell 2008; Munck 2010). It is also crucial in assessing the possibilities for trade union "renewal" in the industrialised countries.

Ultimately, the question is whether trade unions are ready to formulate an alternative strategy, grounded in the contradictions of capitalism and seeking to overcome them. The socialist strategy seeks to displace the socio-ecological contradiction into capital itself, by pointing towards the constitution of alternative social relations and thus the possibility of democratising socio-ecological relations in order to fulfil human needs. But to succeed, it has to promote forms of political consciousness amongst trade unions and amongst workers which run counter to the dominant visions. At the same time, it is equally clear that for most grassroots union members across the world, climate change is not (yet?) a central concern. Furthermore, in the context of declining trade union power and membership in industrialised countries, climate change is often not seen by trade union leaders as a major priority for organising.

This is precisely why understanding ITUs strategies on this issue is important. By developing an expertise and strengthening a highly detailed discourse, ITUs are framing the issue of climate change for affiliated members, especially those who do not have a climate or an environmental strategy. Battles are being, and will be, fought within *nati`nal* labour movements over the direction of the trade unions with regards to the environmental crisis (e.g.: Snell and Fairbrother 2010; Nugent 2011; Hrynyshyn and Ross 2011; Stevis 2012). The effects of the global ecological crisis are increasingly being felt, and in the aftermath of a global economical crisis, the worst elements of neoliberalism seem discredited, at least symbolically. Whether a context-changing strategy will thus be appropriated throughout the labour movement and will ultimately prevail remains to be seen. But its sheer existence indicates that an alternative socio-ecological strategy is possible and alive.

Bibliography

Bécot, R. (2012) L'invention syndicale de l'environnement dans la France des années 1960. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'hist`ire*, **113**, 169-178.

Bieler, A. (2012a) 'Workers of the World, Unite'? Globalisation and the Quest for Transnational Solidarity, *Gl`balizati`ns*, **9**, 365-378.

Bieler, A. (2012b) The EU, Global Europe, and processes of uneven and combined

development: the problem of transnational labour solidarity. *Review of International Studies*, **FirstView**, 1-23.

Bonefeld, W. (2008). Global Capital, National State, and the International. *Critique*, **36**, 63-72

Brand, U. & Wissen, M. (2012) Crisis and continuity of capitalist society-nature relationships: the imperial mode of living and the limits to environmental governance. *Review of International Political Economy*, **iFirst**.

Burgmann, V. (2000) The social responsibility of labour versus the environmental impact of property capital: The Australian green bans movement. *Environmental Politics*, **9**, 78-101.

Burnham, P. (1994) Open Marxism and vulgar international political economy. *Review of International Political Economy*, **1**, 221-231.

Castree, N. (2008) Neoliberalising nature: processes, effects, and evaluations. *Environment and Planning A*, **40**, 153-173.

Castree, N. et al. (2004) *Spaces of work : global capitalism and geographies of labour*. Sage, London.

Clarke, S. (Ed.). (1991). *The State debate*. Houndmills: Macmillan.

CGU. (2009) *Getting the World to Work. Green growth for jobs and social justice*. Council of Global Unions, Brussels.

Coutrot, T. & Gadrey, J. (2012) 'Green growth' is called into question. *ETUI Policy Brief*, **3**, 1-6.

Croucher, R. & Cotton, E. (2009) *Global unions global business: global union federations and international business*. Middlesex University Press, London.

Dörre, K., Holst, H. & Nachtwey, O. (2009) Organising - A Strategic Option for Trade Union Renewal? *International Journal of Action Research*, **5**, 33-67.

Gallin, D. (2006) La nouvelle Internationale syndicale. *Pages de gauche*, **51**, 14-15.

Gough, J. (2010) Workers' strategies to secure jobs, their uses of scale, and competing economic moralities: Rethinking the 'geography of justice'. *Political Geography*, **29**, 130-139.

Hajer, M.A. (1995) *The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process*. OUP, Oxford.

Harrod, J. & O'Brien, R. (2003) *Global unions? : theory and strategies of organized labour in the global political economy*. Routledge, London.

Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, nature, and the geography of difference*. Blackwell, Cambridge.

Hensman, R. (2001) World Trade and Workers' Rights: In Search of an Internationalist Position. *Antipode*, **33**, 427-450.

Hodkinson, S. (2005) Is There a New Union Internationalism? The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions' Response to Globalization, 1996-2002. *LABOUR, Capital & Society*, **38**, 36-65.

Hrynyshyn, D. & Ross, S. (2011) Canadian Autoworkers, the Climate Crisis, and the Contradictions of Social Unionism. *Labor Studies Journal*, **36**, 5-36

ICEM. (2001) *Labour and Climate Change An ICEM position*. International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Unions, ICEM.

ICEM. (2009) "*Sustainability - a Role for Labour, a Role for the ICEM*". ICEM.

ILO (2007) Green Jobs. Climate Change in the world of Work. *World of work. The magazine of the ILO*, **60**,

IMF, et al. (2009) *Cutting emissions, transforming jobs: Working in green jobs for a secure future. Towards a Common Platform on Climate change (To be discussed in Bad Orb: 14-15 October 2009)*. IMF, ICEM, EMF, and EMCEF, Retrieved from http://www.icem.org//files/PDF/Bad%20Orb%20Doc/Towards%20a%20Common%20Platform%20on%20Climate%20Change_English.pdf [accessed 18.8.2011].

ITF, Climate Change Working Group in collaboration with Global Labor Institute (Ed.). (2010) *Transport Workers and Climate Change: Towards Sustainable, Low-Carbon Mobility*. International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF), London.

ITUC. (2009) *Trade unions and climate change. Equity, justice & solidarity in the fight against climate change. Trade Union Statement to COP15, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC Copenhagen, Denmark (7-18 December, 2009).)*. ITUC, Brussels.

ITUC (2010) Resolution on "combating climate change through sustainable development and just transition". *ITUC 2nd World Congress*, **2CO/E/6.10**,

Jessop, B. (2001). Institutional (Re)turns and the Strategic-Relational Approach. *Environment and Planning A,* **33**, 1213-1235.

Lemke, T. (2001) 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality. *Economy and Society*, **30**, 190-207.

Mayer, B. (2009) *Blue-green coalitions : fighting for safe workplaces and healthy communities*. ILR Press, Ithaca.

Methmann, C.P. (2010) 'Climate Protection' as Empty Signifier: A Discourse Theorerical Perspective on Climate Mainstreaming in World Politics. *Millenium - Journal of International Studies*, **39**, 345-372.

Mitchell, T. (2009) Carbon Democracy. *Economy and Society*, **38**, 399-432.

Moody, K. (2001) *Workers in a lean world : unions in the international economy*. Verso, London.

Munck, R. (2010) Globalization and the Labour Movement: Challenges and Responses. *Global Labour Journal*, **1**, 218-232.

Nugent, J.P. (2011) Changing the Climate: Ecoliberalism, Green New Dealism, and the Struggle over Green Jobs in Canada. *Labor Studies Journal*, **36**, 58-82.

Obach, B.K. (2004) *Labor and the environmental movement : the quest for common ground*. MIT Press, Cambridge.

O'Brien, R. (2000) The Difficult Birth Of A Global Labour Movement. *Review of International Political Economy*, **7** (3), 514-523.

Radice, H. (2000) Responses to Globalisation: A Critique of Progressive Nationalism. *New Political Economy*, **5**, 5-19.

Randall, D. & Hampton, P. (2011) Towards an Independent Working-Class Climate Movement. *New Politics*, **XIII**, 90-96.

Räthzel, N. & Uzzell, D. (2011) Trade unions and climate change: The jobs versus environment dilemma. *Global Environmental Change*, **21**, 1215-1223.

Rosemberg, A. (2010) Building a Just Transition. The linkages between climate change and employment. *International Journal of Labour Research*, **2**, 125-156.

Saurin, J. (2001) Global Environmental Crisis as the 'Disaster Triumphant': The Private Capture of Public Goods. *Environmental Politics*, **10**, 63-84.

Silverman, V. (2006) 'Green Unions in a Grey World': Labor Environmentalism and International Institutions. *Organization & Environment*, **19**, 191-213.

Sklair, L. (2001) *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Smith, N. (2008) *Uneven development : nature, capital, and the production of space*. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

Smith, T. (2009) *Globalisation : a systematic marxian account*. Haymarket, Chicago.

Snell, D. & Fairbrother, P. (2010) Unions as environmental actors. *Transfer*, **16**, 411-424

Stevis, D., & Boswell, T. (2008). *Globalization and labor : democratizing global governance*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Stevis, D. (2011) Unions and the Environment: Pathways to Global Labor Environmentalism. *WorkingUSA*, **14**, 145-159.

Stevis, D. (2012) Green Jobs? Good Jobs? Just Jobs? USA Labour Unions Confront Climate Change. In *Trade Unions in the Green Economy. Working for the Environment*, (Eds, Räthzel, N. & Uzzell, D.) Earthscan/Routledge,

Storm, S. (2009) Capitalism and Climate Change: Can the Invisible Hand Adjust the Natural Thermostat. *Development and Change*, **40**, 1011-1038.

Swyngedouw, E. (2010) Apocalypse Forever ? Post-Political Populism and the Specter of Climate Change. *Theory, Culture & Society*, **27**, 213-232.

Tanuro, D. (2010) *L'impossible capitalisme vert*. La Découverte, Paris.

Taylor, M. (2009). Displacing Insecurity in a Divided World: global security, international development and the endless accumulation of capital. *Third World Quarterly*, 30(1), 147-162.

Taylor, M. (Ed.) (2010) *Renewing International Labour Studies* Routledge, London.

UNEP. (2007) *Labour and the Environment: A Natural Synergy*. UNEP, Nairobi.

UNEP. (2008) *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World*. UNEP/ ILO/ IOE/ ITUC, Nairobi.

UNEP. (2011) *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*. UNEP, Nairobi.

UNEP/Sustainlabour. (2008) *Climate Change, its Consequences on Employment and Trade Union Action: Training manual for workers and trade unions*. UNEP/Sustainlabour, Madrid/Nairobi.

Vlachou, A. (2004) Capitalism and ecological sustainability: the shaping of environmental policies. *Review of International Political Economy*, **11**, 926-952.

Warner, R. (2010) Ecological modernisation theory: towards a critical ecopolitics of change? *Environmental Politics*, **19**, 538-556.

Waterman, P. (2001) Trade union internationalism in the age of Seattle. *Antipode*, **33**, 312-336.

Wills, J. (1998) Taking on the CosmoCorps? Experiments in Transnational Labor Organization. *Economic Geography*, **74**, 111-130.

---

[i] The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is the confederation of national trade unions' confederations. It results from the merger, in 2006, of two previous international confederations: the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which had a broadly socialist and social-democratic orientation, and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), which was essentially the confederation of Christian trade unions (Gallin 2006). The so-called "Global Unions" (formerly known as "International Trade Secretariats") organise workers' organisations alongside broad economic sectors, such as, for instance, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), or the Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI). For useful background information on the international trade union movement, see Waterman (2001), Harrod & O'Brien (2003), Hodkinson (2005), and Stevis and Boswell (2008). A detailed analysis of Global Union federations (GUFs) is given in Croucher and Cotton (2009). In this paper I use the concept of "international trade unions" (ITUs) to refer to the ITUC, the GUFs, and associated organisations such as the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC). Let us also note that since early 2012 the ICEM, as well as two other GUFs, have merged into a new GUF called "IndustriALL".

[ii] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for having asked me to clarify this point.

[iii] That is, how trade unions in industrialised countries can increase their membership (e.g.: Dörre et al. 2009).

[iv] To give just one example, an expert working for the international trade union movement told me that he formerly supported the views expressed in the "green jobs" report (UNEP 2008; more on which below) and thus what I will call the "deliberative" strategy. However, the global economic crisis and the ensuing realignment of power relations have convinced him that organizing an alliance with the progressive "green" segment of the bourgeoisie have since proved to be elusive and he thus now supports a more confrontational perspective (that which I will call the "socialist" strategy).

[v] Sustainlabour is the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development, with its seat in Spain. It was set up by some trade union members of the ITUC with a funding from the Spanish government. It is partly funded by the ILO and the UNEP. Its current president is the secretary general of the ITUC. Sustainlabour acts as a "think-tank" and an expert pool for the ITUC and affiliated members on sustainability and climate change in particular.

[vi] Of course, there are two explanations to the hegemonic acceptance, by national trade unions, of the importance for ITUs to tackle the issue of climate change in a progressive environmental perspective. Either this can be seen as the sign that national trade unions are themselves convinced of the importance of this topic (and that therefore ITUs do reflect correctly their own concerns and priorities), or it can be seen as the consequence of the rather weak position of ITUs versus national trade unions and their relative unimportance (thereby allowing them to develop specific policies which may, or may not, be implemented by their affiliates). These two explanations are not mutually exclusive. Yet, it is remarkable that no national trade unions affiliate publicly and actively oppose the ITUs course of action on climate change.

[vii] Ecological modernisation is defined as "the discourse that recognizes the structural character of the environmental problematique but none the less assumes that existing political, economic, and social institutions can internalize the care for the environment" (Hajer 1995: 25; see also Warner 2010).

[viii] The "council of global unions" was created in 2007 to unite the ITUC with the global union federations. It mainly exists as a website. However, one of its first interventions was precisely to edit a pamphlet detailing the notions of "green growth", "just transition", and "green jobs" (CGU 2009).This pamphlet is very much in line with the "deliberative" model analysed below.

[ix] "Deliberative" is not used here in the sense of the political theories of deliberative democracy, but rather as an indication of the non-conflictual method of resolving differences favoured by this strategy. These notions are of course not exclusive to the "deliberative" strategy, but also part of the socialist one, but, whereas the latter conceives them as goals to be attained through a struggle against a political enemy and ultimately through a transformation of the social relations, the former believes in their completion through dialogue, mutual understanding and enlightened education. In other words, the former see only a disagreement where the latter sees a contradiction.

[x] Let us also note, as the literature on labour's environmentalism has shown, that in industrialised countries, alliances between environmentalist and trade unions have often been one-sided, with environmental activists less keen on reciprocating labour's support (Gould *et al*. 2004: 104-107).

[xi] The question of international labour solidarity, world trade, and the relations with NGO is actually quite complex and varies enormously across time and space. For detailed analysis, see O'Brien 2000, Hensman 2001 and Bieler 2012b.