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The social anchoring of Portuguese MPs, 1975–2009: Trade union participation during 35 years of democracy

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to analyse the relationship between trade unions and political parties. Based upon the concept of political field proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, this study centres on the evolution of parliamentary recruitment among trade union leaders. It is a study that, being based upon the historical relation between these two social and political actors, aims to reflect upon the ideas of politics and representation.

KEYWORDS

trade union
political camp
political party
parliamentary
recruitment

INTRODUCTION

Max Weber defined politics as ‘the union of efforts aimed to participate in power or to influence its distribution, whether among states or diverse groups inside the state (Weber 1959: 113). The relationship between political parties and trade unions seems to express this definition, as they share a common *political field* (Bourdieu 1989), whether in association or in conflict.

In this study we wish to ascertain if the recruitment of trade union leaders by political parties reveals the historical association between these actors. Our investigation will focus on two essential aspects: first, the evolution of

recruitment and, second, a sociological analysis of those recruited. From the results obtained we propose to reflect on the current uncertain condition of trade unions through an analysis capable of confronting the issues of politics and representation with the issues of politics and professionalisation.

FROM THE SOCIAL TO THE POLITICAL AND THE POLITICAL TO THE SOCIAL: THE THEORY OF THE FIELDS AND THE PARLIAMENTARY RECRUITMENT

The growing complexity of society represents a challenge to anyone who is confronted with a series of phenomena that cross the economic, political and cultural spheres. In order not to ignore these problems, but rather to circumvent them, Pierre Bourdieu developed a model of analysis that was based upon the idea of the social field. According to Bourdieu, society presents itself as a vast multi-dimensional space that is built on 'differential and distributive principles constituted by the joint of properties that act on the considered social universe' (Bourdieu 1989: 133). Its division in fields and sub-fields results directly from social relations: if we consider, as an example, the interactions produced in the political field, we can observe how these distinguish themselves from relations in other social fields, each with an array of unique problems, concepts and phenomena.

Social fields, from this point of view, constitute the result of the action produced by agents and determined by the position occupied by each of them. This element is defined by the capital held by each agent, that is, the force they are able to gather, and which provides them with advantages or disadvantages in a determined social field. Therefore, we should admit that the social position of an individual or a group is determined by the association of two variables: the type of capital, which establishes the field (or fields) of intervention; and the volume of capital one is able to provide and the consequent position occupied on the field's hierarchy.

The perspective on the social world is given by the panorama observed from the position one occupies. A mental picture created by the symbolic struggles between the numerous powers intervening around the sense of the action that each agent should take: 'the sense of the position, as the sense of what one can or cannot "allow himself", implies a tacit acceptance of a position, a sense of the limits ("that is not for us to do") or, the same thing, a sense of distances, to mark and sustain, to respect and to enforce respect' (Bourdieu 1989: 140).

From the incorporation of this sense, the *habitus* is formed, a joint of dispositions – culinary tastes, leisure practices, ways of speaking, political opinions – which reproduce an array of potentialities inscribed in the soul and in the body, as their structuring principle. On the one hand, the distinct levels of cultural and/or economic capital give rise to different power positions and lifestyles that are usually associated (with greater or lesser empathy). On the other, the distinction is established by a regime of rules and categories that replicate the inequality of power and capital, proper to the social organisation.

Part of the social field, the political field expresses this logic: to a certain capital volume and structure, the corresponding political *habitus*, that is, a determined political stance and behaviour. As in the economic realm, the political field is crossed by unequal relations, regulated by a division of responsibilities between the ones that should represent and the ones that should be represented. These guidelines initially have a formal character,

uttered on the legal constraints imposed upon the access to the political activity (for example, the criteria associated with the formation of a political party). Parallel to these, there is an informal selection mechanism that is based upon the ownership of competences, which are considered to be essential skills for a political professional: not only ‘the corpus of specific knowledge ... produced and gathered by the political work made by past and present professionals’ (Bourdieu 1989: 144), but also all the word and presentation techniques. In sum, a profound knowledge of the strategies one should resort to in order to be victorious. It is in this context of competition that the capital in dispute is endowed with symbolic power. The work to be done among the represented includes the search for recognition, faith and credit, or, in other words, the interpretation of certain personal qualities that are rare and exceptional and which are, consequently, practised by rare and exceptional individuals.

Parliamentary recruitment represents a type of political investiture: the moment when the individual abandons their subaltern condition of represented and becomes a representative: ‘as the medieval investiture solemnises the “tradition” of the feud or of other goods – it cannot but be the counterpart of a long investment of time, work, dedication and devotion to the institution’ (Bourdieu 1989: 188). More than a simple passage, parliamentary recruitment corresponds to a process in which ‘social elements are “politicised” and, in fact, changed’ (Best and Cotta 2000b: 8).

This process is born out of three social and political elements: the candidates, the selectors and the voters. The first are mobilised by two orders of motivation: the individual benefits inherent to the condition, of ‘prestige, power, material rewards or ideological compromises’ (Best and Cotta 2000b: 11) and by the belief in one’s self, namely, in the ability to generate interest among the political parties. The selectors, the gatekeepers, are responsible for establishing the criteria determining the choice of candidate. For him, it is not only about rhetoric, knowledge and image, but being submitted to ‘the implicit and explicit expectations nurtured by the selectors, when becoming a parliamentary actor’ (Best and Cotta 2000b: 11).

Recruitment may happen through two different operations: delegation, in which the ‘reputation from holding previous elected offices, from holding public office (of trust) in the executive branch and party militancy’ (Miguel 2003: 121) is understood as a form of capital; or conversion, when competences developed on other fields – e.g. sports, mass media, cultural or academic – are recognised by powers from other fields. Finally, the selection made by political parties will be subjected by the final judgment of the electorate.

We should also consider the informal and formal structures of representation as a factor in defining parliamentary recruitment: legal devices, constituencies, system of party competition (Norris 1997b: 11), as well as the political regime and its relationship with pressure groups.

THE PARLIAMENTARY RECRUITMENT OF TRADE UNIONISTS: FROM THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO THE PRESENT DAY

The relationship between political parties and trade unions: The Portuguese case

The communion of principles, purposes and even organisational models (from the mass to the cartel)¹ presents an almost umbilical association between political parties and trade unions. In this respect, the Portuguese case is certainly not an exception.

1. According to Mair (1996), the cartel party is born from the co-operation of hostile competitors in order to guarantee the public financing of political parties.

2. Its creation was supported financially by the Friederich Erbert and Friederich Nauman foundations, which had strong links with the José Fontana (related to the PS) and the Oliveira Martins (related to PSD) foundations, respectively (Costa 1994: 127).
3. Intersindical changed its name to the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers-Intersindical (CGTP-IN – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses-Intersindical) in 1978.

On 11 October 1970, communists, Catholics and some members of the extreme-left attended the first meeting of Intersindical. Although its composition was plural, most of the efforts to ensure the reorganisation of the workers' movement had been made by the Communist Party (PCP – Partido Comunista Português), an organisation that had since the 1930s been engaged in a clandestine struggle against the dictatorship. Despite its immediate repression, the political use of the legally-sanctioned trade unions had a powerful impact on industrial relations, which were felt in the number of collective agreements signed: from 90 signed in 1970 to 149, 252, 229, 207 and 377 in the years that followed (Silva 2000: 165).

When the regime fell in 1974 Intersindical was practically the only organisation with a political experience. The communist influence on Intersindical was initially acknowledged as a factor of stability, due to its support for the government's programme. In a country confronted with popular mass movements of household and factory occupations, the PCP presented itself 'as one of the rare elements of discipline and social control in a free Portugal' (Schmitter 1999: 218). Nevertheless, this influence was viewed with some discomfort by the other parties – the Socialist Party (PS – Partido Socialista), the Popular Democratic Party (PPD – Partido Popular Democrata), the Democratic and Social Centre (CDS – Centro Democrático e Social) – as it had no concomitant expression at the polls.

Following the events of 25 November 1975, and one year after the approval of the country's new constitution, PS and PSD trade unions formed the Movimento Carta Aberta (Open Letter Movement), which contested the principle of trade union unity. In 1978 some of the unions, mainly those from the banking and insurance sectors, went on to form the General Union of Workers (UGT – União Geral de Trabalhadores).² While the CGTP-IN was embedded in a traditional class-based unionism which,³ according to the evolution model proposed by Durand (1971) and Touraine, Wieviorka and Dubet (1984), still envisaged the relationship between work and capital as being based upon opposition, the UGT presented a different face. The bilateral meetings between the new union body and business confederations, which took place at the beginning of the 1980s, clearly stated how a negotiating type of unionism was part of its DNA (Marques and Ferreira 1991: 25).

From that moment, the UGT presented itself to the companies as part of the solution, and not of the problem, for selecting negotiation as the means par excellence for guaranteeing its members the best working conditions.

Trade unions, political parties and recruitment opportunities: Theory and practice

Apparently the relationship between Portuguese parties and trade unions presents conditions conducive to the transformation of activists into politicians. Following the model proposed by Best and Cotta (2000a; 2000b), its experience may well be interpreted as a form of social capital, founded upon a practical knowledge of the world of work. Other factors are, however, relevant, like the historical bond between the two social actors, the institutional proximity between trade unions and public bodies, the recruitment strategy developed by political parties, the structure of the Portuguese electoral system and the changing nature of parliamentary work.

The close association between party political and trade union realities do not mean they share the same set of principles and aims; however, it does reflect a double-militancy. This partially explains the trade unions' march through the

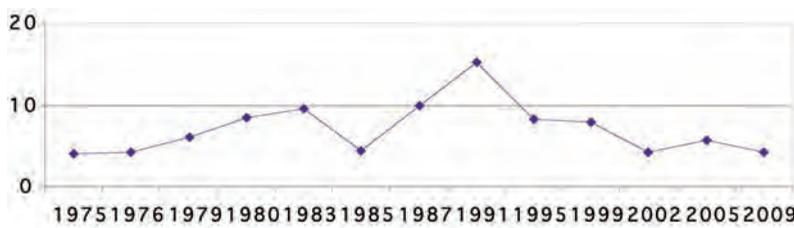
institutions, which is symbolised in their participation in several instances of social dialogue with their former enemies, as well in other public structures (from municipal councils to social security). This reflects a change that, according to Pierre Rosanvallon, presupposes the ‘diminution of the differences between the social representative model ... and that of political representation, as well as their practical exercise of democratic legitimacy’ (Rosanvallon 1988: 116).

The growing institutionalisation of trade union activity and the structure of Portuguese industry, being composed mainly of small units, have encouraged the centralisation of social dialogue. For the party gatekeepers this feature is not a problem as it is pretty well attuned with its own form of recruitment. Apart from the PSD, where the power of local and regional powers is greater, all the other parties ‘have in their main recruitment agencies in their national leaderships’ (Freire 2003: 200–1). The distance between trade unions and the local realities is, therefore, not regarded as a setback, since the political parties seem to share the same kind of divorce.

This phenomenon is equally produced by the electoral system, which consists of multi-member constituencies and closed electoral lists that do not allow the voter to choose a particular candidate (only the political party). To use the expression initially coined by Marsh and Gallagher, Braga da Cruz argues that these structures close politics into a kind of ‘secret garden’ with a hidden passage that is known only to selected professionals who are chosen by the political parties (Cruz 1988: 106). Finally, parallel to the arena model (in which the rhetoric comes to be recognised as privileged asset), parliamentary work is increasingly determined by the activities in commissions, the specialised attributes of which demand both technical and practical knowledge.

However, when analysing the evolution of parliamentary recruitment among trade union leaders (Figure 1), we note that, after an increase until 1991 (which was only interrupted in 1985), there is a progressive decline. At the party level⁴ (Figure 2), this decline is general, and includes the PCP which traditionally has a greater number of trade unionists within its parliamentary group. In the specific case of PSD, the small increase since 1999 can be linked to its historic ties to the UGT, despite the socialist hegemony (Castanheira 1985).⁵ The small percentage presented by the Left Bloc (BE – Bloco de Esquerda), which had only one deputy with a trade union experience in 1999, none in 2002 and one again in 2005, was initially the consequence of the limited size of its parliamentary group. However, the success it achieved in the 2009 elections, in which its parliamentary group doubled in size to 16 deputies, neither increased nor reduced the number of trade unionists in their midst. A fact that may be

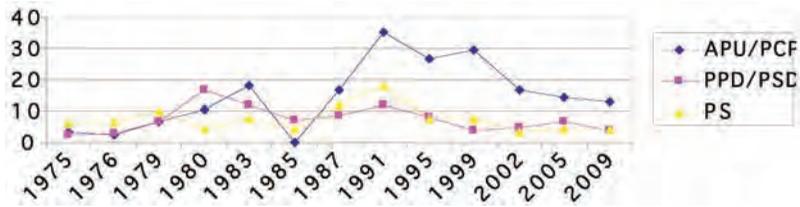
4. We excluded the CDS from our analysis, since from *the constituent assembly to the present* we have found only one trade unionist within its parliamentary group.
5. According to Castanheira, the 1984 UGT congress ended the parity between PS and PSD. In all confederative bodies, one of the main social-democratic currents (Tesisred) was also excluded (Castanheira 1985: 808). This led to the institution, on the same of year, of the Social Democratic Workers (TSD), a party structure dedicated to labor issues.



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 1: Trade Unionists' parliamentary recruitment (%).

6. According to Maria da Conceição Cerdeira, between 1979 and 1995, Portuguese trade unions lost half of their members (Cerdeira 1997). An international study, directed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), for part of the same period (1985–95) obtained the same results (ILO 1997). More recently, data gathered by Jelle Visser confirms this. If in 1990, Portuguese trade unions had a total membership of 920,000, this number suffered constant decline from then on: 800,000 in 2002 and 769,000 in 2010 (Visser 2011).



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 2: Trade Unionists' parliamentary recruitment by party (%).

interpreted as a sign of greater proximity to post-materialist trends within the left.

This reduction is due to a crisis within the trade unions, which is visible in the decline in trade union membership (Cerdeira and Padilha 1990; ILO 1997; Visser 2011).⁶ In 1983, for the first time more people were employed in the service sector than were employed in industry. This change represented a huge challenge for the trade unions, particularly the CGTP-IN, as it was accompanied by another phenomenon typical of post-Fordist societies: the increasing feminisation of the labour force, that is, of a group of workers who have historically been under-represented by trade unions (Ferreira 2002).

However, the change in the social composition of labour was not limited to gender. The falling membership rates were also the result of a quantitative and qualitative decentralisation and pulverisation. The differences between trade union participation among medium and large organisations, in which only 23 per cent of the former have a majority of unionised workers, while in the latter 46 per cent of organisations have more than half their workers unionised (Stoleroff 1995: 16) – are, paradoxically, the consequence of both structural delays and advancements: on the one hand, the small and pre-Taylorised workshop, which remains dominant in some areas of production (e.g. textile and clothing); while on the other, the network enterprise, which is an organised set of enterprises responsible for the production of the same product (Castells 2003). The hegemony of the small unit represents the end of the mass strikes and meetings, events in which the force numbers raised hopes of victory.

We should also mention the relationship between unionisation and the type of capital. Being responsible for the satisfaction of social interests, public enterprises usually demand a greater number of employees, as well as relative 'social peace'. Thus, we should conclude their privatisation will, among other things, deprive trade unions of one of their main strongholds. In fact, between 1991 and 1955, public administration and transport and communications (which are predominantly public) maintain relatively high unionisation rates (Cerdeira 1997).

The epicentre of the trade union backlash is, nevertheless, to be found elsewhere. Work insecurity and heterogeneity are not a recent phenomenon. The insistence on workers solidarity was the political answer to the fact that, according to Richard Hyman, 'the working class was not a homogeneous unity, because divided sectionalism was an ever-present possibility, and because painful experience showed that isolated and often competitive struggles by fragmented groups were more often than not mutually defeating' (Hyman 1999: 99).

Conscious of this division, trade unions urged the integration of dispersed interests, including through the resort to closed-shop practices, by which workers were, in practical terms, forced to join the union. In parallel with this, Fordist citizenship allowed upward mobilisation within the enterprise and, with it, greater identification between old and new generations.

The end of this strategic advantage led to a radical inversion of this scenario. The introduction of new kinds of work relations that were limited in time signified the end of the enduring ties between worker, the enterprise and the trade union. The worker lost job security and could be left to move through several different companies, and several different jobs. For trade unions, which were organised according to areas of production, this ‘multi-dimensional’ worker, without a fixed professional identity, is a huge challenge, as its inability to aggregate different interests in one body ends up reproducing itself.

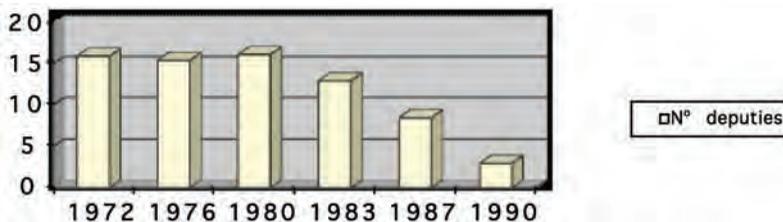
Even if unintended, the concentration of its action in the defence of its members’ interests,⁷ favours ‘the position ... of certain groups – usually, though not exclusively – those performing (multi-)skilled, “core” work activities,⁸ ... weakening the position of others, increasingly those on a variety of “non-permanent” employment contracts that provide companies “numerical flexibility” (Terry 1995: 232).

Although we should not ignore the importance of cultural and moral values, the reasons behind the apparent divorce between young people and trade unions cannot be found on a so-called ‘generation gap’, unable to explain why the unemployed are also part of this trend (Lima 1992; Waddington and Pascual 2000). Despite the search for job fulfilment, frequently far away from the standardised jobs in factories, when faced with the job market, young people will ‘grab the given opportunities, even if unsatisfactory’ (Almeida 1990: 89). Additionally, as noted by Elisio Estanque, job insecurity increases ‘new forms of discretionary power, new despotisms, exclusions and forms of oppression at work’, which hinder the already difficult relationship between trade unions and unprivileged workers (Estanque 2004: 129).

The transnational nature of these transformations have effects not only in Portugal, but also on other countries in which trade unions have suffered loss of membership between 1985 and 1995): New Zealand (-55 per cent), United Kingdom (-27.7 per cent), France (-37.2 per cent) and Germany (-17.6 per cent). In this last case the changes have had many repercussions, including at the level of parliamentary recruitment of trade union leaders (Figure 3).

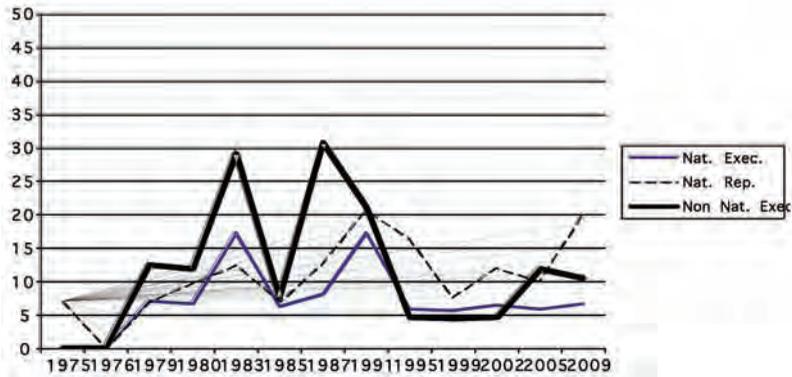
A similar phenomenon has been noted in New Zealand, where of the 216 parliamentary candidates in 1993, only 24 had trade union experience compared to the 62 candidates who were members of local interest groups (Catt 1997: 152). At the European level, trade union weakness is even clearer:

7. If we look, for example, at the content of collective negotiations, we see that most are related to income and prices rather than to organisational change or work flexibility (Mozzicafredo 2000: 91; Lima 1992: 342).
8. Part of these seem to rely more on professional associations, whose action, which is more corporative, obtains the support of a more privileged set of workers (Offe 1985; Freire 2004).



Source: Wessels (1997)

Figure 3: Union leaders in the German Bundestag.



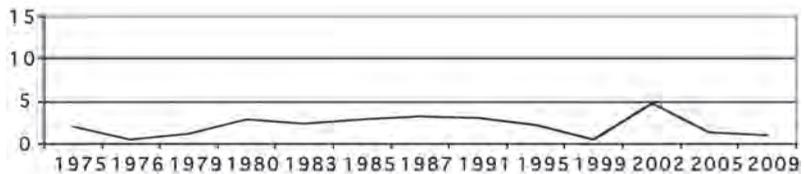
Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 4: Deputies with party and trade union leadership experience (%).

the ‘trade union experience’ criteria occupies a relatively low position among men (19.1 per cent), which is exceeded by participation in professional associations, student organisations and local/national interest groups (Norris 1997a: 227). It accounted for the lowest participation rate among women.

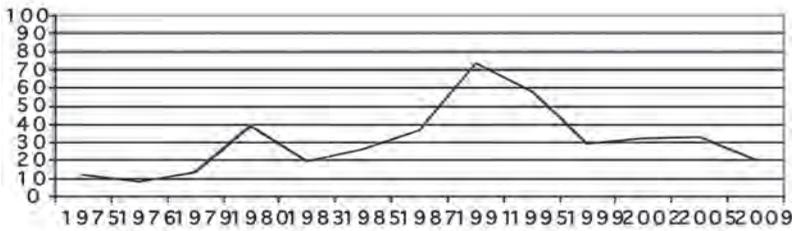
The exception to this tendency can be found in the Scandinavian countries, particularly Finland and Sweden. With a relatively high rate of membership (Vitols 2010), the trade unions from these two countries have managed to guarantee ‘firm representation in preparing legislation and programming policy implementation’ (Jorgensen 2003: 161). Their intervention in the definition of some social policies, in particular those related to unemployment, is the expression of their pragmatic stance and of an institutional partnership with the other social partners. The resort to the provision of services (as a means of ensuring participation) or lobbying practices demonstrates how ‘the class struggle has, in part, been transformed into a media struggle’ (Jorgensen 2003: 162). Despite the emergence of a new kind of politician, ‘a specialised representative, highly qualified, who rarely served as a party or union employee’ (Ruostetsaari 2000: 80), this has not reduced the number of deputies with trade union experience.

Although there was a slight increase in 2009, if we consider the last 20 years we note a decline in parliamentary recruitment from among trade union leaders (Figure 4), a fact that seems to confirm an inability to represent. After all, where is the judgment behind the selection of leaders with no leadership experience? Nevertheless, if we take a look at the evolution of the number of deputies with experience within a professional association (Figure 5), we note a more general indifference, which does not only target the trade unions.



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 5: Parliamentary recruitment from within professional associations (%).



9. These include cultural, religious, academic, environmental, charitable and anti-fascist associations.

Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 6: Parliamentary recruitment from within civic associations (%).

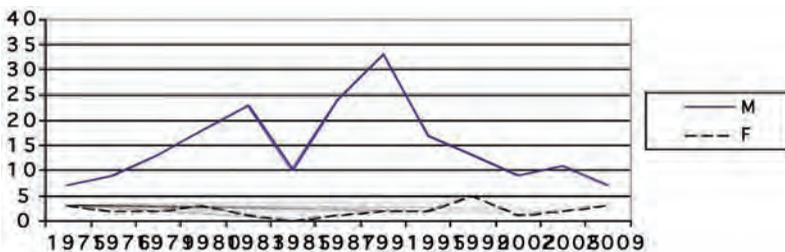
Even the deputies’ participation rate in civic associations seems to be subject to fluctuation (Figure 6).⁹

While the enrichment guaranteed by this type of social and symbolic capital ‘either by the amplifying effect of the media, or by the reckoning conferred’ the low rate of electoral participation in these organisations legitimises the concomitant lack of interest of the deputies (Viegas and Santos 2009: 122). Considering the period between 1991 and 2005, we conclude that the hegemonic recruitment model continues to gamble on the delegation of political capital, favouring formations within the parties’ walls. The idea of a career in politics, and only in politics, has come to undermine other forms of parliamentary recruitment, calling into question every discourse concerning inclusion and participation (Best and Cotta 2000a: 521–5; Freire 2002: 30–1).

The gender difference

There have been some developments in the parliamentary recruitment of female trade unionists since 1975 (Figure 7). Its highest value, which was reached in 1999, indicates that there is still a gender difference among the participants in the institutional sphere of politics (although the gap was smaller after the last elections).

The participation of women in trade unions, and through them as deputies, depends on overcoming three obstacles. First, the obstacle produced by social relationships, which is still determined by a gender difference. While on the one hand one of the most important elements highlighted in the analysis of the post-25 April society in Portugal is the participation of women in businesses and universities, on the other, they are also overwhelmingly exposed to unemployment, job insecurity and wage inequality (Viegas and Faria 2001).



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 7: Trade union deputies (Gender).

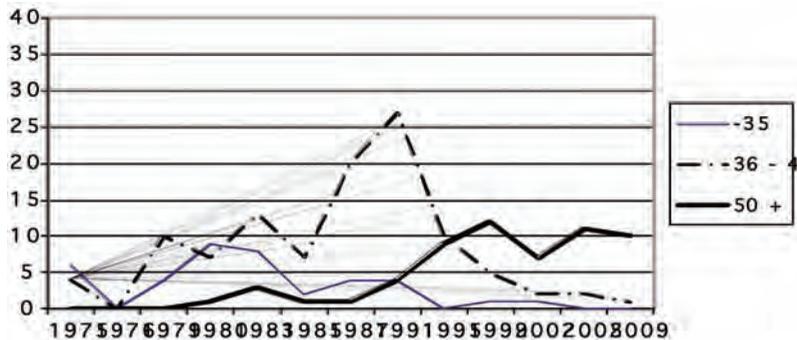
This imbalance also invades private life, in which most domestic tasks continue to be seen as the woman’s responsibility. On average, during the 1990s men dedicated about eight hours a day to professional work, while women worked about seven hours; however, if we consider salaried and non-salaried work together, women work on average for two hours more each day than men (INE 2002). An imbalance that, given the direct relationship between free time and ‘political capitalisation’ (Bourdieu 1989: 164), creates different opportunities and levels of political participation between the genders.

The second obstacle is produced by trade unions, which have since their origin, been characterised by a strongly masculine culture that is sometimes hostile to the participation of women (Trebilcock 1991; Ferreira 2002). According to a study sponsored by the European Confederation of Trade Unions, this distinction is visible both in the level of female militancy (40 per cent), compared to 60 per cent for men, and by its reflection in managerial and representative positions, where the imbalance is even greater (Waddington and Pascual 2000).

Finally, the third obstacle is constructed by the political parties, the recruitment policies of which seem to reproduce this discriminatory logic. While there have been some efforts to overcome this reality, mainly through the establishment of parity rules (which are guaranteed by the 2006 Parity Law), the parliamentary under-representation of women has been the rule (Freire 1998; 2001; 2002; 2003). In a 2005 study of the political participation of women, 80 per cent of those interviewed (women candidates in the 2002 legislative elections) agreed there existed ‘a kind of assessment of aspiring candidates, in which gender, while not considered explicitly, has a determining influence on who has a realistic chance of being chosen to stand for election’ (Martins and Teixeira 2005: 61). An assessment that is based neither on ability or vocation, but which is the result of the ‘discriminatory attitudes and practices inside the political parties’ (Martins and Teixeira 2005: 248).

The age difference

The evolution of the age composition of trade union deputies seems at a first sight to be not much different from the general parliamentary population. However, the aging process among the former tends to be less gradual than among the latter. As we can see in Figure 8, in the election to the constituent legislature the presence of trade unionists under the age of 35 was dominant.



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 8: Trade union deputies (age).

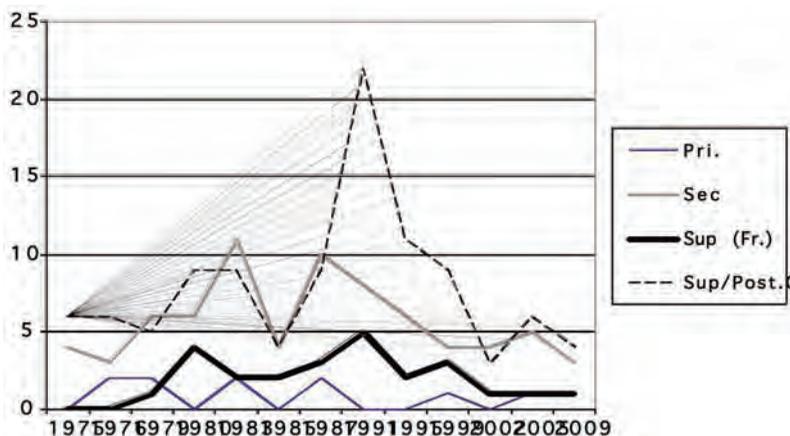
By 1979 the position occupied by the youngest trade unionists is surpassed by those aged 36–49. By the mid-1990s the situation had changed again, with those over the age of 50 dominating. This evolution reflects the ageing of Portuguese trade union structures, which is motivated essentially by two causes: first, by the detachment of younger workers who are subject to greater job insecurity and instability, who therefore lack a professional identity, which, among other things, manifests itself in their not being unionised (Lima 1992; Matos 2007); second, job stability and the consequently stronger professional and cultural identity among older workers leads to a greater identification with trade unions, which are representatives of these values and political aims. In the Portuguese case we should also mention the relationship between trade union participation and the memory of the revolutionary period that was characterised by an active, offensive and ideologically oriented style of trade unionism (Lima 1991).

10. We considered the four areas with a greater incidence.

The education difference

The aging of this group can explain the similarity of the data concerning their levels of education (from 1975 to the present), a trend that does not correspond with the general trend among deputies (Figure 9), most of whom have a university degree (Freire 1998; 2001; 2002; 2003).

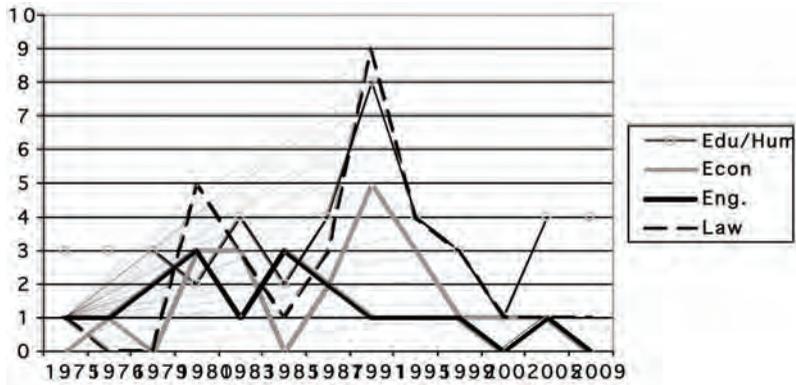
The difference between the general and the particular demands a more thorough analysis of this group; one that considers the disparity between political parties. Due to its smaller size, we can identify within this phenomenon a 'leftist effect', since the PCP and the BE did not present any trade unionist candidate with a university degree for election to parliament at the last legislative elections. The PS presented a relative percentage of unionised candidates with primary and secondary education. In all three cases, this seems to be associated with the specific nature of 'union capital', defined less by academic qualification than by abilities that are based on practical knowledge. We should also mention that some union strongholds, such as among public transport and public sector workers (Cerqueira 1997; Stoleroff 1995) for example – correspond to areas in which most of the jobs do not necessarily require an academic degree. As for the area of education,¹⁰ we note



Source: Freire (2009)

Figure 9: Trade union deputies (education).

11. In our study, it was difficult to analyse some subjects, due to the diversity of categories and its small dimension. The results were therefore diffuse. An analysis uniting all years, thereby enlarging the object, was also difficult, as a large proportion of the deputies (particularly those representing the PCP, one of the parliamentary groups with more deputies with a trade union background) extended their participation over several legislatures.



Source: Freire (2009).

Figure 10: Trade union deputies (study discipline).

that in recent years there has been a decline in the number of deputies with law and engineering degrees and a rise of those who studied education and humanities (Figure 10); areas in which the associated professions (teaching and/or public administration) are represented by trade unions (Matos 2007),¹¹ some of which are of significant importance and with a large capacity for mobilisation.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of the strategies behind the parliamentary recruitment of union activists reveals a near break in the historical liaison between the two social and political actors. A near break because, despite their development, trade unions retain some influence among particular groups of labour. In fact, in the Portuguese case, they continue to be organisations that are likely closer to a genuine social movement. From this point of view, in a context of changes across the nature of the parliamentary work (which is increasingly determined by specific knowledge), the diminishing political representation of union interests and practices seems paradoxical. Nonetheless, the effects both of recrudescing union participation and of the parties' monogamous model of recruitment are felt. The few current unionised deputies are, sociologically speaking, not representative of present labour reality: they are symbols of what used to be, and not of what is.

Although there have been attempts to turn these problems around, particularly through the adoption of measures designed to integrate traditionally excluded populations (e.g. women and young people), the distance between the representative and the represented does not express a particular nature as much as it does a general principle that is shared by an array of political organisations.

From an instrumental function that sought 'through the publicly present person, to make visible an invisible being' (Habermas 2003: 50), dependent on 'the surroundings in which it unfolds' (Habermas 2005: 23), representation has become an end in itself. The representative's need to legitimise their own position leads to the creation of the represented group, which is produced according to their image. In Bourdieu's words, 'the group is created by the one

who speaks in its name, thus appearing as the principle of the power it exercises over those who are its true principle' (Bourdieu 1989: 158). Therefore, we have to ask the questions presented by Best and Cotta: 'Is there an end to the history of political professionalisation (2000b: 22)?

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