

COSATU'S Contested Legacy

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COSATU'S Contested Legacy

South African Trade Unions in the
Second Decade of Democracy

Edited by

Sakhela Buhlungu
Malehoko Tshoaei



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Abbreviations and acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ANSA	Artists for a new South Africa
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CAX	Coalition against Xenophobia
CAWU	Construction and Allied Workers' Union
CEPPWAWU	Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPP	Convention People's Party
CWIU	Chemical Workers' Industrial Union
CWU	Communication Workers' Union
CWUSA	Council of Workers' Union of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
DENOSA	Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers' Union
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HOSPERSA	Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MAWU	Metal and Allied Workers' Union
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NALEDI	National Labour and Economic Development Institute
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union

NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PAWUSA	Public and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa
POPCRU	Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union
PPAWU	Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAAPAWU	South African Agriculture, Plantation and Allied Workers' Union
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SACTWU	Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADNU	South African Democratic Nurses' Union
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAFPU	South African Football Players' Union
SAMA	South African Medical Association
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SARHWU	South African Railway and Harbour Workers' Union
SASAWU	South African State and Allied Workers' Union
SASBO	South Africa Society of Banking Officials
SASFU	South African Security Force Union
SATAWU	South African Transport Workers' Union
SATUCC	Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
SWOP	Sociology of Work Unit
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trade Union Congress
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front

UDM	United Democratic Movement
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNIP	United National Independent Party
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
UPE	University of Port Elizabeth (now NMMU)
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WITS	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zambian Congress of Trade Unions

Preface

It has become a cliché to state that behind every book there is a story. But in the case of this volume it is so true, and it is not just one story, but several complex stories that are part of the larger social tapestry of a changing South Africa. Two of these deserve special mention here so as to help readers navigate their way through the pages that follow. The first is the story of a movement that has inspired thousands of men and women in various occupations to take charge of their lives by combining in trade unions across different industries to defend life, limb and dignity in the face of an exploitative and dehumanising socio-economic system. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has come to symbolise the loftiest objectives and noblest values and virtues of this movement and has earned the admiration of friend and foe in its fight against all of forms of human exploitation and degradation. The researchers who set out to conduct the first COSATU Workers' Survey in 1994 and all subsequent ones, including the 2008 one, were fascinated by the commitment and fortitude of the activists and members who constituted the movement. The contributors to this book share this fascination and admiration for the labour movement's role in the momentous events of the last two decades in South Africa.

However, the discussion in the pages that follow is not about paying homage to COSATU and the broader labour movement, nor is it about demonising them. This takes us to the second story behind this book, which is about the producers of social knowledge and the process of producing that knowledge. The South African labour studies scholarly community may have become smaller in numerical terms, but it has certainly become more diverse, more robust and rigorous. As can be noted, the contributors to this book are drawn from more diverse backgrounds in occupational, generational, gender and, of course, racial backgrounds. That makes the discussion unpredictable, yet deeper and more interesting. We found it both fascinating and somewhat challenging to reconcile the different styles and approaches of the different authors. But we enjoyed every minute of it and came out of the experience wiser.

This volume is about COSATU and its members and focuses particularly on their understanding of union democracy and how that understanding is transposed into the broader arena of politics and governance. The discussion is based on quantitative data as well as qualitative interviews. The quantitative data is gathered by means of a survey of a sample of COSATU members every four years prior to the national government elections. The project has been running since 1994 and we have used the same questionnaire, with some minor modifications and additions. The data has enabled us to examine trends in workers' perceptions of workplace democracy, union politics and South African politics in general. The richness of the data made it possible for us to identify patterns of power and inequality and, by extension, the nature of consensus and contestation, cooperation and conflict, within COSATU and its allies, the ruling African National Congress and the South African Communist Party.

This volume highlights the successes and opportunities, setbacks and failures faced by South Africa's largest trade union federation in the recent period. Over the last decade and a half the successes included relatively high membership densities in almost all sectors of the economy and membership breakthroughs in new sectors that employed white-collar and professional workers. In addition, COSATU's strength and influence in South African politics and the economy is undisputed. At the same time, this volume illustrates that COSATU's successes also come at a cost and that the opportunities that present themselves are not always easy to take advantage of. For example, the expansion of COSATU membership and the organisation of workers from various occupational levels introduce new complexities to the conceptualisation of working-class politics and unity. In a similar way, the growth of women's membership challenges the federation and its unions to face up to questions of gender equality in the federation and its unions.

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey was a collaborative effort among researchers based at several South African universities, and Stephen Ellis, formerly at the University of Leiden and now at the Free University of Amsterdam. Many people have been immensely helpful in the process of organising the project and gathering the data. We would like to thank COSATU general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, for support and assistance in facilitating access to all the unions. Our gratitude also goes to all the workers and shop stewards who provided information to us. Many shop stewards,

union officials, managers and company representatives played an important role by assisting us with arrangements and access to enable our fieldworkers to conduct the interviews within workplaces, most of them during working hours. We would also like to acknowledge all the final year undergraduate and postgraduate social science students, most of them from sociology, in our respective universities who travelled to far-flung places to administer the survey questionnaire to COSATU members.

The Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand hosted the initial phase of the project and facilitated the administrative aspects. Their support is gratefully acknowledged. In Chapter 2, the full list of the researchers involved in the 2008 survey is provided and we would like to acknowledge all those who, for various reasons, were unable to contribute chapters to this volume.

The 2008 project, including the participation of our Dutch research partner, was funded by the South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) and we are grateful for their assistance and support. The Faculties of Humanities at the University of Pretoria provided financial support towards the production of this book and we are grateful for their support.

At HSRC Press, Roshan Cader, Fiona Wakelin, the anonymous reviewers, Samantha Hoaeane and Liz Sparg made the experience of producing this book a pleasant and collegial one.

Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their love and support throughout the duration of this project.

Sakhela Buhlungu and Malehoko Tshoaeadi

1 *A contested legacy: organisational and political challenges facing COSATU*

Sakhela Buhlungu and Malehoko Tshoaedi

In December 2010, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. The union federation used the occasion to remember the numerous struggles that its members and affiliates have fought and the heroic sacrifices that thousands of workers, including its own members, have made to ensure that all workers in South Africa are treated with dignity and that they enjoy better wages and conditions of work. A cursory review of South African union history, particularly of black worker trade unionism, will reveal that the federation had good reason to celebrate because, not only do they have a proud legacy of resistance, but they have also made a sterling contribution to the reconstruction of the country since the end of apartheid.

The familiar pattern of union action in post-liberation societies is that, once the new social order is inaugurated, some unions shift from a resistance posture to one of close cooperation with – and, some would argue, co-option by – the new regime, while others remain in resistance mode and refuse to engage constructively in the new order. A unique aspect of COSATU's legacy is that the federation has been able to achieve a delicate balance between the themes of resistance and reconstruction by ensuring that engagement in reconstruction processes does not result in a displacement of militant collective action. It is this ability to balance and juggle these apparently contradictory imperatives of resistance and reconstruction that has earned the federation admiration from both friend and foe. Webster and Adler have argued that under apartheid and in the lead-up to the transfer of power to a democratically elected government, labour (specifically COSATU) adopted what they term 'radical reform' whereby it:

combined a radical vision of a future society with a reformist, incrementalist strategy ... Through its independent power base it had the capacity both to mobilise and restrain its members, a capacity it used in negotiating with its enemy – both capital and the state – to win and expand legal space in which to pursue its goals. (Webster & Adler 2000: 1–2)

Although the notion of ‘radical reform’ is more appropriate for describing labour’s strategy before the achievement of democracy, there is no doubt that it has continued to shape COSATU’s approach to engagement with the new order in the post-apartheid period. Indeed, ‘radical reform’ is part of the legacy that COSATU continues to embrace today.

However, this legacy of South Africa’s largest union federation is subject to intense contestation by various forces within the federation and its affiliated unions as well as others outside who have an interest in the resolution of the contest (Buhlungu 2003; Von Holdt 2003). While some emphasise the resistance dimension of the legacy in the form of militant action and ‘ungovernability’ to achieve their objectives, there are also those who prioritise engagement in formal institutions of the new democracy and therefore frown upon militant action. This tension is often brought into sharp relief in leadership contests within COSATU and its affiliates, during collective bargaining disputes and strikes and during debates within the Tripartite Alliance, made up of COSATU, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). However, the clearest evidence of the tension is the way COSATU unions manage (or fail to manage) strikes and the frequency of violent incidents during these strikes. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 9 of this volume.

The contestation over the legacy of the trade union federation has an external as well as an internal dimension. The external contestation of the legacy is by both friends and foes, including COSATU’s allies, opposition parties and observers such as researchers, ‘analysts’ and journalists. For the most part, this contestation is over the kind of influence the federation exerts and the contribution it has made and continues to make in the economy and politics of the country. In this regard, opinions are roughly divided into two positions: those who see the legacy of the federation as positive and progressive and those who regard the federation’s influence as negative and even destructive. For this reason COSATU continues to be in the news and its leaders generate both admiration and reproach.

The internal contestation over the giant federation's legacy is more complex and more intense, as it is not only about the federation's past contribution and influence, but also about the role of the federation in the present and the future. The contestation takes place between different layers of the federation, including:

- members and non-members;
- rank-and-file members and leaders;
- different unions;
- women and men;
- black, coloured, Indian and white workers;
- skilled and unskilled, blue-collar and white-collar, professional and non-professional workers;
- migrant and urban workers;
- ANC supporters and supporters of other political parties;
- socialists or communists and nationalists;
- private and public sector workers.

Internal contestation is over the historical legacy, whose views are dominant, who determines policy and direction and what the future of the federation should look like. A close examination of the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey results shows that everything is up for contestation in COSATU, even though such contestation may not be acknowledged, either publicly or within the federation. For example, in the public domain everyone knows that the federation is part of the Tripartite Alliance and that this arrangement is not currently up for discussion. Yet, the survey results show that a significant (and growing) group of the federation's members believe that COSATU should not be aligned to any political party. This was confirmed in responses to two separate survey questions regarding the Tripartite Alliance. The first question was, 'COSATU has entered into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the 2009 election. What do you think of this arrangement?' A surprising 21 per cent of members who participated in the survey chose the answer, 'COSATU should not be aligned to any political party.' (Compared with 15 per cent in 1994, 16 per cent in 1998 and 17 per cent in 2004). The second question was, 'Do you think that this alliance should continue and contest the election after 2009 (in 2014)?' Again, an unexpected 20 per cent of the federation's members taking part in the survey chose the answer, 'No. COSATU should not be aligned with any political party.' (Not asked in 1994, but compared with 3 per cent in 1998 and 15 per cent in 2004). The results for both questions reflect

a trend where an increasing number of COSATU members are suggesting that other political positions exist within the federation, thus illustrating the contestation referred to in this chapter.

However, if one expects contestation along neat lines of pro-alliance versus anti-alliance, Tripartite Alliance versus a workers' party, nationalists versus socialists, and so on, then one is bound to be disappointed. The survey points to a consistent decline in the view that the federation should form its own party, from 14 per cent in 1994 to 4 per cent in 2008. This illustrates a further point about the contestation of the legacy, namely, that it does not follow any particular logical or ideological lines. It is fluid and characterised by rapidly changing positions by different members or groups of members. Internal contestation of the federation's legacies is, therefore, messy.

Internal contestation also takes place over which leaders in the country best represent the workers' interests. As in the 2004 survey, in 2008 COSATU members were asked: 'Which leader represents worker interests best?' Table 1.1 provides a list of all leaders who got support of 1 per cent or more from the 441 COSATU members who answered the question.

Table 1.1 *Which leader represents worker interests best? (selected results from question asked during survey in 2004 and 2008)*

Leader	2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%
Zwelinzima Vavi	100	22.7	176	39.9
Jacob Zuma	5	1.1	84	19.0
Blade Nzimande	62	14.1	23	5.2
Nelson Mandela	127	28.8	20	4.5
Willie Madisha	38	8.6	17	3.9
Thabo Mbeki	47	10.7	15	3.4
Mbhazima Shilowa	31	7.0	9	2.0
Cyril Ramaphosa	16	3.6	9	2.0
Shop steward	Not voted for		8	1.8
Kgalema Motlanthe	Not voted for		7	1.6
Gwede Mantashe	Not voted for		7	1.6
Helen Zille	Not voted for		6	1.4

It will be noticed that the list includes the workers' shop stewards – who are obviously doing a sterling job in their workplaces championing the interests of their members – as well as Helen Zille, the leader of the Democratic Alliance (the official parliamentary opposition party). Whereas, at face value, this list of leaders is just that – a list of leaders – what it really illustrates is that workers' choices of which leaders best represent them is always complex and contested. Long after the leaders are gone, workers retain different images and notions of who the best leaders were and are: for example, included in the full list of names was the late Elijah Barayi, the founding president of COSATU.

The aim of this first chapter is to provide a conceptual framework for the discussion in the rest of this volume. However, more than simply identifying the themes raised in the different chapters of this volume, our objective is to engage in an exposition that maps the theoretical field of union organisation and action. It is our view that, over the last four decades or so, labour studies scholarship in South Africa has produced some of the best contributions to knowledge. However, there is scope for this scholarship to be more theoretically robust than it currently is. In particular, scholarly endeavours in the following areas of labour studies require attention:

- power relations within labour organisations;
- the mobilisation of collective action;
- the changing nature of trade unions;
- the politics of social mobility;
- the political role of trade unions.

Arguing that South African labour studies is not sufficiently robust should not be construed to mean that the above issues have not been examined by labour studies scholars in the past. However, existing scholarship tends to work with unproblematised and homogeneous binary categories and largely neglects to examine the multiplicity of subgroups, networks and hierarchies within unions that cut across the fashionable binaries. Thus, we have black versus white workers, militant workers versus conservative or co-opted ones, politicised versus unpoliticised workers, strong unions versus weak unions, political versus apolitical unions, and the list goes on. The binary approach to studying unions also fails to grasp the differential distribution of power within organisations and how this gives rise to the subgroups, networks and hierarchies referred to above.

Of course, the binary approach to studying union organisation has historical roots. The labour scholarship that emerged in the 1970s developed in a context where the boundaries between advocacy or activism, on the one hand, and scholarship on the other, were blurred. Activist-scholars at the time often felt they had to choose between pro-establishment and co-opted unions, on the one hand, and 'independent' or 'progressive' unions, on the other. In this context, they often engaged in some kind of 'morality play' in support of the 'independent unions', something that blinded them to the existence of hierarchies within the groups they supported.

Below we turn to a discussion of the different dimensions of the contestation of COSATU's legacy.

Power relations within labour organisations

The conventional approach to the study of power in trade unions focuses on how union members and leaders mobilise and build power vis-à-vis external opponents, principally employers and state agencies. In this approach, the focus is on the ability of trade unions to muster sufficient power to confront these opponents. Viewed in this way, unions are seen as homogeneous entities that are either strong or weak relative to their adversaries, with little or no attention paid to the internal divisions and differentiation that shapes their ability to engage opponents. The few notable exceptions to this approach are Maree (1982), Webster (1985), Freund (1995), Von Holdt (2003) and Buhlungu (2002, 2003 and 2010). What has been neglected in the majority of studies is the way in which power operates and is deployed by different groups within trade unions, whether by leaders against members, full-time officials against workers, educated workers against workers with little or no education, men against women, skilled against unskilled workers, etcetera. To make this point clearer, we should pose the question: How does power operate in a trade union and how does it get deployed and by whom?

First, in a union setting, power does not reside in a single place or group, but is diffused more widely among the various levels of the organisation. This means that power does not operate in a zero-sum fashion, where either a group or individual has it or does not. Different groups or networks have different amounts of power, depending on their structural location and the

resources that they possess. These may include education, skill, political connectivity and occupational position.

Second, power in a trade union is ‘relational’, that is, individuals and groups have power relative to others and the relative power each individual or group possesses is subject to change, depending on a variety of factors as discussed above.

Third, different groups within a trade union deploy power to extract concessions from or to derive advantage over other groups. Thus, full-time officials may deploy the power they have by virtue of their knowledge and education to win debates and get their points of view adopted as union resolutions.

Fourth, power may be deployed in a benevolent or altruistic way, where the outcomes are supposed to serve to promote the common good, or to promote solidarity with a particular group or individual, or for self-serving purposes in a contest. What is experienced as leadership struggles or in-fighting in trade unions is usually the manifestation of power struggles between or among different groups.

Finally, power never resides with the same group forever. It shifts all the time, and an astute group knows that it has to build coalitions with other groups to stay ahead in the power stakes. In COSATU, this can be observed within individual affiliates or between different affiliates as they seek to influence the direction of the federation.

In short, central to union organisations are power relations among individuals, groups and networks and a power contest is behind any leadership struggle, debate, disagreement about direction or dispute over the position to be taken on a political or collective bargaining issue. Later in this chapter, we will discuss how contests over the legacy of the federation, particularly with regard to resistance and reconstruction, are inscribed with power relations.

The mobilisation of collective action

A fascinating aspect of the legacy of union organisation during the last three-and-a-half decades in South Africa is the ability of workers and their unions to sustain the mobilisation of collective action to achieve their goals. Such collective action has been mobilised towards achieving three broad goals for the union movement.

First, workers have embarked on various forms of collective action to fight for improved wages and conditions of employment. In this regard, the historic Durban strikes of 1973 created a pattern which future generations of workers, with or without unions, were to follow. Collective action oriented towards improvements to wages and conditions of work tends to resonate with most workers and thus some of the largest, longest and most bitter struggles by workers have been for this goal.

Second, workers have acted collectively in support of their demands for rights, institutions and policies favourable to them. Under this rubric of mobilisation we can include struggles for freedom of association, demands for recognition of unions by employers and the state, and struggles in support of demands for reform of labour legislation. In this regard, the struggles of the 1970s and 1980s by workers demanding recognition of their unions spring to mind. The 1990s also witnessed struggles in support of the demand for the reform of labour legislation, particularly the Labour Relations Act, and for the reform of existing institutions such as the National Manpower Commission and the creation of new ones such as the National Economic Forum and later the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

Finally, union collective action has also been mobilised to achieve political and socio-economic goals. These forms of action became more overt and direct from the 1990s onwards and involved mobilisation around issues outside the traditional scope of trade union action, ranging from the massive general strike against Value Added Tax in 1991 to the 'rolling mass action' of 1992 and 1993 and, after about 2000, the series of protests demanding government action to create jobs.

While the mobilisation of collective action by workers and unions has been studied by labour studies scholars, what has been neglected is the delicate nature of such mobilisation within the unions and among different groups of workers. As shown by the survey material analysed in the different chapters of this volume, workers hold different views and positions on virtually all issues confronting them and their organisations. Negotiation among various groups of workers therefore entails intricate trade-offs, concessions and compromises as groups, networks and leaders seek to maximise their benefits. The ability of workers and unions to sustain their collective action depends on the viability of the trade-offs, concessions and compromises. It takes longer to convince individuals and groups of workers who believe that they can achieve their

goals without embarking on collective action to participate, and they are also often the first to break ranks when the action is protracted. Groups that fall into this category include workers who are relatively better off, such as skilled workers, white-collar workers, professionals and, in the context of apartheid, certain categories of coloured and Indian workers. In this regard, Buhlungu (2010) has shown how difficult it was during the 1980s and 1990s for unions to sustain solidarity action involving coloured and Indian workers during strikes and other kinds of mass action by COSATU unions.

For us to understand the different forms of union collective action and the ways in which these are conducted we need to be able to identify the different groups and what keeps them together during such actions. While a collective sense of grievance and outrage is important to motivate workers to participate, it is often not sufficient to sustain the bonds of solidarity. In a similar way, the ability of the dominant group or groups to enforce their decisions depends on the options that the minority groups have, should they choose not to participate. For example, in the past it was relatively easy for striking workers to discourage those opposed to striking by using threats and even violence against them. In the context of apartheid, the use of violence against non-strikers was often justified in the name of the broader political struggle, and unions did not risk losing the moral high ground as a result of such actions by their members. Today, the situation has changed dramatically, and unions whose members use violence risk generating strong public outrage.

The mobilisation of collective action remains one of the key terrains for the contestation of COSATU's legacy by different groups within the federation and its unions. While there is a general consensus in the federation about the need to use collective action, there seems to be no general agreement on when to embark on such action, on what issues to support and on how to conduct the action. The 2010 public sector strike ended in a chaotic fashion amidst disagreements among different categories of workers and unions, particularly groups affiliated to the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union and the South African Democratic Teachers' Union. There have also been unusual cases, where groups of workers have used the courts and strike action against their own unions. For example, in 1998, members of the South African Municipal Workers' Union took the union to court to demand R5 million from it, after they were dismissed by the Springs municipality following an unprotected strike. The workers claimed that the union had done nothing to

discourage them from the strike and had thus failed to play a 'fatherly' role towards them. Another example involved members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa at Volkswagen in Uitenhage, who went on strike against their union because they blamed the union for signing what they considered a sell-out agreement with the company, without obtaining the workers' mandate.

In recent years, the contestation over the legacy of the federation has manifested itself in the manner in which strike action is conducted. On the one hand, there are those who prefer to use collective action in a strategic and disciplined way and would opt for short but effective forms of strikes and other actions. They seek to align the use of collective action with the imperatives of reconstruction. On the other hand, there are those who see collective action as a form of resistance in order to force the post-apartheid leadership to address their demands. When they do engage in such actions, they put aside considerations about reconstruction and focus on using the most effective methods, including violence and the trashing of city centres, to draw the attention of the authorities. The same approach can be found in community protests. In a recent research report on collective violence in post-apartheid South Africa, Von Holdt observed:

Violence is integral to insurgent citizenship in South Africa. Violence – both against the state and against collaborators in the community – was very much part of the insurgent movement of the anti-apartheid struggle, which at its heart was a struggle to assert the rights to citizenship of the black majority, and provides a repertoire of practices when frustration and anger become too much.

Violence is understood as a language, a message, a way of calling out to higher authorities about the state of things in their town but its violence makes it a warning at the same time. (Von Holdt 2011: 27)

In a nutshell, the underlying logic of this approach is that the end justifies the means. Those who subscribe to this approach draw heavily from the history of the anti-apartheid movement, particularly what Webster and Adler (2000) referred to as 'militant abstentionism' or what Von Holdt (2000) calls 'ungovernability'. However, a more accurate term commonly used in militant

activist parlance is *siyayinyova*. *Siyayinyova*, as a term, preceded the call by Oliver Tambo, then president of the exiled ANC, to ‘render the country ungovernable and apartheid unmanageable’ by several years. Following the June 1976 student uprisings, it was not uncommon to hear township youths, students and worker activists making a call to *nyova* things in their communities, schools and workplaces: to render the situation chaotic and unmanageable. In the present context, the *siyayinyova* approach refers to a situation where workers and community members set out to deliberately withhold their loyalty, flout the rules, defy authority and actively work to sabotage the normal functioning of institutions, community life and the exercise of authority until their demands have been met. Another dimension of *siyayinyova* is the damaging and destruction of property – particularly property associated with the authorities – and the intimidation of those from the community who show no sympathy with the strikers or who carry on with their daily lives in the midst of the protests. For many protesters, this mode of resistance is perceived to be efficacious (and therefore attractive) because it elicits a quick response from those at whom it is targeted.

It is thus evident that the legacy of COSATU and its unions combines these two approaches and the contestation and changing balance of power among different subgroups of workers, leaders and full-time officials determines which is dominant at a particular time. While it is easy for observers to understand and sympathise with the reconstruction approach, many of them find the resistance approach irrational and not acceptable in a democratic environment. However, Piven and Cloward have argued in their classic work on movements and rebellion:

But when people are thus encouraged in spirit without being appeased in fact, their defiance may escape the boundaries of electoral rituals, and escape the boundaries established by the political norms of the electoral-representative system in general. They may indeed become rebellious, but while their rebellion often appears chaotic from the perspective of conventional American politics, or from the perspective of some organisers, it is not chaotic at all; it is structured political behaviour. When people riot in the streets, their behaviour is socially patterned, and within those patterns their actions are to some extent deliberate and purposeful. (Piven & Cloward 1979: 18)

The changing nature of trade unions

Contrary to the popular belief that trade unions and their federations are unchanging organisations which maintain continuity with their past, the reality is that unions are constantly changing. Some of the dimensions of change include the numerical size of the unions, the composition of the membership in terms of occupations and skills, rural and urban workers, migrant and local workers, men and women, and workers from different sectors of the economy and generational changes. Different categories of workers make different, and often competing, claims on unions and also contribute different aspects to a union's organisational culture and traditions. For example, migrant workers from rural areas have different demands and needs compared to township-based workers and they give a union a very specific character compared to their urbanised counterparts (Von Holdt 2003). The different groups that make up a union are constantly locked in contest as each seeks to shape the organisation in its own image.

Unions also undergo major transformations as a result of changes taking place in the environment within which they operate. In the last two decades, these include changes in politics and the global economy. The democratic transformation that the country has experienced since the early 1990s has seen unions gain recognition as legitimate social institutions, with rights enshrined in legislation and the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. Trade union leaders are courted by both the political and business elites, and the absence of powerful opposition parties has resulted in unions, COSATU in particular, filling the void as crucial political actors. The Tripartite Alliance between COSATU, the ANC and the SACP has also created greater social and political interaction between union leaders and the political elite, something that provides avenues for mobility for unionists and acts as a moderating influence on key union leaders. In a sense, union leaders are the veritable 'new men of power' that C Wright Mills ([1948] 2001) first identified in the context of the United States of America in the 1930s and 1940s.

The changes in South African politics have also led to changes in the general outlook of both union members and their leaders. The fact that the country is now a democracy with legitimate institutions means that unionists no longer see the state and its institutions as the enemy. Indeed, many see the state as a partner for trade unions and workers. Relations with employers are also

generally more cooperative than they were under apartheid. These changes have implications for the ways in which workers and union leaders see the world and how they fit into it. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of socialism that COSATU members and leaders continue to espouse, most no longer believe in the need for and the possibility of fundamental changes in the social order. Indeed, the radical Marxist rhetoric is at odds with the private beliefs and practices of the federation's members today. They participate actively in the consumerism of the post-apartheid period and, when presented with opportunities for upward social mobility, they enthusiastically make use of them. COSATU's alliance with the ruling party continues to enjoy support among union members precisely because, among other things, it offers avenues for upward mobility for the middle and upper layers of the federation's membership and leadership. This point is developed further below.

The politics of social mobility

Over the last two decades or so, South Africa has witnessed unprecedented processes of social mobility. Sitas' (2004) research in KwaZulu-Natal shows that social mobility has been both downward and upward. Groups affected by downward mobility include large numbers of black and white people who have been cast aside by the deleterious processes of work restructuring and retrenchment in both private and public sector organisations. Many former union members and low-level leaders have suffered this fate and their experience of post-apartheid South Africa is, therefore, a painful one (Mosoetsa 2011). Ngonini's research on the impact of the decline of mine migrancy – and its attendant job loss on villages in the Eastern Cape – also tells a tale of downward mobility and its negative impact on individual, family and community life. He identified several problems, such as negative effects on ex-migrants' psychological wellbeing and standing in the community, marital problems as women assumed roles as breadwinners, an increase in poverty, lack of money for education, a decline of investment in agriculture and dependence on pensions and child welfare grants. He concluded by arguing that 'although migration did not provide a route out of poverty its absence is making the poor a lot worse off' (Ngonini 2007: 184).

Upward social mobility presents COSATU unions with difficulties and problems of a different sort and these often manifest themselves in three ways,

namely, in-fighting among union leaders, misappropriation or mismanagement of funds and bribery, and leaving the unions for greener pastures. In-fighting among union leaders results from competition for leadership positions and resources associated with these positions (Bezuidenhout et al 2005; Bezuidenhout et al 2010; Buhlungu & Bezuidenhout 2008). The federation and virtually all its affiliates have experienced intense contests and competition between members and leaders at various times in recent years. These contests are attributable to the fact that leadership positions are now inscribed with power and entitle those who hold them to perks and other resources that are not accessible to rank-and-file union members. Furthermore, the intensity of these contests is due to the fact that union leadership positions serve as important stepping stones for further upward mobility, both within the union movement and beyond it in the world of politics, business and the state bureaucracy.

Union leaders who have access to sizeable resources have often used them as patronage, which they use to build support bases and 'fiefdoms' that can be mobilised relatively easily to defend them against competitors and help support them in their quest to rise to higher positions. Thus, contests for union positions are never merely contests between individual leaders, but are complex struggles between different support bases and even coalitions thereof, in support of different leaders. The resources that are used to hold support bases and coalitions together vary from the most basic at the local level to very significant ones at provincial and national levels. These may include cellphones, money, access to union or company vehicles for personal use and promises to supporters of union positions or jobs in the union or private companies.

The misappropriation or mismanagement of funds and acceptance of bribes by trade unionists have become common occurrences in the last decade and a half, a manifestation of a new culture of individualism and accumulation that has emerged within organisations that were part of the struggle for liberation, including COSATU. In the post-apartheid era, activists believe that they also deserve to live a better life and that they should prove in material terms that the sacrifices they made by joining the struggle were not in vain. A few become so desperate that they help themselves to union funds or other union resources. This phenomenon occurs at all levels of union organisation and includes high-profile cases, such as that of COSATU head office official, Jan Mahlangu, who resigned in disgrace following media disclosures that he had

accepted a bribe – in the form of a car worth R350 000 – from a pension fund management company that wanted to gain access to vast pension funds over which COSATU unions have joint oversight. In ‘COSATU responds to *Mail & Guardian*’, a statement issued on 23 April 2010 by Patrick Craven, COSATU’s national spokesperson, the federation confirmed that Mahlangu had admitted to taking the bribe and that he resigned voluntarily. But what was particularly significant about the statement was the admission that corruption is endemic in the unions:

This incident will in no way however, undermine COSATU’s crusade against corruption. We have never denied that it is a problem within the trade unions as well as in the private and public sectors. Mahlangu is not the first and will not be the last to accept gifts from service providers. The capitalist system will always place temptations in the path of public, political and trade union figures. COSATU will fight even harder to eradicate corruption in the trade unions, since it can rightly be seen as a betrayal of the trust that workers place in their organisations. (‘COSATU responds to *Mail & Guardian*’, COSATU statement issued 23 April 2010)

The other common response to the desire for mobility among unionists is the search for greener pastures in the unions and other organisations (Buhlungu 1994; Buhlungu 2010; Von Holdt 2003). This trend emerged in the early 1990s and has continued since as shopfloor activists, shop stewards, branch, regional and national leaders and full-time officials at various levels continue to move into better remunerated and often high-powered positions in management, politics, the civil service and business. One of the most intriguing findings of the COSATU Workers’ Survey is that rank-and-file COSATU members see nothing wrong with upward mobility, even when their shop stewards accept positions in frontline management on the shopfloor, such as supervisors and foremen. Asked whether it was acceptable for a shop steward to be promoted into a managerial position, 63 per cent of the sample ‘agreed/strongly agreed’ with the statement, 22 per cent ‘disagreed/strongly disagreed’ and most of the remainder were ‘neutral’. This is in stark contrast to the ethos of the struggle years, when such moves were considered to be acts of betrayal against the struggle and the workers.

Unionists are leaving the unions in numbers that are large enough to have a destabilising effect on the federation and its affiliates. While the current

leadership deny that this is the case, there is no doubt that experience embodying years of training, practice and organisational memory gets lost every time a unionist in a significant leadership role or position departs. Furthermore, there is a tendency for those who leave the unions to distance themselves from the labour movement and its campaigns. Indeed, many ex-unionists have adopted anti-union stances in their new roles, and this is particularly the case with those in business, local government, state corporations and the civil service. However, it is clear that COSATU unions remain important stepping stones for those who wish to take advantage of the existing opportunities for upward mobility. In this context, the federation's alliance with the ruling party is a great boon, because membership of one or all the Alliance organisations is considered an important testimonial to get ahead in post-apartheid South Africa.

The political role of trade unions

To argue that COSATU is part of the political architecture of post-apartheid South Africa may sound like one is asserting the obvious, particularly in a context where there is a complex web of overlapping leadership between the federation and its political party allies, the ANC and the SACP. However, it is important to remember that trade unions are not political institutions in the conventional sense, nor is their role unproblematic. Unions, by definition, do not contest for political power in their own right. Where they seek to play a role and influence the political direction of a country, they usually do so through the agency of a political party that can run for parliamentary and related institutions. Historically, unions around the world have done this in three ways, namely, forming a labour party where unions have a strong voice, forming an alliance with a chosen party or supporting a party electoral programme at election time.

The complexity of the political role of unions arises from the fact that they have a primary role, that is, a shopfloor mandate to fight for better wages and conditions of employment, and they have to rely on the goodwill of a political party to meaningfully influence politics. These issues are connected in that the power and effectiveness of a union's political role depends, to a large degree, on the union's ability to fulfil its shopfloor mandate. Thus, a union that is not sufficiently representative of the workforce it claims to speak for and is unable to deliver a good bargain during its engagement with employers cannot have

power to meaningfully influence politics, regardless of which of the three approaches identified above it follows. In other words, COSATU remains politically powerful for as long as it is able to unite workers and deliver real improvements to them in terms of wages and other conditions of work. This explains, in part, the federation's obsession with periodically making its membership figures public and ensuring that the figures reflect growth rather than decline.

The political role of trade unions has cycles of a maximum of thirty years, but, in reality, each cycle tends to be much shorter. In a cycle, a union or union federation may wield political power or influence, but that cycle never lasts forever. Usually, a cycle characterised by a robust political role is followed by one where the fortunes of the union are in decline. Loss of representivity is the most powerful trigger for the decline of a union's political influence, as such loss makes its adversaries and interlocutors lose respect for the union. Union movements across the world have found that it is extremely difficult to reverse a trend of decline in political influence and that it is contingent on a union's ability to reverse the decline in membership. What some have termed 'revitalisation' of trade unions (Frege & Kelly 2003; Phelan 2007; Turner 2005; Voss & Sherman 2000) is, in essence, about rebuilding union structures and growing membership and, if this is done successfully, it could set in motion the beginning of a new cycle of successful political engagement by the union.

It is hard to pinpoint a level of membership decline that could result in loss of political influence, just as it is difficult to identify the extent of union revitalisation necessary to earn a trade union a significant role in the politics of a country. What is certain is that the pervasiveness of work restructuring, work insecurity and job loss makes the task of union revitalisation through membership growth based only on formal sector workers nearly impossible. Unions are hard pressed to find ways of organising beyond the diminishing core of formal sector workers. The implication of this, therefore, is that the ability of trade unions and federations such as COSATU to play an influential role is increasingly going to depend on the unions' organising reach beyond the formal sector. Where this is not possible, unions are going to have to forge and strengthen coalitions with civil society organisations that organise people in precarious forms of employment in the formal sector and those working in the informal sector.

Organisational and political challenges

The results of the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey have presented us with an opportunity to interrogate the state of the federation and to make connections between the various aspects of its organisational life. Our analysis of the survey data, as well as material from other sources, makes it clear that unions have indeed become extremely complex organisations and as such they require rigorous forms of analysis. In the same way that the legacy of the federation is contested, our research shows that its organisational and political life is also contested.

On the one hand, COSATU is an extremely powerful and well-oiled organisational machine whose impact goes beyond its collective bargaining or shopfloor mandate. To all intents and purposes, the federation is a major player in the country's political life, whose influence dwarfs that of most, if not all, the parliamentary opposition parties. Even when it is not addressed directly, the theme of COSATU's organisational and political clout comes through in all the chapters in this volume.

On the other hand, the federation faces serious organisational and political challenges. The discussion of the 2008 survey results in the chapters of this volume lays these bare and raises fundamental issues about the need to combine a macro-analysis of organisations with an assessment of their microdynamics. To put this differently, a study of the unions from above needs to be complemented by a focus from below. This helps us understand the ongoing contestation that takes place within organisations and to identify the different subgroups and networks that are vying for power and influence. The discussion below identifies and discusses the key themes that run through the different chapters of the volume. In particular, the discussion focuses on the challenges that COSATU faces around these issues and the implications that the issues have for the federation's organisational power and political influence in the medium and long term.

Internal union democracy

Internal union democracy, or 'worker control' in COSATU parlance, is the cornerstone of the federation and its affiliated unions. When trade unions emerged in the early 1970s, the focus was on building strong union structures wherein workers would have direct control and influence over decision-

making processes. This was driven by the belief that workers should play a central role in determining the agenda of the labour movement and be directly involved in all union processes. Hence, worker leadership at the workplace and in higher union structures was emphasised. These efforts were reinforced with intensive education and training processes to build the leadership capacity of union activists (Buhlungu 2009). This was particularly important in the context of apartheid, where the majority of the black workforce had low educational qualifications and were largely employed in unskilled occupational categories. Collective solidarity was, therefore, forged on the basis of a relatively homogeneous working class that was largely black, with low educational levels, doing unskilled work and earning low wages. Most of this union training had an overtly political content, which was considered crucial for raising the consciousness of workers about broader political issues and how they connected with their workplace struggles.

The democratisation of South Africa and the country's re-entry into the global economy have broadened the agenda of trade unions at different levels: the workplace, the industry or sector, the national economy and the political arena of the country. Not only are trade unions engaging management at the workplace, they are also involved in bargaining councils, negotiating wages and working conditions, as well as in macro-economic issues in the domestic and global arenas. The extent and level of this engagement requires high levels of sophistication with regard to knowledge, bargaining and communication skills. In this new context, trade union activism and leadership requires higher order leadership skills, which education and training approaches from the 1980s and 1990s cannot provide.

Union responses to the challenges of democratisation, globalisation and economic restructuring of workplaces have alienated the leadership from the rank-and-file membership of the unions. The focus on specialised training and education for elected worker leaders and full-time union officials has resulted in the emergence of a sharp differentiation between workers and leaders and between leadership at lower levels and those at provincial and national levels. This differentiation on policy questions and the involvement of the federation in institutions such as NEDLAC has also been noted in the COSATU Workers Survey, particularly the 2008 round. The data shows that there is a wide gap between workers and their national leaders with regard to understanding the agenda of COSATU at the national and international levels.

Collective solidarity on the basis of a common understanding of working-class struggles in the workplace and in society has been undermined by the democratisation of South Africa and the increasing scope of trade union involvement in politics and macro-economic issues. It also raises the question: Can workers participate meaningfully in democratic institutions when they are not well informed about the broader issues that their leaders are involved in? Direct participatory democracy in the unions is hard to achieve (and it is virtually impossible at the national level), even when union members are fully informed or are knowledgeable about the issues at hand. Without such knowledge, participatory democracy is impossible, even at the lowest and therefore most accessible structures of the union, with the result that union members have to rely on their leadership for representation. Workers' lack of knowledge and information about the macro-economic and political issues that COSATU and its unions are involved in renders representative democracy meaningless and increases the alienation of the workers from their leaders, something the leaders of the federation should be concerned about.

From its inception, the COSATU Workers' Survey has interrogated the operation of internal union democracy at the shopfloor level, including the attendance of union meetings by members and shop stewards and the accountability of shop stewards to their members. The 2008 survey revealed a continuation of the tradition of active membership participation, as manifested by the high attendance at union meetings. In addition, 92 per cent of the workers surveyed said that their shop stewards were elected by members, as opposed to being appointed by union officials or management. But the results of the survey also suggest a mellowing of the tradition of worker control, as an increasing number of workers no longer saw it as desirable or necessary for shop stewards to seek their mandate before each time they engaged with management or other organisations. Table 1.2 below shows that, in 1994, the majority of COSATU members had an extremely restricted conception of worker control, where a shop steward was expected to do only what the members told him or her. The recent survey shows that members are willing to give their shopfloor leaders more leeway and discretion when representing them. But, in response to another survey question, the vast majority of members (78 per cent) still expected their shop stewards to report back to them about their activities and interactions with others, particularly management.

Table 1.2 *How a shop steward should exercise his/her mandate (by percentage)*

A shop steward:	1994	1998	2004	2008
can only do what the membership tells them to do	72	50	54	46
has discretion (choice) within a broad mandate	Not asked	20	28	30
can represent members' interests as she/he sees fit	26	30	18	19

The relaxation of the shopfloor democratic tradition can also be discerned in the way in which management and managerial positions are perceived. The survey shows that there is a growing trend where shop stewards get promoted into entry level managerial positions, with 52 per cent of the workers saying a shop steward had been promoted in their workplace (a significant increase from 37 per cent in 2004). More fascinating were the attitudes of workers towards the elevation of shop stewards into managerial positions. A total of 63 per cent supported it, 10 per cent were neutral and only 26 per cent were opposed to it. COSATU has come a long way indeed! The rest of these issues are discussed in more depth by Johann Maree (Chapter 3) and Themba Masondo (Chapter 5) in this volume.

A changing membership, a changing COSATU

Trade unions have grown large in size and their membership has diversified, as union mobilisation has expanded into all sectors of the economy. The composition of trade union membership has changed since the early 1990s, as a younger generation of workers have joined trade unions. A total of 56 per cent of the 2008 survey sample joined COSATU unions after 1994 and 38 per cent were below the age of 36. Significantly, the gender composition of the unions is also changing as large numbers of women are now union members. The Secretariat Report to the 5th COSATU Central Committee gathering held in 2011 estimated that 48 per cent of the federation's members are women (COSATU 2011). These changes are crucial for the federation, as they have transformed its image and outlook. But how are these changes or new dynamics being accommodated by COSATU? In Chapter 4, Tshoedi argues that COSATU has made little adjustment to include women in leadership and decision-making structures. More importantly, the organisation faces the challenge of developing a representative democratic system that is inclusive and ensures that the voices of the less dominant groups are given significance.

It is a challenge about adapting and reconceptualising democracy and how it is practised so that it fits in with the realities of a modern trade union federation.

COSATU unions also face challenges in relation to the local manifestations of globalisation: workplace restructuring, job losses and a decline in economic growth. These manifestations have led to thousands of workers getting retrenched and therefore being outside the reach of the trade union movement. A growing number of workers, particularly women and youth (including migrant and immigrant workers), are employed as casual and temporary workers, without full employment benefits. In Chapter 10, Xulu shows that most local migrant workers covered by the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey did not have full tenure and so were employed as temporary or casual workers. She further indicates that internal migration patterns have changed and that more women aged between the ages of 26 and 45 years migrate to the cities in search of employment opportunities. However, as opportunities for formal employment continue to dwindle, the majority of women end up in the informal sector, which COSATU has, thus far, proved incapable of organising.

The challenge for COSATU and its affiliates is that a growing number of the workforce is outside its organising reach, as it is currently conceived. Unions have responded to these challenges by retreating into a defensive posture of workplace protectionism that focuses on those with full-time formal employment. Meanwhile, the workplace is no longer a centralised location with a clearly defined employer/employee relationship. In this context, the protectionist stance of the unions is not sustainable, as full-time employment in the formal sector continues to shrink.

But the survey results offer a glimmer of hope, as COSATU seems to have recorded a slight increase in members outside the core of permanent, full-time workers, which could be read to mean that the federation is finally managing to reach non-permanent and part-time workers. Discussing the results of the 2004 survey, which showed that a total of 91 per cent of COSATU members were drawn from the core of permanent, full-time workers, Webster (2006) argued that the federation was facing a 'crisis of representation'. Although the 2008 survey shows the persistence of this crisis, there has been a slight shift: 88 per cent of the sample were full-time permanent workers. This drop from the 2004 figure is attributable to a corresponding increase in union members on temporary, full-time contracts – that is, on fixed contracts – (up from 4.5 per cent in 2004 to 5.6 per cent in 2008) and union members on permanent,

part-time contracts (up from 1.7 per cent in 2004 to 4.8 per cent in 2008). Although this change is marginal, it suggests that some strategies to draw non-permanent and part-time workers into unions may be beginning to yield results.

In Chapter 11, Hlatshwayo demonstrates that labour migration, whether legal or illegal, is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. He expresses concern about COSATU's inability to organise beyond its traditional base, which, he argues, reflects a failure to adapt to the challenges wrought by globalisation. This, he argues, weakens trade unions' struggles against globalisation, as employers use unorganised foreign migrants to undercut local labour, resulting in the erosion of wages and working conditions.

In a nutshell, COSATU's continued power and influence is dependent on it sustaining its membership base. However, for this to happen, it is vital that the federation and its affiliates broaden their conceptualisation and definition of workers and the workplace to incorporate those who fall outside the formal sector and, more importantly, local and foreign migrants in South Africa.

Social mobility and coherence of the working-class project

As in previous years, the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey highlights changes in educational and occupational levels of COSATU members. An increasing number of workers are in skilled occupations, while fewer members have less than Grade 12 educational levels. Trade unions have grown in size and their membership has expanded into all sectors of the economy. There has been growth in union membership in white-collar and professional occupations, such as banking, health and education.

Union activism is driven by the interests of the different categories of workers who belong to unions. In the current socio-economic context in South Africa, where there is growing materialism and individualism, the interests of workers and their leaders – like those of other citizens – are influenced by the desire for upward social mobility and personal wealth accumulation. In Chapter 5, Masondo shows that union activism and leadership has become an opportunity and a stepping stone to climb to greater heights in the union and in managerial positions which come with benefits and further opportunities for career growth. Sitas (Chapter 6) makes a related point, when he discusses the changing character of COSATU. In a similar vein, Buhlungu and Ellis

(Chapter 12) argue that COSATU's participation in the Tripartite Alliance provides union leaders with opportunities for accessing lucrative positions in local government, provincial legislatures and Parliament and in the state bureaucracy.

The changes discussed in this section have a profound impact on the nature of worker solidarity and the coherence of the broad working-class project against capitalism. Indeed, the very idea that there is a common working-class project has become extremely tenuous in the current political and economic context. This is the gist of the discussion by Sitas in Chapter 6. The growing differentiation of the workers highlights the crisis of the working-class project and the extent to which COSATU as an organisation can actually continue representing the South African working class as a homogeneous group with common interests and goals.

COSATU and the Tripartite Alliance

In Chapter 3, Maree argues that the Tripartite Alliance and COSATU's continued participation in it is a critical issue that has a bearing on the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. From a different perspective, Buhlungu and Ellis (Chapter 12) argue that the Alliance is a tangled and complex political relationship, characterised by a web of overlapping leadership roles, all of which make the coalition a vital stabilising force for the democratic dispensation. For this reason, many will find it disconcerting that COSATU members' support for the Alliance is on the decline. Workers' dissatisfaction with the Alliance, particularly the ANC, could be construed as a sign of their unhappiness with general progress in the government's service delivery record. Workers' support (or lack thereof) for the ruling party is influenced by their expectations of improvement in their lives. However, as Mosoetsa argues in Chapter 7, workers are generally ambivalent towards the ruling party when it comes to issues of service delivery, something which is tied up with issues of loyalty to a political tradition.

COSATU participates in Tripartite Alliance structures with the objective of influencing the policies and programmes of the ruling party, which are then implemented at the government level. However, the experience with the implementation of GEAR under Thabo Mbeki's presidency demonstrated the subordinate position of COSATU within the Alliance structure. It also

highlighted that, although the ANC supports workers, it is not an anti-capitalism party. Indeed, the vast majority of the party's members and leaders are pro-capitalist. Furthermore, the ANC is a multi-class organisation that incorporates both working-class and capitalist members. The representation and articulation of any particular group's interests is, therefore, not guaranteed, but is contested and challenged at different levels of the party. This has been clearly demonstrated at different times since the party's ascension to power in 1994.

Snow (2004) has observed that social movement participation in politics is often fraught with contestation and conflict over the prioritisation of issues. The power and dominance of one particular group in social movement leadership is critical in influencing the agenda of the social movement. COSATU's participation in the Tripartite Alliance, therefore, needs to be analysed against this background of contestation; the struggle for power and influence within the Alliance and the government level. The contestation within the Alliance also raises questions about the extent to which COSATU's interests are still in alignment with those of the ANC, which is not only a multi-class organisation, but a ruling party. The ANC as a ruling party is not only driven by the local context in its policy decisions, but is also influenced by the role it plays in the global context. Therefore, the conditions that shaped the special relationship that COSATU enjoyed with the ANC during the liberation years no longer apply in the contemporary period. In a similar vein, in Chapter 8, Khunou argues that globalisation and the orientation of the ruling party towards neo-liberal policies have severely hampered COSATU's ability to effectively influence social policy in such a way that it benefits its broad membership. She blames this incapacity largely on the federation's participation in the Alliance, which she argues limits the full utilisation of its potential social power.

Consolidating democracy

The biggest challenge currently facing South Africa is probably to consolidate the democratic dispensation, particularly the extension of economic and political rights and the guaranteeing of safety and security to all citizens. However, to achieve this goal in the context of globalisation, growing unemployment and poverty and widening inequalities is a major challenge. COSATU, as an influential organisation in working-class politics, has a big role to play in this process.

In her chapter on service delivery (Chapter 7), Mosoetsa points to the fact that at the root of service delivery protest is community anger at the government's failure to deliver on its promises of 'a better life for all'. She argues that the protests reflect community frustrations over unemployment, corruption and lack of political accountability. Here we may add that the xenophobic violence that gripped the country in 2008 was also related to community frustrations with the government's failure to address poverty, inequality and lack of access to full employment opportunities.

An interesting observation Mosoetsa makes about the 2008 survey's findings, with regard to community protests over service delivery, is the lack of active or visible involvement or participation by COSATU workers in the protests. Indeed, most COSATU members have not taken part in these protests, which have mostly been led by young, unemployed and therefore non-unionised community members. Similarly, in his analyses of the use of violence by union members to force non-striking workers to take part in the strikes, Von Holdt (Chapter 9) also highlights union members' frustrations with the process of democratisation, which has still not enabled them to realise economic emancipation. This means that, to an extent, democracy has failed to redistribute wealth and address poverty and inequality. But, most importantly, democracy has not helped in a direct way to address low wages and the poor working conditions of the majority of (mostly African) workers. All of this is taking place in a context where many government officials and leaders of the ruling party are not only accused of corruption, mismanagement and abuse of state funds, but also of a public display of wealth that is insensitive to the grinding poverty around them.

Protests by community members against lack of service delivery and strikes by workers demanding a better bargain are increasingly characterised by violence and destruction of infrastructure. So violence is not only against immigrants, who are considered to be competing with South Africans over scarce resources and economic opportunities, but is also against local South African workers, to coerce them to take part in community protests and strikes. Furthermore, severe forms of violence are directed at scab workers, who are regarded by strikers as traitors or rats (*amagundwane*) who deserve harsh punishment for breaking ranks.

The destruction and violence witnessed during the 'xenophobic' attacks on immigrants, during strikes and service delivery protests, is a reflection of

frustrations with the government and its failure to transform society and address inequalities. More importantly, the violence reflects fractures within society. COSATU, as an influential organisation within society, has the potential to play a constructive role in addressing these challenges.

Resistance and reconstruction: a contested legacy

In this chapter, we have argued that COSATU is not homogeneous, both in terms of its membership and the political positions that members hold. We have also asserted that the federation has a proud history of resistance to exploitation and political injustice, and has carved a niche for itself as a powerful actor in civil society in the post-apartheid period. We have conceptualised this as a legacy of resistance and reconstruction, which is contested by those who wish to steer the federation in the direction of resistance, on the one hand, and those who want to see it prioritise reconstruction, on the other. Resistance is often associated with the past and a refusal to come to terms with the historic compromise that ushered in the democratic transition, while reconstruction is associated with a pragmatic and forward-looking outlook that eschews resistance and embraces the historic compromise of the Kempton Park negotiations.

COSATU embodies both these approaches and thus its legacy can be characterised as a complex one that combines both resistance and reconstruction. This has been discussed above, save to say that the practices and policy positions embraced by members of the federation also reflect this complexity. Observers of the federation, and the union movement in general, should be aware of this complexity and factor it into their analyses. As we have argued above, union membership is also characterised by heterogeneity in the form of subgroups and networks, which vie with one another for influence and power.

The 2008 round of the COSATU Workers' Survey clearly illustrates this complexity and heterogeneity. The results show the existence of a multiplicity of political and organisational positions within the federation and that the consolidation of democracy makes it possible for the different subgroups to assert themselves more openly and confidently. The task for the federation is to ensure that an internal debate takes place on the diversity that is discussed in the pages of this volume, so that the different groups use persuasion,

not coercion, towards one another. The current state of affairs, where the contestation takes place in an environment characterised by intolerance, coercion and even violence holds a lot of dangers, as such practices threaten to blight the proud legacy that the federation and its affiliates have built over the last three-and-a-half decades. A failure to engage in an open debate could result in polarisation between those who hold different positions on how to proceed in terms of resistance and reconstruction. Those who lose out in the contestation would simply operate underground and conduct an insurgency war against those they disagree with. Indeed, this may be happening already in the form of the intimidation and violence that has characterised strikes by COSATU unions in recent years.

Aims of the volume

Some would argue that the COSATU story has been told ad nauseum and that, besides, the mass media has been doing an excellent job of filling the gaps and bringing us all up to date on labour developments in the country. They would, therefore, argue that any new book on the subject is likely to duplicate what already exists and leave its readers none the wiser. Our view is that this volume fulfils the very specific function of engaging with the data of a longitudinal study on labour, the only one of its kind in South Africa. This places the contributors in the unique position of being able to engage with the material in a sustained way that overcomes the pitfalls of journalistic accounts and predictions by non-specialist analysts of the labour movement. From the vantage point of the COSATU Workers' Survey data we are able to identify, track and analyse trends, shifts, ambiguities and contradictions that would ordinarily be missed by those who follow developments in labour through the impressionistic eyes of the media.

The volume also deliberately avoids the 'victims-villains' dichotomy, where observers are driven by their advocacy instincts to view trade unions as victims, on the one hand, or villains, on the other. Those who follow either of these positions often find themselves inadvertently playing the role of praise singer of the labour movement and turning a blind eye to its flaws and failings, or union basher and doing everything in their power to demonise unions, while ignoring some of the positive things that unions do. All the chapters in this volume ask tough questions of COSATU: Why are women under-represented, despite the rhetoric of gender equality? Does COSATU

have the will to organise external migrants into its structures? Could it be that union leaders encourage or condone violence during strikes? Is COSATU a junior partner in the Tripartite Alliance? Can COSATU sustain its 'contest for the soul of the ANC' if its structures are weakening and its leaders are often motivated by the desire for upward mobility?

In short, the analyses provided in this volume are intended to inform, provoke, debunk conventional wisdoms, and challenge others to see the contradictions, complexity, fluidity and contested nature of COSATU and the labour movement in general. We believe this is best done by studying the changes of the labour movement from below. We are aware that survey research has limitations for unravelling some of the complexities we write about, but we are also fortunate to have had a team of researchers who, in their own right, are either emerging researchers or are established and leading scholars in the field of labour studies.

When it comes to the structure of the different chapters, the contributors had a flexible brief, in that they could either take a specific finding of the survey and present an in-depth discussion, or they could use a specific finding to present a broader chapter that makes connections with current debates. The end result is a good balance between these two approaches.

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2 *The experience of conducting a longitudinal study: the COSATU Workers' Survey, 2008*

Christine Bischoff and Malehoko Tshoaedi

The COSATU Workers' longitudinal survey was launched in 1994, with the first democratic elections in South Africa. It was initiated with the aim of understanding workers' conceptions of democracy on the shopfloor, within the unions, and how these conceptions extend to the broader political arena. The survey also sought to assess workers' political attitudes and their expectations of political parties and the government that they intended to vote for. Hence, the survey was conducted prior to the national elections. Since then, the survey has been conducted every four years in the run-up to the national elections and the 2008 study marked the fourth in this series.

The research represents one of the few, if not the only, longitudinal set of survey results relating to the political attitudes of trade union members in South Africa. The longitudinal research method has allowed us to study the shifts in COSATU members' attitudes and perceptions of democracy over a period of time. The survey has been conducted over a period of 15 years, with the same labour federation (COSATU), the same workplaces where possible (not the same workers) and more or less the same sample size. The questionnaire has also remained the same, although over the years, adjustments have been made, based on new issues of interest arising from the data analysis in the previous surveys and also from observed changes in the social, economic and political context. The latest version of the questionnaire is included as the Appendix in this volume.

COSATU's history and continued influence in the labour market and politics make it an important organisation to research. Not only was the federation at the forefront of the struggle to improve wages and conditions of employment

and transform workplace relations, it also played a key role in the anti-apartheid struggles of the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the democratic transition that culminated in the transfer of power to a democratically elected government in 1994. In the post-apartheid period, COSATU continues to be an important player in industrial relations and the labour market, and occupies a vital role in politics, including acting as a vocal critic of the government on issues such as macro-economic policies, unemployment, poverty and corruption by top government officials.

COSATU's power and influence in South Africa's industrial relations and political spheres centres on its large membership and its alliance partnership with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) – the majority political party, which has been in government for the past 18 years – and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Firstly, COSATU's large membership, estimated at just over two million, makes it the largest federation in the country (other federations include Federation of Unions of South Africa, with an estimate of 500 000 members, and National Council of Trade Unions, which has approximately 397 000 members). COSATU's numerical strength puts it at an advantage in that it always has collective strength during collective bargaining or when making socio-economic demands. Mass mobilisation of membership has always been a powerful tool for COSATU and its affiliated unions. Their potential power and impact on the economy means that they are always taken seriously when voicing opinions.

Secondly, COSATU's partnership with the ANC, through the Tripartite Alliance structure, is very critical. COSATU is the only labour organisation in South Africa that has formal direct access to the leadership and decision-making structures of the ruling party. The federation's location within this structure allows it opportunities to debate and challenge policy proposals and to lobby for support within the ANC structures. Furthermore, the relationship has also seen a number of COSATU members and leaders being deployed to Parliament as ANC candidates and to government positions. The rationale behind this has always been that the federation wants to take advantage of the opportunity to influence the government and policy-making from within.

Sampling

The survey includes COSATU members within the following sectors:

manufacturing; community, social and personal services; mining and construction; transport storage and communication; wholesale and retail trade; financial intermediation, insurance, real estate and business services. The interviews were spread across five provinces, namely, Gauteng, North West, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape. Table 2.1 below shows the regional representation of workers covered by the survey.

Table 2.1 *Provinces covered in the COSATU longitudinal study*

Province	1994		1998		2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gauteng	199	31	223	35	239	36	248	40
North West	13	2	–	–	43	7	21	3
KwaZulu-Natal	116	18	123	19	103	16	113	17.9
Eastern Cape	206	32	166	26	129	20	133	21.1
Western Cape	109	17	127	20	141	21	115	18
Total	643	100	639	100	655	100	630	100

Initially, in 1994, a list of factories in the relevant provinces was drawn from a directory of employers and employer associations. A random sample was then drawn from workplaces across certain sectors and COSATU members in these workplaces were interviewed. However, in the fourth survey (in 2008), adjustments had to be made to this list, as we found that many of the companies that had been surveyed in the earlier rounds of the study had subsequently closed down, merged or been reconstituted and so had different names. This was a common experience in all of the provinces, and the result was that new companies and workplaces were included in the study, albeit in the same sectors as previously surveyed. In total, 63 workplaces participated in the 2008 study, which was made up of a sample of 630 workers.

In light of the changes in the growth in membership of public service unions within COSATU,¹ we adjusted their representation in the survey by adding the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) and Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA). These unions were included for the first time in the 1998 survey. Another addition was the South African Society of Bank Officials (SASBO),

which affiliated to COSATU in 1995.

In addition to the survey, qualitative interviews were also conducted with members and leaders of the unions and various other organisations. Some of the members of the research team are involved in other research projects related to work and labour and, where relevant, they also drew on research material from these projects to prepare their chapters for this volume. In all cases the purpose was to facilitate triangulation of data obtained through the survey and to understand how members and leaders of other organisations perceive COSATU (Buhlungu 2006: 4–5).

The socio-political and economic context of the research

In conducting research, the social context is often considered to be of critical importance, as it influences both the research process and the outcomes of the research. The ways in which respondents perceive or interpret and respond to the research and the questions asked are largely influenced by their social surroundings and specific events within their social milieu. In our attempts to understand workers' perceptions of democracy in post-apartheid South Africa, it was important for us to be cognisant of how the socio-economic and political dynamics in the workers' social context impact on them and thus their behaviour and attitudes. The responses and attitudes of workers were thus analysed and understood within the political, economic and social context.

The context within which the first survey was conducted in 1994 was one in which the first democratic elections were seen by the majority of people in the country, including COSATU members, as heralding a victory over the forces of colonial domination and apartheid. However, uncertainty prevailed until the day of the elections in April 1994. In reference to the first democratic elections in 1994, Buhlungu (2006: 1) described the atmosphere as one filled with uncertainty as 'the country appeared to be on the brink of a bloody civil war and the elections seemed in jeopardy'. The election process, nevertheless, went ahead amid violent threats and intimidation from some Afrikaner conservative groups in South Africa. Large numbers of South African voters demonstrated commitment to participating in the new political process and the national elections were a resounding success. The elections represented the hope that post-apartheid South Africa would bring an end to the injustices

experienced under the apartheid regime. The elections further represented the possibility of a democratic future that would protect and promote human rights and equality for all its citizens.

Democracy, human rights and equality for all the citizens in South Africa have been the cornerstone of South African elections since 1994. But how do we define democracy, human rights and equality in post-apartheid South Africa? How significant is access to services such as health, education and housing in our definitions? What is the significance of access to full employment opportunities (with decent wages) and economic redistribution, in the consolidation of our democracy?

In 1994, the slogan of the ANC election campaign was 'A better life for all'. In subsequent elections, the ANC has consistently put forward employment opportunities (decent work and sustainable livelihoods), housing and improved access to education and health; all of which are priorities for many black people who live in conditions of extreme poverty and poor access to basic services. More than 54 per cent of South Africans are poor (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Report 2010). Unemployment levels in South Africa remain high, particularly among Africans (28.2 per cent), women (26.1 per cent) and youth (30 per cent).² Youth unemployment is alarmingly high in South Africa, with some estimating that 3.2 million (or 72 per cent) of young people eligible for employment are unemployed (StatsSA Quarterly Labour Force Survey, First Quarter 2011). This is a much higher rate when compared to sub-Saharan Africa, where 21 per cent of the youth are unemployed (Bhorat & Oosthuizen 2007).

Compounding the high unemployment levels has been the decline in the growth of the economy and the global economic meltdown, which saw businesses retrenching massive numbers of workers who were already under pressure supporting unemployed dependents.

Table 2.2 on the next page shows that in 2009 most of the sectors experienced a decline in employment, except for the finance and other business services and community and social services sectors, which experienced minimal growth of 3.8 per cent and 1.0 per cent, respectively, in employment numbers. However, this growth alone is insufficient to significantly reduce unemployment. Furthermore, the quality of jobs created, particularly in the services sector, has also been in question, as this sector is characterised by non-standard

forms of employment, with low wages and no job security (it includes casual, outsourced and contract workers). The agricultural, manufacturing, trade and mining sectors have shed the most jobs. The formal sector still accounted for 70 per cent of total employment in 2009 (StatsSA 2010).

Table 2.2 *Employment by sector between 2005 and 2009*

Sector	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	% Changes
Agriculture	740	859	737	780	679	-12.9
Mining	343	339	367	329	312	-5.2
Manufacturing	1 860	1 922	1 960	1 954	1 805	-7.6
Utilities	93	97	86	94	93	-1.1
Construction	937	1 016	1 051	1 136	1 096	-3.5
Trade	3 180	3 450	3 342	3 150	2 927	-7.1
Transport	705	684	717	766	740	-3.4
Finance and other business services	1 338	1 361	1 459	1 656	1 719	3.8
Community and social services	2 321	2 379	2 490	2 616	2 642	1.0
Private households	1 252	1 311	1 258	1 230	1 199	-2.5
Total	12 769	13 418	13 467	13 711	13 212	3.6

Source: StatsSA (2010)

The informal sector accounted for 15 per cent (2 091 million) of total employment. While men accounted for 16 per cent of those employed in the informal sector, 84 per cent of those employed in the informal sector were women (StatsSA 2010). Evidently, the impact of job losses and insufficient economic growth (and thus the failure to create employment opportunities) can be observed in the growth of employment in the informal sector.

The challenges facing the South African labour movement are part of a global phenomenon that requires a certain level of sophistication in the strategies adopted by organised labour, with regard to both the changes taking place in employment and the way that it approaches the organisation of workers within these new types of employment. Studies on the growth of the informal sector reveal that the 'workplace' (traditionally regarded as a centralised location with a group of workers working on an assembly line, such as those in a factory) has

changed (see Mosoetsa 2011; Webster 2006). This means that unions cannot continue relying on old forms of organisation and union membership. The decline in traditional forms of employment challenges unions to redefine their scope, membership and organising strategies. The immediate challenge is to broaden the scope of unions beyond the formal sector and for unions to open their activities and services to those outside the formal workplaces.

COSATU and the 2007 Polokwane conference

The macro-economic policies of the Mbeki government, specifically the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, have been blamed for the economic challenges facing the country, particularly the impact on the working class. In its Political Report to the 10th National Congress, COSATU argued:

The imposition of GEAR in 1996 signalled a shift towards a conservative stabilisation project largely supported by capital and right-wing opposition parties ... At the factory level, economic liberalisation and capital's response to the new labour laws unleashed an unprecedented restructuring of the working class via retrenchments, sub-contracting and casualisation. (COSATU 2009)

The debates in COSATU prior to and during the ANC's Polokwane conference (which saw the ousting of Thabo Mbeki as the ANC president and subsequently his removal from office as President of the country) centred on these issues. At the core of COSATU's disillusionment and antagonism towards Mbeki were the macro-economic policies and the manner in which they were enforced under his administration. GEAR was introduced in 1996, without negotiation with the labour movement. The imposition disregarded COSATU as an Alliance partner, which felt entitled to consultation on important policy decisions by the ruling party. The government also bypassed the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC): the forum for discussion of socio-economic policies between business, labour, government and community organisations prior to implementation or submission to Parliament.

Mbeki's removal from office, spearheaded by COSATU, was motivated by assumptions that a change in leadership within the ANC and the government would make it possible for the concerns of labour to receive favourable

treatment. Jacob Zuma, who had been sacked by Mbeki from his position as Deputy President, was perceived as a leader who is sensitive to the interests of the workers and would therefore introduce policies and programmes favourable to improving the conditions of the working class. Once more, the national elections in 2009 were fuelled by hope and expectations for change.

At the same time, the leadership change within the ANC created a tense political atmosphere. The animosity and in-fighting within the ranks of the ANC shaped the political climate, producing uncertainty amongst voters. The uncertainty was mainly around leadership change and the manner in which it was being put into effect. The future of the ANC or the direction it was taking was, therefore, a cause for concern among South Africans.

What was also significant about the political context was the 'split' within the ANC and the departure of some influential ANC figures such as Mbhazima Shilowa and Mosiuoa Lekota who founded a party named the Congress of the People (COPE). The political tensions resulting from the divisions within the ruling political party tested the extent to which the democracy had matured.

It was in this context that the fourth COSATU Workers' Survey was undertaken in 2008. The political upheavals undoubtedly impacted on the research process, and on the research participants' attitudes towards the research and the questions being asked of them. In many workplaces visited researchers observed signs of fear and uncertainty among research participants, and several instances of workers being extremely uncomfortable to talk about their political preferences were noted. The outcomes of the 2008 survey should be evaluated against this background.

Reflections on the research process

For each leg of the study, a team of prominent labour scholars was drawn in. One of the major ingredients contributing to the success of this research has been the continuous participation of some of the team members. On the one hand, the permanence of some key team members has been important for the stability of the research project, and has also ensured that the survey retains its original purpose and objectives in the questions asked, the sample and the research strategy followed. Table 2.3 below shows the research team members between 1994 and 2008.

Table 2.3 *COSATU Workers' Survey researchers 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008*

1994	1998	2004	2008
Sakhela Buhlungu (Wits)	Sakhela Buhlungu (Wits)	Sakhela Buhlungu (project leader) (Wits)	Sakhela Buhlungu (project leader) (Wits, UJ & UP)
Janet Cherry (UPE)	Janet Cherry (UPE)	Janet Cherry (HSRC)	Wilson Akpan (UFH)
David Ginsberg (project leader) (Natal)	David Ginsberg (project leader) (Natal)	Hlengiwe Hlela (Wits)	Philip Hirschsohn (UWC)
Richard Haines (UPE)	Christine Psoulis (Wits)	Pauline Dibben (University of Sheffield)	Carol Christie (NMMU)
Gilton Klerck (Rhodes)	Johann Maree (UCT)	Freek Schiphorst (ISS, Netherlands)	Christine (Psoulis) Bischoff (Wits)
Johann Maree (UCT)	Roger Southall (Rhodes University)	Roger Southall (HSRC)	Stephen Ellis (Leiden & Free University of Amsterdam)
Roger Southall (Rhodes University)	Eddie Webster (Wits)	Eddie Webster (Wits)	Aisha Lorgat (UCT)
Eddie Webster (Wits)	Geoffrey Wood (Rhodes)	Geoffrey Wood (Middlesex University)	Eddie Webster (Wits)
Geoffrey Wood (Rhodes)		Malehoko Tshoamedi (Leiden)	Malehoko Tshoamedi (Wits, UJ and UNISA)
		Roger Tangri (University of Botswana)	Ikechukwu Umejiesi (UFH)
			Themba Masondo (Wits)
			Yusuf Small (UWC)
			Nomkhosi Xulu (UKZN)

Note: Also known as the 'Taking Democracy Seriously' survey

On the other hand, the inclusion of new team members, particularly young and upcoming scholars, provided new perspectives and diversity that improved and strengthened the research process. The new team members added to the richness of the research questions posed in the survey and the strategies used in collecting and analysing data. It should be noted that, in 2008, in addition to the team members listed in the table, other scholars were brought in to contribute chapters to this volume, based on their own research projects.

Managing a research team across the provinces

As already indicated above, the survey was conducted in five provinces. The survey was, therefore, a collaborative effort, involving a team of university-based researchers and postgraduate students at eight South African universities.

Professor Stephen Ellis, a Netherlands-based partner, who was at Leiden University at the time and is now at the Free University of Amsterdam, also joined the team. The Society, Work and Development Institute (formerly the Sociology of Work Unit Programme) at the University of the Witwatersrand undertook the coordination of the fieldwork and data analysis.

An important element of the project has been its capacity-building dimension, in the form of the training of senior students and young researchers. Sociology students at Masters and Doctoral levels have been recruited into the project during each leg of the study. Additionally, third-year undergraduate students from the participating institutions were recruited and trained to conduct the fieldwork, including the administration of the questionnaire. These students were trained in provincial workshops and were closely supervised by the senior members of the project team.

Having a research team that spread across several provinces was extremely useful and cost effective. Similarly, interviews were relatively easy to organise, as all the researchers and fieldworkers were locally based. Less travelling was required, and the researchers and fieldworkers were familiar with local dynamics and union politics, particularly the challenge of gaining access to different workplaces.

Clear communication on the research strategy and its implementation was critical throughout the research process. This required several meetings and workshops between the host university (the University of the Witwatersrand) and the four other collaborating institutions (University of the Western Cape, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of Fort Hare and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University). Further workshops and training were conducted with the students who were recruited for fieldwork. It was essential to follow the same research design as that of the previous surveys. The execution of a statistical enquiry necessitates proper preparation of the technical and organisational plans, plus an overarching system of supervision by senior researchers and the central coordinating office to check quality and ensure the correct implementation of the research strategy (Gil & Omaboe 1998: 45).

However, the management of the study across the five provinces also had its challenges. For example, in one of the provinces there was a misunderstanding about the number of workers required in each workplace. The requirement was that, in each workplace, ten interviews had to be conducted, with eight

ordinary workers and two shop stewards (emphasis was also made on the representation of women among the workers selected for the interviews). In the province in question this instruction was not clearly understood and, therefore, interviews were not done according to the set guidelines. The central project office had to discard the completed questionnaires and the interviews had to be done all over again. This had financial implications for the budget allocated for fieldwork in the region and also impacted on the time designated for finalising data collection.

The challenges of negotiating access: unions and management responses

In conducting this survey over a period of 15 years, the changes in the political context and impact on the attitudes of unions and workers towards our research was profound. Reflecting on our earlier survey, Buhlungu (2006: 5) noted that time-series studies in the area of labour studies can run into politically sensitive difficulties, because of the different expectations of research subjects at various levels of the organisational structure.

Our experience of negotiating access to the research sites highlighted the power dynamics of the research process and the hierarchies in the power structures. The unions and management had the power and control over the research sites, with management often invoking its control over the physical premises, while branch and local union officials often sought to control access to their members within workplaces. As researchers, we had to negotiate at different levels with our gatekeepers, and these included COSATU as the federation, the relevant affiliates' shop stewards in the various workplaces and management at the workplaces concerned.

The first step in the negotiation process in the 2008 survey was to contact COSATU as the federation, informing them about our study and its research objectives. This was a relatively smooth process, as we had conducted the survey three times in the past 15 years. The general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, wrote an endorsement letter expressing his support for the study and encouraging all affiliated unions to allow or facilitate access for the researchers to the workplaces and their membership.

This first part of the process was then followed by negotiating with affiliated unions in each region. In most instances, the affiliates granted access and

gave researchers the go-ahead to contact union members at their different workplaces. However, we still had to contact management and the worker leaders at each workplace, and this often presented some difficulties. In a few instances, management simply refused access, without giving specific reasons, while in other instances, management had fears that the research would 'stir things up' amongst the workers. These fears stemmed mainly from the negative industrial relations climate of the company and the fact that the purpose of the study was political in nature. In such cases, we had to abandon attempts to access those workplaces and negotiate for access elsewhere. Similar experiences have also been reported in other studies on workplaces (see Von Holdt 2003). Reflecting on his experiences during research with the metalworkers at Highveld Steel, Von Holdt notes, 'management refused to co-operate with this study, referring to the volatile racial tensions in the company and their anxiety about losing control of confidential information' (2003: 12).

Where management granted access, we still had to negotiate with worker leaders and we had several challenges in this regard. Firstly, communication between COSATU as the federation, the affiliated unions and the worker leaders at specific workplaces, came up as an issue during our research. Some worker leaders expressed their surprise and suspicion that COSATU or their affiliated union did not communicate directly with them about our research project. In an attempt to negotiate the setting up of interviews with a worker leader in one workplace, one researcher was questioned on the procedures that she followed in negotiating access. After explaining the process and indicating that the union had granted access verbally, she was still refused access. The shop steward concerned emphasised the importance of following 'protocol' in union structures and of ensuring that he had a mandate from the union for every decision he makes in the workplace. Verbal communication was not sufficient, nor was the official endorsement letter from COSATU. According to the shop steward, his position in the workplace as a union leader may be jeopardised if he is perceived as taking decisions not approved by the national office of his union.

This example raises important questions about the notion of worker control in the workplace and the authority structures within the unions. In his recently published book, *A Paradox of Victory*, Buhlungu (2010: 118) highlights the changes that have occurred in the union movement, specifically

the hierarchical relations amongst union leaders and between the union leadership and membership. He notes such hierarchical relations often subject junior union leaders to discipline by senior union leadership.

Another difficulty that we faced when negotiating access to the workplaces related to the length of our interviews and the number of workers we required from each workplace. The length of our interview was a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of an hour, and for consistency we required ten workers at each workplace to be interviewed during working hours. In several instances, access was denied due to these requirements.

Likewise, some unions within the manufacturing sector, in particular, were concerned about production times, meeting their targets and therefore bonuses. When we contacted one of the shop stewards referred to us by one of the union affiliates, he explained the difficulties the workers had with granting us access. Because workers' remuneration is performance-based, their bonuses were tied to production targets, and so if ten workers were to go for interviews, it meant losing ten working hours. Furthermore, it did not make any difference whether we interviewed two or three workers at a time; they would still lose production time and this would have an impact on their bonuses. Thus, in some cases, access was denied by the union shopfloor representatives and not by management. This response has to be assessed in the context of the global changes in the workplace with regards to the production process.

The political climate at the time of the survey also posed complications for our survey. The conflict within the ANC and the breakaway of some of its members to form COPE created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion across the Tripartite Alliance structures and, particularly, COSATU and its affiliates. This observation was particularly acute when we contacted one affiliate, which demanded to see the questionnaire before they would grant us access to their membership. The affiliate was concerned about the kind of questions we wanted to ask their members and the extent to which those questions could confuse or influence their members negatively against the ANC. There were fears that we may have been representing or advocating particular political views. We sent through our questionnaire, together with the endorsement letter from COSATU, and we were subsequently granted permission to contact the union shop steward.

The experience of conducting interviews

The interviews were mostly conducted in the second half of 2008. The political context was highly charged, as the conflict within the ANC had intensified. Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima Shilowa left the party in November 2008 to form their own political party, COPE, later in December 2008. More significantly for COSATU, the president of the SADTU, who had also served as COSATU president until he was dismissed by the federation because of his support for Mbeki, also joined COPE. As noted above, the period during which we conducted the interviews with COSATU members was characterised by political tensions, confusion and suspicion, and this spilled over into our research and its purposes. Questions about our own political association or links were often raised when negotiating access and even when we arrived at some of the workplaces. Our location within the university, as opposed to being an independent organisation, was advantageous in proclaiming our independence from any political association.

Our research was indeed political in that the questionnaire included questions about workers' political attitudes and which political party they were likely to support in the 2009 national elections. As researchers, we were curious to know how the current political developments were likely to influence the voting patterns in the 2009 elections.

One of the discussions we had in the research team was the significance of including questions around the split and the new political party in the questionnaire. Our main concern was whether, given the political tensions, this might lead to the research being regarded as promoting a particular political agenda, thereby compromising its independent status. After some consideration of these issues, an additional question was added to the interview schedule to address the issue of the split in the ANC.

The responses of research participants to the political questions in the survey varied. In some instances, workers would want to know why we were asking which party they would be voting for in the upcoming elections, while others refused to answer this question. However, it was also noted that, in some circumstances, our fieldworkers were very uncomfortable about asking these questions, particularly in workplaces where workers seemed suspicious of the fieldworkers' political association.

In many of the provinces and across all the sectors, the researchers noted how their relationship with the research respondents was fraught with tension. They felt that, as researchers, what they wanted to achieve in the study was subjected to intense scrutiny by the respondents. This left many of the researchers exhausted after the extra effort they had to apply to conclude the research.

COSATU membership trends and changes

The slow-down in the economy, the decline in employment levels, and the growth of the informal sector have significant implications for the stability of the union movement in South Africa. The total number employed in South Africa is estimated at 13 118 000 (StatsSA 2011) and of this total, an estimated one fifth (20 per cent) of workers are unionised. Of this total, COSATU membership currently stands at 2 070 739. This estimate demonstrates COSATU's strength and continued importance in South African politics.

In its Secretariat Report to the 5th COSATU Central Committee gathering in June 2011, the federation estimated its membership growth at 3.9 per cent (77 352 new members). The report argues that this represents a decline compared to the previous four years (2004–2008), where membership growth was estimated at 333 440. Between January 2009 and May 2010, COSATU affiliates lost a total of 161 172 members (COSATU 2011: 207). Consistent with the reported decline in the manufacturing and trade sectors, the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU) and the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) reported the biggest losses in membership, mostly due to retrenchments. Table 2.4 on the next page shows membership trends in the federation between 2007 and 2011.³

It is worth noting that the report states that some of the membership losses stem from resignations due to dissatisfaction with the union service and collective bargaining processes. This observation is consistent with Mosoetsa's (2011) research findings, where retrenched workers blamed unions for not fighting hard enough to prevent retrenchments and their failure to negotiate satisfactory retrenchment packages.

However, a strategic decision has been taken by COSATU to merge certain affiliates and create 'super unions'. The following unions have already been

identified for the merger: National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (CEPPWAWU); South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU), Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) and South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU); Communication Workers' Union (CWU) and South African Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU) (COSATU 2011). The report also notes the problems with the merger between Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU) and (Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) (now CEPPWAWU). Tensions and infighting within the union has resulted in the formation of two splinter unions (COSATU 2011: 230).

Table 2.4 *COSATU affiliate membership figures 2007–2011*

Affiliate	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CEPPWAWU	63 827	62 000	64 182	64 182	64 100
CWU	24 218	27 320	29 699	29 699	29 699
CWUSA	680	1 090	370	370	370
DENOSA	64 010	65 526	68 450	68 450	73 453
FAWU	116 000	111 029	118 974	118 974	127 368
NEHAWU	214 850	212 964	230 445	240 016	251 018
NUM	274 520	270 536	272 000	272 000	272 002
NUMSA	216 808	216 652	236 909	236 909	262 976
PAWUSA	15 876	15 970	16 169	16 169	14 281
POPCRU	105 090	102 966	125 732	135 436	140 806
SACCAWU	128 520	107 553	115 488	115 488	115 488
SACTWU	–	102 000	85 000	85 000	85 000
SADNU	9 338	9 244	9 093	8 804	8 655
SADTU	230 574	227 437	236 843	236 843	246 947
SAFPU	557	557	472	472	592
SAMA	16 358	5 525	7 246	7 929	7 790
SAMWU	118 973	118 973	135 679	135 679	135 679
SASAWU	8 182	8 182	7 840	7 287	7 520
SASBO	64 416	65 237	66 093	66 880	67 457
SASFU	6 300	6 304	6 781	6 781	7 284
Total	1 679 097	1 737 065	1 833 465	1 853 368	1 918 485

The composition of COSATU's membership

Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of COSATU's membership is below the age of 30 years (COSATU 2011). Furthermore, the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey demonstrates that, amongst the workplaces covered, over a third (38 per cent) of COSATU union members are below the age of 36 (see Table 2.5). These figures are indicative of labour market trends, where the majority of the unemployed in South Africa are young and fresh from secondary schools, without the technical skills and requisite qualifications required for absorption into the labour market. There is, thus, an under-representation of young people both in the labour market and amongst union membership. COSATU has acknowledged this by exploring the employment challenges faced by South African youth, and the federation has made recommendations to review the 'last in, last out' principle that is applied during retrenchments at various workplaces (COSATU 2011).

Table 2.5 Age of COSATU members between 1994 and 2008

Age	1994		1998		2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18–25	19	3	36	6	37	6	33	5.2
26–35	244	38	233	37	198	30	206	32.7
36–45	219	34	226	35	259	40	229	36.3
46–55	135	21	123	19	130	20	129	20.5
56–65	26	4	21	3	29	4	32	5.1
No answer	0	0	0	0	2	0.3	1	0.1
Total	643	100	639	100	655	100	630	100

Year in which respondents joined the union

In the last 15 years, COSATU membership has undergone changes: more than half (56 per cent) of the respondents in the 2008 survey reported that they joined the union in the post-apartheid period. According to Buhlungu (2006) this change suggests a generational shift, with profound implications for the social composition of COSATU membership. Table 2.6 shows the year in which respondents joined unions.

Table 2.6 *Year in which respondents joined the unions*

Year	Respondents (%)
1970–1980	3.6
1981–1985	7.8
1986–1990	10.9
1991–1995	18.4
1996–2000	18.8
2001–2005	19.8
2006–2008	17.5

Gender of COSATU members

The representation of women in COSATU is currently estimated at 48 per cent, a massive increase from Baskin's (1991) estimate of 36 per cent in the early 1990s. The growth in public and service sector employment has resulted in female-dominated employment, changing the composition of the workforce and also increasing women membership in COSATU-affiliated unions (Tshoaedi 2008).

In conducting the interviews with COSATU workers in the 2008 study, attempts were made to take account of this and to insist on the representation of women among the workers called in to be interviewed by fieldworkers. In spite of these attempts, the representation of women respondents in this survey has been more or less consistent across the surveys. While in 1994 women represented 33 per cent of respondents, in 2008 they were about 37 per cent (see Table 2.7). This reflects the limitations that the researchers faced in their attempts to gather a more representative sample. In all the workplaces visited, the shop stewards determined the composition of workers called in for the interviews. The researchers had no direct contact with or access to the workers, and, therefore, no control over which workers were called forward for the interviews.

Table 2.7 *Gender distribution of COSATU members*

Gender	1994		1998		2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women	212	33	191	30	225	34	232	37.1
Men	431	67	448	70	430	66	393	62.9
No answer	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	0.7
Total	643	100	639	100	655	100	630	100

Highest formal educational qualification of COSATU members

The educational levels of COSATU members have improved tremendously in the last 15 years. The democratisation of the country has, indeed, opened up opportunities for education and skills upgrading for many people of working age. The introduction of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) has allowed many workers – employed and unemployed – options to further their occupational skills. This can be done via learnerships or skills development programmes.

Table 2.8 *Highest formal educational levels of COSATU members*

Educational level	1994		1998		2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No formal education	13	2	16	3	3	1	2	0.3
Std 2/Grade 4 or lower	26	4	22	3	14	2	4	0.6
Stds 3-5/ Grades 5-7	97	15	66	10	41	6	18	2.9
Std 6-8/ Grades 8-10	283	44	246	39	181	28	97	15.5
Std 9-10/ Grades 11-12	199	31	238	37	247	38	275	43.9
Technical diploma	18	3	31	5	83	13	111	17.7
University Degree	0	0	14	2	45	7	79	12.6
Other post-school qualification	7	1	6	1	41	6	41	6.5
No answer	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	0.4
Total	643	100	639	100	655	100	630	100

Note: Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

In 1994 about 65 per cent of respondents had achieved education levels below or up to Grade 10. However, as shown in Table 2.8, in recent years this trend has dramatically overturned, with 44 per cent of COSATU members having

educational levels of up to matric. There has also been a significant increase in the number of those with post-matric education, with 17.7 per cent of workers possessing technical college diplomas. A significant change has also been observed in the dramatic increase of those with university degrees. While in 1994 there were no workers with university qualifications, in 2004 there were about 7 per cent, increasing to 12.6 per cent in 2008.

The significant improvements in educational levels of COSATU members could possibly be attributed to the growing membership and presence of public sector unions like SADTU and DENOSA and white-collar unions like SASBO, which represent mainly the professional sectors. However, credit also needs to be given to COSATU unions, which have succeeded in organising white-collar workers such as university academics, airline pilots, public sector managers and skilled workers. Another factor in the improved educational qualifications of workers is the increasing demand by employers for post-matric educational qualifications (such as technical diplomas) for new recruits into the workplace (Buhlungu 2006).

Occupational category

Consistent with the educational improvements of COSATU members, the survey results continue to provide evidence for the decline of unskilled workers amongst COSATU membership. While in 1994 unskilled and semi-skilled workers were both 30 per cent, in 2008 their representation has significantly declined. The results also reflect the impact that successful public sector unionisation has had on the composition of COSATU's membership. COSATU's public sector membership has been estimated to constitute a third of the total membership (Buhlungu 2006: 8). The growth in public sector unions within COSATU has also had an impact on the skills and occupational categories of union members. Table 2.9 shows the occupational categories of COSATU members.

COSATU membership's occupational category is significant, in that it reflects members' upward mobility and social status in the workplace. However, it also highlights the challenges that the labour movement is facing in successfully representing groups that continue to be marginalised in post-apartheid South Africa. These include the domestic and farm workers as well as those workers in precarious forms of employment.

Table 2.9 Occupational category as defined by companies

Occupational category	1994		1998		2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Unskilled	190	30	118	19	81	12.3	38	6.1
Semi-skilled	193	30	223	35	169	26	101	16.2
Skilled	135	21	192	30	275	42	240	38.5
Supervisory	26	4	31	5	61	9.3	47	7.5
Clerical	64	10	48	7.5	55	8.3	52	8.3
Professional	–	–	–	–	–	–	127	20.4
Other	32	5	21	3.2	13	1.9	17	2.7
Don't know	3	0.4	6	0.9	1	0.1	8	1.2
Total	643	100	639	100	655	100	630	100

Security of tenure

One of the most significant findings of the survey concerns the security (or insecurity) of tenure of COSATU members. Table 2.10 below shows that the bulk of COSATU's membership (87.7 per cent) is predominantly employed on a permanent, full-time basis, and if one adds to this figure those in permanent, part-time positions (4.8 per cent), the figure totals to 92.5 per cent. These findings are consistent with the membership survey of NUM members carried out by the Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP) in 2010, which showed that 93 per cent of NUM members were in permanent employment (Bezuidenhout, Bischoff & Masondo 2010).

Table 2.10 Security of tenure of COSATU members

Nature of contract	Respondents			
	2004		2008	
	N	%	N	%
Fixed term contract (temporary) part time	11	1.8	10	1.52
Fixed term contract (temporary) full time	35	5.6	30	4.58
Permanent contract, part time	30	4.8	11	1.67
Permanent contract, full time	544	87.7	604	92.21

Not only do the figures suggest that COSATU members are privileged – relative to the growing army of the unemployed, workers in precarious types of employment and workers employed in the informal sector – it also suggests that the federation continues to fail to make headway in organising beyond the diminishing core workforce in full-time permanent jobs (Buhlungu 2006: 9).

Conclusion

Longitudinal studies, as already indicated, are often conducted with the objective of assessing trends and changes in a specific phenomenon. Such research methods are powerful in measuring various processes of social change (Ruspini 1999: 219). The COSATU Workers' Survey has tracked workers' perceptions and attitudes towards democracy in South Africa since 1994. The experience of conducting the longitudinal survey shows that, in measuring and analysing workers' attitudes and perceptions of democracy, we need to be cognisant of the multiple processes that influence how respondents react to our research and, consequently, the research questions posed. The local and global economic and political contexts are significant in understanding the changes observed within our study. The patterns of change or differences observed between the various surveys conducted by our research team need to be understood within the various contexts in which these studies were conducted.

Notes

- 1 Most notably, NEHAWU, POPCRU, SAMWU and SADTU are recorded by COSATU as affiliates with the highest growth in membership between 2006 and 2010 (COSATU 2011: 90), which makes the presence of these public service unions increasingly significant within the labour federation.
- 2 These official figures for the unemployed exclude those who have 'not taken active steps' or 'have given up seeking work' (StatsSA 2010).
- 3 However, caution needs to be taken regarding these membership figures. Reporting by some affiliates is not always accurate, because some affiliates do not reflect their actual membership figures, as this could impact on their affiliates fees (see COSATU Secretariat Report 2011: 196).

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3 *COSATU, oligarchy and the consolidation of democracy in an African context*

Johann Maree

Many of the trade unions that constitute the backbone of present-day COSATU placed a strong emphasis on democratic workplace organisation, right from the time they were founded during the early 1970s. They established a strong tradition of democracy in the unions, which entailed worker participation at the level of the shopfloor, with representative and accountable leadership at higher levels (Maree 1982 and 1986).

But, from the outset, the shadow of oligarchy loomed over the unions. By 'oligarchy' is meant the domination of an organisation by a few leaders. Robert Michels, a German sociologist born in 1876, is famous for his 'iron law of oligarchy', a theory that all political parties and trade unions eventually become oligarchic. What is more, Michels maintained that, even when unions retain the trappings of democracy, they still become oligarchic as they grow large and become complex organisations. He wrote:

Nominally, and according to the letter of the rules, all the acts of the leaders are subject to the ever vigilant criticism of the rank and file. In theory the leader is merely an employee bound by the instructions he receives ... But in actual fact, as the organisation increases in size, this control becomes purely fictitious. The members have to give up the idea of themselves conducting or even supervising the whole administration, and are compelled to hand these tasks over to trustworthy persons specially nominated for the purpose, to salaried officials. The rank and file must content themselves with summary reports, and with the appointment of occasional special committees of inquiry ... It is obvious that democratic control thus undergoes a progressive diminution, and

is ultimately reduced to an infinitesimal minimum. (Michels 1962: 71–72)

It has been argued that the independent trade unions that emerged during the 1970s turned Michels' argument on its head. The unions started off as oligarchies dominated by intellectual leaders with university education, but these leaders deliberately set about building democratic structures and practices in the unions with the aim of establishing democratic worker control of the unions. Extensive research established that a high level of democratic worker participation had in fact been established at shopfloor level and that representative leaders were held accountable to the workers at higher levels of the unions' organisation. (Maree 1982, 1986 and 1996). Even where this was not the case, the ethic was established that unions ought to be democratic and that workers should control officials (Maree 1996).

However, at that time the unions were relatively small, with only a few thousand members. Since then, the unions have grown into mega unions: nine of the COSATU-affiliated unions have more than a hundred thousand members each, while COSATU as a whole represents two million workers.

This chapter examines whether COSATU has maintained its shopfloor democracy and whether it practises representative democracy or oligarchy at the national level. Research has shown that, as unions grow larger, they can no longer practise direct participatory democracy, but have to switch to representative democracy. This entails electing or appointing leaders who represent members' wishes and are held accountable to them by canvassing their views at meetings and reporting back to them (Maree 1982).

The research for this chapter is based on a survey of over 600 COSATU members that was conducted late in 2008 in five of South Africa's nine provinces. The findings are that there is still shopfloor democracy, but that oligarchy exists at the national level. The chapter thereupon explores what type of oligarchy exists: is it free and open, where alternative views to the dominant Marxist discourse are presented and where existing leaders can be challenged, or is it repressive and closed, where entrenched leaders impose their views on members?

Another feature of the black unions that emerged during the 1970s was that they were independent. At first, being 'independent' referred to being independent of the state, employers and parallel white unions that existed. However, as

political resistance grew during the 1980s, the unions started referring to their independence from political and liberation movements. The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was the main union federation that articulated its political independence and committed itself to the building of a working-class movement separate and distinct from the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP). Joe Foster, general secretary of FOSATU, expressed the federation's intentions at its 1982 Congress. After clarifying that a working-class movement consists of different organisations – trade unions, cooperatives, political parties and newspapers – he went on to say:

We believe that FOSATU must set itself the task of giving leadership and direction to the building of a working class movement ... FOSATU's task will be to build the effective organisational base for workers to play a major political role as workers. Our task will be to create an identity, confidence and political presence for worker organisation. (Foster 1982: 78)

Before this could happen, events overtook FOSATU. A political reconciliation and realignment took place between the independent trade union movement and the Congress movement. The result was the birth of a new trade union federation, the Congress of Trade Unions of South Africa, COSATU, in 1985. COSATU brought together the independent and pro-ANC unions into a much larger federation that aligned itself with the political goals of the Congress movement. After the ANC and SACP were unbanned in 1990, COSATU entered into a Tripartite Alliance with them.

Consequently, this chapter explores a second major question. It explores whether, by being in the Alliance, COSATU has sacrificed its independence and whether its participation in the Alliance facilitates or inhibits the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. However, the chapter asks these questions within the broader context of Africa and first explores the extent of democracy in Africa. It identifies a major factor that inhibits the consolidation of democracy in Africa, namely the dominance of a single political party in many African states. In the light thereof, the consequences of COSATU's alliance with the ruling party and the SACP for the consolidation of democracy are explored. (This discussion of COSATU and the Alliance addresses a different set of issues from those examined in Chapter 12 in this volume).

Democracy at the workplace, oligarchy at the top¹

Workplace democracy in COSATU-affiliated unions has shown remarkable tenacity over the years. The 2008 COSATU Workers' survey confirmed this once again. In the survey, 98 per cent of workers surveyed had shop stewards in their workplaces and 92 per cent of the shop stewards had been elected by workers. Eighty-two per cent of shop steward elections took place at least once every three years. Elections took place through secret ballot in half of the cases and by a show of hands in the other half.

COSATU members also expected their shop stewards to be representative and accountable to them. Seventy-six per cent expected elected shop stewards to do only what the members told them to do or act within a broad mandate. Only one-fifth felt that shop stewards could represent workers' interests as they saw fit. Furthermore, 54 per cent of members maintained that shop stewards had to consult them every time they acted on behalf of workers, while another 40 per cent thought that shop stewards had to consult them from time to time on important issues.

If shop stewards did not do the bidding of workers, then they could be fired by workers: this was another view the COSATU members held quite firmly. No less than 94 per cent agreed that workers had a right to remove shop stewards if they did not do what the workers wanted. Over a third (35 per cent) of members participating in the survey recalled that shop stewards had been removed by workers. In 62 per cent of the cases the reason given was because the shop stewards were not doing their job properly, while in 24 per cent of the cases it was because the shop stewards were too close to management. In only 5 per cent of the cases were shop stewards removed because they held different political views.

Union members still attended union meetings fairly regularly, according to the survey. Seventy per cent of workers said they attended union meetings at least once a month, while another 11 per cent attended meetings at least once a year. These figures have remained remarkably constant since 1994, when 76 per cent of members said they attended union meetings at least once a month. Furthermore, the proportion of workers who never attended union meetings had declined from 14 per cent in 1994 to 8 per cent in 2008. Thus the proportion of workers attending union meetings had increased between 1994 and 2008.

In summary, union democracy at the level of the workplace has remained remarkably robust in COSATU unions since the advent of political democracy in South Africa in 1994. Workers elected shop stewards whom they held highly accountable and they attended union meetings fairly regularly.

However, these democratic practices are not duplicated in COSATU at the national level. Leaders at national level are not being held accountable, nor do workers even know what their national representatives are doing on their behalf. National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) provides a good case study. NEDLAC is a statutory quadripartite body that was created by an Act of Parliament in 1994. The state, business, organised labour and the community all have representation on it, thereby promoting social partnership. It has given organised labour a powerful voice in shaping labour legislation as well as other socio-economic policies.² As the largest trade union federation, COSATU has played a leading role in NEDLAC and has profoundly influenced the labour laws that were passed in Parliament between 1995 and 1998.³

In spite of that, the 2008 survey found that less than a third of COSATU members knew what NEDLAC was. When asked to briefly describe NEDLAC, slightly less than half of those who said they knew what it was could describe it. Hence only one in seven (16 per cent) of COSATU members surveyed in 2008 actually knew what NEDLAC was. In 1998, only 9 per cent of workers knew what it was, while in 2004, 22 per cent said they knew what NEDLAC was.⁴ However, slightly more than half could describe it, with the result that – in 2004 – only about 12 per cent actually knew what NEDLAC was. What is more, 87 per cent of COSATU members surveyed in 2008 had never been at a meeting where there had been a report-back on NEDLAC. This figure has steadily increased from 70 per cent in 1998. Therefore, increasingly, workers are not being consulted or even informed about the issues and decisions taken on their behalf by their national leaders at NEDLAC. The leaders at national level were, therefore, neither representative of, nor accountable to, union members. There has, thus, been a deepening of the rupture between rank-and-file COSATU members and their national leaders. This rupture was already noted in the 1994 survey, when Ginsburg and Webster recorded that, ‘There are growing signs of a “democratic rupture” between trade union leaders drawn into corporatist type tripartite structures, and rank and file trade union members’ (Ginsburg et al 1995: 9; see also 63–78)

At the national level COSATU has, therefore, become an oligarchy, an organisation whose leaders act without a mandate from the workers and are not accountable to them. This is not a problem unique to COSATU. It is a phenomenon that faces trade unions the world over as they grow large, with membership in the hundreds of thousands. What has made COSATU unique is that it has retained its democratic practices at workplace level, while being oligarchic at national level.

Buhlungu (2001: vi) has tried to resolve this organisational bifurcation by describing it as a 'dilemma of leadership', the dilemma being 'a tension between two competing imperatives in a trade union, namely, the need to be democratic on the one hand, and the desire to achieve administrative efficiency on the other'. But Buhlungu has not resolved the tension between democracy and oligarchy in trade unions. He has rather provided a further convincing reason why oligarchy is practised in large trade unions: namely, the need for efficiency. One way to deal with this is to accept the hard reality of oligarchy in large trade unions and to establish what type of oligarchy is being practised in them: restrictive and closed or free and open. Before subjecting COSATU to this test, it is valuable to consider an important debate about trade union democracy that waged in Britain and America during the third quarter of the twentieth century, a period when these unions were at their peak. A similar debate has started taking place in South Africa and has important implications for democracy in COSATU and its affiliated unions.

Alternative theory of trade union democracy: freedom to oppose and challenge

An important criterion of trade union democracy is the test of whether union leadership allows or tolerates opposing groups within the union that can actually challenge the leadership. If leadership does so, the union is deemed to be democratic. This approach was adopted by the International Typographical Union, 'the only American trade union in which organised parties regularly oppose each other for election to the chief union posts and in which a two-party system has been institutionalised' (Lipset et al 1972: 155). Lipset, Trow and Coleman, who pioneered this study in 1956, found that the parties had often defeated each other in elections. This led them to the conclusion that 'democracy is strengthened when members are not only related to the larger

organisation but are also affiliated with or loyal to subgroups within the organisation' (Lipset et al 1972: 169). Put very succinctly, they define union democracy as 'the institutionalisation of opposition' (Lipset et al cited in Martin 1972: 190). Such a definition of union democracy is unduly restrictive, as the International Typographical Union is the only union that has an entrenched two-party system.

In contrast to Lipset et al, Edelstein and Warner (1979: 62) stress the extent to which there is competition in the election of top officers in unions as an important criterion of trade union democracy. They conducted a wide-ranging study of union democracy amongst 31 British and 51 American unions. Their finding was summarised by Clegg as follows:

Democracy is likely to exist in any union where there is serious competition for the top posts. It does not matter whether the opposition succeeds in ousting the administration or not, so long as the administration believes that there is a risk that they might, and are therefore under pressure to revise unpopular policies. (Clegg 1979: 208)

Clegg, however, points out that such a test of democracy in the British unions was of limited value, since there were unions that elected officials for life, while others appointed all their full-time officials. He suggests a 'wider and less precise test of the contribution of opposition to union democracy' as, 'strong evidence that opposition groups are able to push union administrations into policies or actions which they would not otherwise have favoured' (Clegg 1979: 209).

A more generalised criterion of union democracy, based on the role of opposition within the union, was provided by Martin who suggested that:

Union democracy exists when union executives are unable to prevent opposition factions distributing propaganda and mobilising electoral support. It does not require that opposition should be institutionalised, nor that it should be democratic ... merely that it should survive as a recognised form of political activity. (Martin 1972: 191)

Martin's criterion stipulates a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure full democracy in a union. In even quite undemocratic unions it would be

well-nigh impossible to prevent opposition from distributing propaganda and mobilising electoral support.⁵

Such definitions of democracy in unions were unsuitable for the independent unions in South Africa during the 1970s. At that time, the unions were only emerging and very much smaller than the established British and American unions from which these concepts of democracy were derived. Whereas, in 1979, the total signed-up membership of all the independent unions in South Africa was about 46 000, with an average union size of 2 300, no less than 39 unions in Britain had at least 50 000 members each, while eleven had more than a quarter of a million members each (Clegg 1979). COSATU-affiliated unions are now more or less the same size as many of the British unions were in the 1970s. The theories of union democracy put forward by these theorists are, therefore, applicable to contemporary COSATU unions. The next section explores how these theories of trade union democracy apply to COSATU.

Freedom to oppose and COSATU's dominant discourse

In a recent examination of impediments to a more vibrant democracy in COSATU, Forrest (2007) found that it was very difficult to vote leaders out of office after they had been elected into positions of power. This was because 'COSATU is structured in a democratic centralist manner where majority decisions are binding'. Furthermore, 'in COSATU's minutes the minority position, however strong, is never recorded and so cannot be revisited' (Forrest 2007: 22–23). Forrest suggests that COSATU should think of introducing an alternative model for electing leaders, such as establishing different platforms on which candidates could stand. She argues that, 'The acceptance of differing platforms could prevent the current situation where leadership has access to the organisational apparatus to promote their candidacy whilst the opposition is left to campaign in secret' (Forrest 2007: 23).

In COSATU, the leadership has imposed a hegemonic Marxist discourse on its members. For instance, in the Political Report to the 10th COSATU National Congress in 2009 the delegates are encouraged to sharpen their 'theoretical tools and practice' (COSATU 2009a: 15). What the sharpening of tools consists of is a demand to 'build Marxism as opposed to simply using Marxism'. The distinction between them is that using Marxism as a tool of analysis falls short of 'calling for socialist transformation', whereas building

Marxism means, 'using Marxism as a tool of scientific enquiry to understand the nature of capitalism; develop[ing] a theory of transition for capitalism; and developing a vision of a post socialist society' (COSATU 2009a: 16).

The Political Report also refers to the SACP as 'the vanguard of the South African working class' (COSATU 2009a: 5). The COSATU 2009 Congress Declaration took up the call in the Political Report and affirmed that, 'We further commit to build[ing] Marxism-Leninism as a tool of scientific inquiry to search for answers in the contemporary world' (COSATU 2009b: 3).

COSATU's ceding of the vanguard role of the working class to the SACP does not stem from the fact that the SACP enjoys majority support of the South African working class. Even within the ranks of COSATU, less than a quarter of its members belong to the SACP and only 3.5 per cent want to be represented by the SACP in Parliament (see Tables 3.1 and 3.3). Instead, the vanguard role is attributed to the SACP on the basis of ideology drawn from Marxist-Leninist theory.

The hegemony of Marxism in the theoretical and political discourse of COSATU is related to the fact that the leadership within COSATU is dominated by members of the SACP (Bell 2009).⁶ A clear example of this is provided by the president of COSATU, Sidumo Dlamini. When asked to describe his politics in one word, he answered, 'Communism. I am a communist. My lifestyle and thinking relates to the thinking of Marx, Lenin' (Dlamini 2010: 31).

Furthermore, Hirschsohn (2011) has shown that the preponderance of SACP leadership extends down to the shopfloor. On average, amongst the unions surveyed, 40 per cent of the shop stewards belonged to the SACP, while in five of the unions, SACP members constituted 50 per cent or more of the shopfloor leadership.

There is a noticeable absence of alternative discourses within the ranks of COSATU. The hegemony of Marxism comes from the top of COSATU and is propelled down to the rank and file, the overwhelming majority of whom are not communists. In the 2008 survey, more than three quarters of COSATU workers surveyed said that they did not belong to the SACP, whereas only 17 per cent were signed up members and 7 per cent paid up members. This is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *Are you a member of the SACP?*

Answer	N	%
Yes, signed up	104	17
Yes, paid up	40	7
No	472	77

Porter, Angle and Allen (2003) have analysed the direction of influence within organisations and identified three directions: downwards, lateral and upwards. The direction of the influence is dependent on the distribution of power within organisations. If the power is concentrated in the hands of those at the top, the direction of influence is from the top down. Power in COSATU is, thus, located at the top and the ideological orientation of the leaders is being imposed on the lower ranks. As Masondo, who attended COSATU’s 10th National Congress, observed, ‘The congress proceedings clearly showed that COSATU is an oligarchic organisation in the sense that decision making on some issues is the responsibility of a select few leaders’ (Masondo 2010: 27).

It would, thus, be valid to conclude that the theoretical and political discourse within COSATU is not free and open. Instead, an exclusive Marxist discourse is being imposed on rank-and-file members from the top. At the same time, it cedes a dominant political position to the SACP as the vanguard of the working class. Although Marxist analysis has its strengths, particularly with regards to class analysis, alternative paradigms, theories and systems are not being presented by the leadership to the rank-and-file members. COSATU members are being intellectually impoverished by not being granted the opportunity to learn about alternative systems. The type of oligarchy that COSATU is imposing on its members is, thus, a restrictive and closed kind, rather than a free and open one.

COSATU and the Tripartite Alliance

A related question about choices is COSATU’s membership in the Tripartite Alliance. In this section, the question is raised whether COSATU is acting in the best interests of its members and the country by being in the Alliance and whether it would not be better for COSATU to be independent.

Before commencing with the analysis, it is important to note that the relationship between the Alliance partners – with COSATU and the SACP on

one side and the ANC on the other – tends to go through cycles. Shortly before, during and after elections the relationship is relatively harmonious. This is due to the fact that all three Alliance partners realise that they need each other to strengthen their own positions. Then, in the mid-period between elections, the relationship between them becomes discordant and tense because of ideological and political differences between them. The ANC as the 'broad church' has leaders and supporters with wide-ranging different ideologies. Its leadership includes capitalists, African nationalists and socialists, whereas the leadership of COSATU and the SACP adhere largely to Marxism and socialism. These ideological differences cause the Alliance partners to pursue objectives that are at loggerheads with each other. Consequently, arguments and disputes arise between the ANC and its Alliance partners. However, as elections draw near the Alliance partners become aware of their dependency on each other and once again form a united front (Southall & Webster 2010).

At the ANC's 52nd National Conference in Polokwane in December 2007, COSATU and the SACP had strengthened their position by infiltrating many of their members into ANC branches and so increasing their representation at the conference. As a result, they succeeded in getting resolutions passed that matched their goals. COSATU and the SACP supported Jacob Zuma as president of the ANC and, in addition, succeeded in getting other leaders elected that they supported (Southall & Webster 2010). This made both COSATU and the SACP more assertive than usual about the political and economic policies that should be implemented. This assertiveness continued up to the 2009 election and beyond, until the differences between the Alliance partners became too great and spilled over into public disputes and threats between them. It is important to bear in mind that this chapter focuses mainly on the post-Polokwane period, while COSATU and the SACP were in a very assertive position within the Alliance.

To return to the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey, it was found that no less than 92 per cent of members agreed or strongly agreed that workers will always need trade unions to protect them. In previous surveys, the proportion had been even higher, with an average of 95 per cent for the preceding three surveys. On the other hand, 60 per cent of workers surveyed in 2008 agreed or strongly agreed that workers cannot rely on political parties to protect their interests. In the preceding three surveys, 54 per cent, on average, were of the same opinion. Workers have, therefore, consistently and firmly expressed the

belief that trade unions are the best organisations to protect their interests. A majority of them also expressed scepticism about the capacity of political parties to protect their interests.

The faith of workers in trade unions and their scepticism about political parties is well-grounded in experiences the world over. Kraus has provided a cogent reason why trade unions are a steadfast force acting on behalf of workers in African countries. He maintains that unions play a crucial role to prevent the political elite from enriching only themselves and, by so doing, not making the immense resources of the state available to the benefit of the working poor and the unemployed. He states that:

When newly ensconced leaders can seize with impunity vast public resources in terms of salaries, offices, and contracts – as in democratic Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa – democracy becomes a mirage for the majority excluded from access ... The real significance of trade unions for democratic life in Africa is that they are virtually the only group representing the popular classes that has continuing organisational influence at the national level and poses challenging questions about rights of mass access to public resources. (Kraus 2007: 256)

This statement was corroborated by the general secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi, in an interview with *City Press* after President Zuma had delivered his State of the Nation Address at the opening of Parliament in 2010. Vavi said that there was a group in the ANC ‘who had amassed wealth in mysterious ways’, lived in expensive houses and threw lavish parties. This group, Vavi added, ‘thought that the struggle was about the accumulation of wealth instead of uplifting society and defeating poverty’.⁷

The British Marxist, Perry Anderson, arguing his belief that trade unions require political parties to create a socialist consciousness in workers, conceded that in Britain and, to some extent in Europe, trade unions had become the avant-garde in the struggle of the working class and eclipsed political parties in the drive for socialism. This, he argued, was because trade unions were rooted in the working class while political parties were not and could thus be assimilated into society. He concluded, ‘The result is that trade unions are less easily chloroformed and suppressed totally than political parties, because they arise spontaneously out of the groundwork of the economic system (Anderson 1977: 344).

In the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey, workers expressed a declining support for the African National Congress (ANC) compared to previous surveys. Whereas in the previous three surveys an average of 74 per cent of workers had indicated that they would vote for the ANC, in 2008 the proportion fell to 57 per cent (see Table 3.2). In the Western Cape a mere 20 per cent of COSATU members said they would vote for the ANC. ANC electoral support nationally had, thus, dropped from almost three quarters of COSATU members to not much more than half.

Table 3.2 *Which party are you going to vote for in the forthcoming national elections?*

	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
ANC	75	74	73	57
All opposition parties together	8	9	5	6
Do not intend to vote	2	3	5	6
Would not say	15	13	16	24
Other	1	1	1	7

These findings raise the question whether COSATU is representing the interests of its members by being in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP. The 2008 survey findings could be interpreted as 'yes', given that 62 per cent of the workers thought that being in the Alliance was the best way of safeguarding workers' interests in Parliament in the 2009 elections (see Table 3.3). But it is doubtful whether COSATU members have ever been given a choice in the matter and it should be noted that this figure has been declining steadily, from a high of 83 per cent in the 1994 election. Members' support for the Alliance seems to be mainly because of the presence of the ANC, because there is very little support amongst COSATU members that the SACP alone should represent worker interests in Parliament. Only 3.5 per cent of workers supported that option in the 1998, 2004 and 2008 surveys and only 2 per cent did so in 1994. On the other hand, the proportion of workers who thought that COSATU should not be aligned with any political party increased from 15 per cent in 1994 to 21 per cent in 2008 (Table 3.3).

Pulling the findings of this section together, it is clear that an overwhelming majority of workers surveyed (more than nine out of ten) believe that trade unions are the best organisations to protect workers' interests and that six out of ten are sceptical that workers can rely on trade unions to protect their

interests. An apparent paradox is that six out of ten believe that membership of the Tripartite Alliance with two political parties, the ANC and SACP, is the best way of workers' interests being served in Parliament, but support for this has steadily declined since 1994. There is very little support for the position that the SACP alone should represent workers in Parliament and a growing proportion of COSATU members who believe that COSATU should not be aligned with any political party. This would be consistent with workers' strong faith in trade unions as the best organisation to represent their interests.

Table 3.3 *Cosatu has entered into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the elections. What do you think of this arrangement?*

Option	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
It is the best way of serving workers' interests in Parliament	83.0	70.0	66.0	62.0
Worker interests in Parliament should be represented by the SACP alone	2.0	3.5	3.5	3.5
Cosatu should not be aligned with any political party	15.0	13.0	18.0	21.0
Another party could better serve worker interests (not asked in 1994)	n.a.	1.0	2.0	2.0
Workers should form their own political party (not asked in 1994)	n.a.	3.5	6.0	3.0
Do not know (not asked in 1994)	n.a.	9.0	5.0	9.0

Consolidation of democracy in an African context

Defining the consolidation of democracy

The final issue arising from the COSATU survey to be discussed in this chapter is the role that COSATU is playing in the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. It is important first to clarify what is meant by consolidation of democracy, as it is a different concept from democratisation and transition to democracy.⁸ Linz has provided a valuable definition of a consolidated democracy. It is:

One in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organised interests, forces or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that

no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. This does not mean that there are no minorities ready to challenge and question the legitimacy of the democratic process by non-democratic means. It means, however, that the major actors do not turn to them and that they remain politically isolated. To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the 'only game in town'. (Linz 1990: 158)

Linz and Stepan have added additional requirements for democracy to be consolidated. Fundamentally, they say, there must be a functioning state. In addition, 'five other interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions must also exist or be crafted for a democracy to be consolidated':

First, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Second, there must be a relatively autonomous and valued political society. Third, there must be a rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life. Fourth, there must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government. Fifth, there must be an institutionalised economic society. (Linz and Stepan 1996: 7)

Even though a consolidation of democracy has been achieved, it does not mean that a regime cannot slide back into less democratic, even authoritarian, rule again.

Extent of democracy in Africa

While this conceptualisation of a consolidated democracy and the requirements for it to be achieved are insightful and valid, Linz and Stepan (1996) omitted an important criterion that is highly relevant for Africa. In order to arrive at this criterion, it is necessary first to examine the extent to which democracy exists in African countries. Diamond has pointed out that many regimes in the world can be classified as neither fully democratic nor as totally authoritarian. He calls these 'hybrid regimes' (Diamond 2002). Although there has been a surge of democratisation in Africa over the past twenty years, it still has a large number of hybrid regimes. Diamond classified 53 African countries into six categories ranging from fully democratic to totally authoritarian. His classification is presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Classification of African regimes, end 2001*

Type of regime	Number	Some of the countries
Liberal Democracy	5	Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa
Electoral Democracy	9	Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia
Ambiguous	6	Mozambique, Nigeria, Zambia
Competitive Authoritarian	11	Lesotho, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe
Hegemonic Electoral Authoritarian	14	Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Uganda
Politically Closed Authoritarian	8	Congo (DRC), Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland

Source: Diamond 2002: 31, Table 2

‘Liberal democracies’ are regimes where not only free and fair elections are held regularly, but where civil and political liberties also exist along with a free press, even though political leaders do not usually encourage or embrace criticisms (Bratton et al 2005: 16). There also exist independent and relatively effective legislative and judicial institutions that uphold the rule of law. South Africa has led the way with a Constitutional Court that reigns supreme and ensures that all legislation upholds the Constitution and the rights embodied in it. Only five countries were classified as liberal democracies, of which only two, Botswana and South Africa, are on the continent. The remaining three are on small islands, including Mauritius.

‘Electoral democracies’ are hybrid regimes that meet minimal democratic standards by holding elections that are usually deemed free and fair, but where civil and political liberties are not secure, especially between elections. Political minorities are often sidelined and complain of neglect and even repression. ‘Most importantly,’ say Bratton et al (2005: 16), ‘political power remains concentrated in the hands of executive presidents to the point that significant arenas of decision making lie beyond the control of other elected officials.’ Nine countries were included in this category, although Ghana could now be reclassified as a liberal democracy.

A large majority of countries were classified as ‘authoritarian’ of one type or another. Diamond also refers to them as pseudo-democracies in that they use the trappings of formal democratic institutions, such as multiparty elections, in order to mask the reality of authoritarian domination (Diamond 2002). Hence, countries can hold elections without democracy actually being practised. Twenty-five regimes fall into either the competitive or hegemonic authoritarian category. The competitive authoritarian regimes have multiparty

electoral competitions of some sort, but in the hegemonic ones, the 'democratic' institutions are largely facades (Diamond 2002). The eight politically closed authoritarian regimes are ones where the governments do not even make any pretence at being democratic. They either hold sham elections or come to power through heredity, military coups or armed insurgency (Bratton et al 2005). The residual six countries classified as 'ambiguous' could neither be placed in the democratic or the autocratic camp and were truly hybrid regimes.

In summary, out of the 53 regimes in Africa, almost three quarters (74 per cent) could not be classified as democratic in 2001 and were either completely hybrid or authoritarian to a lesser or greater extent. Only one in eleven could be classified as fully democratic, with all the practices, institutions and freedoms associated with a democracy. By way of contrast Diamond classified almost half (49 per cent) of the regimes in the rest of the world as fully democratic (Diamond 2002: 26, Table 1).

One-party dominance in Africa

The question arises of why so few African countries are truly democratic. While there are a number of reasons for this, only one reason is highlighted, because of its preponderance in Africa: that is, the dominance of a single party in a large proportion of African countries, so that they effectively are one-party regimes. Frequently, these parties are former liberation movements that came to power after their countries achieved independence from colonial rule. Table 3.5 provides an overview of this phenomenon.

Table 3.5 shows that, since 1989, 41 African countries had held at least one legislative election and 21 of these had already conducted a fourth election by the end of 2006. The winning party has consistently enjoyed a comfortable victory, never falling below 62 per cent and even rising above two-thirds of the seats (68 per cent) in the second round of elections. The winning parties are usually the incumbent parties, that is, the parties that are already in power. Table 3.5 also shows the weakness of opposition parties in terms of the small proportion of seats held in the legislature by the second largest party. There has, however, been an increase from 19 per cent of the seats in the first election up to 28 per cent in the fourth election. Even so, the low percentage 'illustrates the pervasive weakness of electoral opposition in Africa' (Rakner & Van de Walle 2009: 110).

Table 3.5 *African legislative election results, by ordinal number of election, 1989–2006*

Election	Number of countries	Winning party (% seats)	Second party (% seats)
First	41	62	19
Second	38	68	16
Third	34	65	21
Fourth	21	62	28

Source: Rakner & Van de Walle 2009: 110

South African electoral results display an even more dominant political party, with weaker electoral opposition than for Africa as a whole, as Table 3.6 demonstrates. In two of the four elections the ruling ANC obtained 66 per cent of the votes and in one election 70 per cent, well over two-thirds majority in Parliament. Opposition parties have struggled to gain electoral support, with the largest opposition party never achieving above 20 per cent of the seats and falling as low as 10 per cent in the second election.

Table 3.6 *South African post-transformation election results*

Election	Year	ANC (% seats)	2nd party (% seats)	2nd party
First	1994	63	20	NP
Second	1999	66	10	DP
Third	2004	70	12	DA
Fourth	2009	66	17	DA

Source: Alvarez-Rivera 2010

Defining the consolidation of democracy in an African context

Bearing these facts in mind for Africa as a whole and for South Africa, it is now possible to arrive at another criterion for the consolidation of democracy in Africa that is also applicable to South Africa. Mattes has shown that there is no ground for complacency about the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. He specifies three conditions crucial to democratic consolidation: a supportive political culture, a growing economy that steadily reduces inequality, and stable and predictable political institutions (Mattes 2002: 22). His analysis of these three conditions is that, in terms of political culture, citizens are displaying ‘low levels of community and political participation’. Economically, South Africa still faces massive unemployment and a rising level of intra-racial

inequality, while in terms of political institutions, 'An internationally praised constitution designed to promote multiparty competition and individual rights is overshadowed by one-party dominance and limited governmental accountability' (Mattes 2002: 23).

A criterion for the consolidation of democracy that can be derived from the foregoing exposition is that an opposition party must actually win a free and fair election and power must be transferred peacefully to the new ruling party. A softer version of this condition is that it must be highly feasible and completely possible for the ruling party to lose a free and fair election and transfer power peacefully to an opposition party. However, it does not mean that, once democracy has been consolidated in this way, it will always remain democratic. The regime has to ensure that democracy remains 'the only game in town' and that the institutions and practices that sustain a democracy remain intact. For this reason, it is necessary to make a distinction between fully and partially consolidated democracies. A fully consolidated democracy is one in which not only has an opposition party won an election against a ruling party, but all the other requirements for a democratic regime are also in place and operating effectively. In a partially consolidated democracy, all the other requirements are either not properly in place or they are not operating effectively.

Consolidation of democracy in Africa: role of independent unions

There are very few countries in Africa where the consolidation of democracy has actually taken place according to the criterion described above. Ghana is one of them and Zambia another. These two countries will each be discussed in turn.

Role of independent unions in Ghana and Zambia

In the case of Ghana, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) fought for its independence and worker rights for over 40 years. During the period 1958–1965, the TUC tried to increase its influence by entering into an alliance with President Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP). Although this brought benefits, the TUC also found itself severely compromised: the CPP intervened in union leadership by removing trade union leaders and imposing others in their place. Consequently, the unions' capacity to act and strike

declined. Ghanaian trade union leaders learned from this period that trade union independence and a democratic political regime that enabled it to happen were both very important (Kraus 2007). Over the subsequent years, the unions' relatively large size, defence of their autonomy and organisational strength enabled them to withstand repression under several authoritarian regimes and to instil the norms of democratic participation in the country. They also learned that democracy gave them freedom to pursue their interests and that dictatorships did not (Kraus 2007).

The real test whether Ghana had managed to consolidate its democracy came in the election of December 2008 and the subsequent run-off in January 2009. The first round of presidential election did not produce a clear winner. President Nana Akufo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) received just over 49 per cent of the vote. His opponent, John Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), obtained slightly less (nearly 48 per cent). The NDC had, however, gained more seats and became the single largest party. Since neither presidential candidate received more than 50 per cent of the vote, a run-off election had to be held. On this occasion, the result was reversed and Mills won by the thinnest of margins. He obtained 50.2 per cent of the vote, while Akufo-Addo received only 49.8 per cent of the vote. Far more important is what happened next. President Akufo-Addo conceded defeat and power was transferred peacefully to the new President (*The Economist*, 8 January 2008 and 13 December 2009). The real test for the consolidation of democracy had thus been passed in Ghana.

Kraus sums up the important role of the trade union movement in protecting and advancing democracy in Ghana by saying that:

They could and did create political space that ultimately enabled other, more political, actors to organise for democratic rights. The union movement in Ghana, unlike those in South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, has not sought to play a direct role in organising political power since the disastrous experience in 1960–66 under the Nkrumah regime. (Kraus 2007: 117)

Nevertheless, Zambia provides an example of a country that did manage to consolidate its democracy, even though it is, as yet, only partially consolidated. It became independent in 1964 under the leadership of President Kaunda of the United National Independent Party (UNIP). In the same year, the Zambia

Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was established as the sole trade union centre. Trade unions were expected to play a developmental rather than representative role. That is, the unions were expected to focus on worker productivity and restrain wage demands and industrial action. There were close union-government ties and the ZCTU appeared to the government to have acquiesced to this role. In 1973, UNIP under Kaunda formally declared Zambia a one-party state under a new constitution.

Kaunda also nationalised the copper mines, but from 1974 to 1989 the price of copper fell. As it accounted for 90 to 95 per cent of Zambian exports the economy declined. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided loans, but imposed austerity measures and structural adjustment programmes. Wage freezes were imposed and workers' standard of living dropped. Consequently, ZCTU resistance to government policies increased and protest strikes were launched (Gostner 1997).

In 1990, the ZCTU called for the restoration of multiparty democracy and took the initiative to campaign for its restoration (Adler & Buhlungu 1997). The campaign grew into a mass movement with the support of a range of community-based organisations, disaffected UNIP members, university lecturers, business, clergymen and traditional rulers. In July 1990, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) was launched. The ZCTU provided the mass mobilisation, while business provided the funds for the MMD to defeat UNIP in general election in October 1991. Frederick Chiluba, former leader of ZCTU, immediately took over as president from Kaunda. The ZCTU had thus played a major role in replacing the autocratic one-party rule of UNIP with a democratic regime, based on multiparty elections and the peaceful transfer of political power to the MMD (Kraus 2007). This was the first time in African history that a trade union movement had facilitated the formation of a political party that won an election and instated multiparty democracy (Kraus 2007).

But Chiluba started implementing the austerity measures advocated by the IMF and, as a result, the initial close relationship that existed between the ZCTU and the MMD after 1991 came to an end, as the trade union movement had to take up the cudgels on behalf of their worker members once again (Tshoamedi 2000; Kraus 2007). Chiluba also became corrupted by power and tried to amend the constitution to give him a third term of office, but there was sufficient popular mobilisation against him to back off. In the 2006 election,

the MMD no longer had an absolute majority in Parliament. It only obtained 46 per cent of the seats, with the opposition parties sharing the rest.⁹

Role of independent unions in the struggle for democracy in Zimbabwe

Ghana and Zambia both provide powerful examples of the contribution that independent and autonomous trade union movements have made in helping regimes attain or move towards the consolidation of democracy in Africa. Another country in which this is happening is Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe and Zanu-PF, who came to power at independence in 1980, turned a democratic regime into an intolerant authoritarian regime destroying the country's economy – especially its thriving agricultural sector – in the process.

Civil society, led by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), stepped into the breach to try to stop the downward spiral into tyranny and ruin. In February 1999, the ZCTU facilitated a National Working People's Convention that brought together people from urban, peri-urban and rural areas, representing trade unions, women's organisations, professional associations, development organisations, churches, human rights groups, the informal sector, communal farmers, industry, the unemployed and student organisations. The Convention gave the ZCTU a mandate to facilitate the formation of a political party. As a result, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched on 11 September 1999 (Raftopoulos 2001).

From 2000 to 2003, ruling party violence increased, with the aim of crushing the MDC. The violence did have a harmful effect on MDC party structures, but did not destroy the movement. The MDC participated in the June 2003 general election campaign, but 30 people, mostly MDC members, were killed. There were approximately 18 000 human rights violations, including assaults, death threats, and interference with the right to campaign and vote freely. Most of the violence (91 per cent) was carried out by ZANU-PF supporters, and the majority of victims (52 per cent) were farm workers and civilians. Notwithstanding the pre-election violence, the MDC performed remarkably well for a newly-formed party, winning 57 seats against ZANU-PF's 62 (Raftopoulos 2001).

The party, by then divided into two 'formations', the Tsvangirai and the Mutambara formations, resolved to take part in the March 2008 election.

The Tsvangirai formation decided to run in both the presidential and parliamentary elections. It had become clear to many of the voters that the collapse of the country's economy was due to the policies of ZANU-PF. In addition, the ZCTU decided shortly before the election that it would mobilise support for the MDC. The outcome was that the MDC achieved an historic victory at the polls. The two MDC formations combined won 109 seats in the 210-seat parliament, whereas ZANU-PF gained only 97 seats. In the presidential election, the official outcome gave Tsvangirai 47.8 per cent of the votes cast and Mugabe only 43.2 per cent.

Because neither presidential candidate had won more than 50 per cent of the vote, a run-off election had to be held. However, unlike President Akufo-Addo of Ghana, Mugabe and his military supporters made it clear that he would not give up his presidency through the democratic process. Instead, they unleashed a violent and brutal assault on MDC and ZCTU followers and leaders, to the point that Tsvangirai had to withdraw from the race, in order to try to secure the safety and security of his followers. The ILO Commission of Inquiry to examine whether freedom of association and the right to organise existed in Zimbabwe concluded that:

The Commission sees a clear pattern of arrests, detentions, violence and torture by the security forces against trade unionists that coincided with ZCTU nationwide events, indicating that there had been some centralised direction to the security forces to take such action. The Commission is particularly concerned by the fact that it appears that, in rural areas in particular, ZCTU officials and members were systematically targeted by vigilante mobs, based on a perception that ZCTU members were supporters of the MDC political party. (ILO 2009: 159, paragraphs 594 & 595)

Not surprisingly, Mugabe secured 86 per cent of the votes cast in the June 2008 run-off.

A long and difficult period followed, in which Mugabe was eventually and reluctantly persuaded by leaders of the Southern African Development Community to share power with Tsvangirai and the MDC. In September 2008, a power-sharing agreement, the Global Political Agreement, was finally signed between Mugabe and the MDC. It commenced in February 2009, when Tsvangirai was sworn in as prime minister. The most noticeable improvement

since then has been in the economy. The astronomically high inflation rate has been curtailed and retailers' shelves filled up with food once again. However, it has become clear that neither Mugabe nor Zanu-PF are committed to power-sharing and are still doing their best to undermine the MDC.

Although representative democracy has not been restored in Zimbabwe yet, it is clear that the independent trade union movement has played a major role in helping to haul the country back from complete tyranny and economic collapse. The brunt of the struggle is being borne by the MDC, which would not exist if it were not for the active mobilisation and support of the Zimbabwean trade union movement in the first instance. Zimbabwe, therefore, also provides an important and powerful example of the contribution that an independent trade union movement can make towards the restoration and eventual consolidation of democracy.

COSATU and the consolidation of democracy in South Africa

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that an extremely small proportion of countries in Africa are fully democratic. One of the reasons why this is the case is because of the dominance of the ruling parties that effectively turns many African countries into authoritarian one-party regimes, as the ruling parties are returned to power again and again. Although South Africa has been classified as one of the fully democratic countries, democracy has not yet been consolidated in post-liberation South Africa because there has not yet been a peaceful and legitimate transfer of political power to another party, nor has it even been a remote possibility.

This hold on power by the ANC has started to pose threats to the democratic institutions and practices in South Africa, particularly by undermining the criminal justice system and equality before the law, whereby powerful political figures have been able to either get out of a court trial or to serve only very small parts of their full sentences. The independence of the media has also been undermined by means of ANC domination of the public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The freedom of the media and freedom of expression are also under threat from the Protection of State Information Bill (B 6B-2010) that has been passed by Parliament in 2011 in the face of intensive opposition from civil society and opposition parties. The Bill imposes heavy sentences – in the worst case, a minimum 15-year jail

sentence – for communicating classified state information (Section 36 of the Bill). The Bill makes no provision for a defence that the information is in the public interest. It is widely feared that the Bill is going to be used to cover up state corruption and abuse of power. (At the time of writing, the Bill was still being considered by the National Council of Provinces.)

It is within this context that the question is being posed whether COSATU is facilitating or impeding the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. COSATU has certainly facilitated the process of democratisation in South Africa. The first way in which it has done so historically was as leader of the Mass Democratic Movement during the highly oppressive apartheid era of the 1980s. Its organisational strength enabled it to mount effective strikes and mass stayaways that helped to force open a political space for democratic protests as well as enabling worker participation and empowerment.

The second way in which COSATU has contributed towards the democratisation was in its role during the transition to democracy in South Africa during the early 1990s. Adler and Webster (1995) have spelled out in detail the role that COSATU played in the negotiations of a Constitution for the new South Africa. In the first place, COSATU ensured that worker and trade union rights, including the right to strike, were enshrined in the Constitution. Secondly, it combined its capacity for negotiation and mass action to help break a deadlock in the negotiations for the Constitution by putting an end to the ruling National Party's demand to hold a veto right over the adoption of the final Constitution.

In the run up to the first democratic election, COSATU initiated the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that the Tripartite Alliance adopted as its central policy programme and the ANC as part of its election manifesto. A core idea of the RDP was that a broad range of social movements would all play a part in the reconstruction of society. The RDP envisaged that democracy would not be confined to elections only, but be an ongoing and active process that enabled formations of civil society to contribute to reconstruction and development. The emphasis in the document was on the importance of participatory and accountable policy-making procedures involving all the social actors (Adler & Webster 1995).

The third way COSATU has been contributing towards the consolidation of democracy has been by asserting its independence and autonomy in post-

apartheid South Africa in pursuit of advancing the interests of its members. It has done so even when it has defied the ANC government and the state. Sometimes it has done so forcefully through strikes, such as the public service, teachers', military and security workers' strikes. Some of the strikes turned violent and others, such as the teachers' strike, were not in the broad national interest, as it was the education of school children that suffered. However, the COSATU unions have helped to keep open the right to protest and the political space to criticise the government.

But COSATU is also inhibiting the process of consolidation of democracy in South Africa. The first, and most obvious way in which it is doing so in terms of the analysis in this chapter, is by being in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP and canvassing support for the ruling party in every election. By so doing, it is reinforcing the trend of one-party dominance in South Africa, with all the dangers it holds for democracy in the long run.

A second way in which COSATU is inhibiting the consolidation of democracy in South Africa is by compromising its autonomy by being in the Alliance. Criticisms have been made from the left of COSATU's Alliance with the ANC and SACP. Freund (2007) has argued that COSATU compromised itself during the pre-1994 negotiations over a new Constitution for the country, as well as on subsequent occasions, because it and the SACP were junior partners in the Alliance with the ANC. McKinley (2003) has taken this further by arguing that COSATU had both compromised and disempowered itself by being in the Tripartite Alliance. Although COSATU articulated its opposition to GEAR from the outset, it was lumbered with the burden of having to take some responsibility for it as an Alliance partner. Furthermore, COSATU became part of a top-down 'political corporatism' and exchanged its independence for subordination to the ANC. According to Masondo, Webster and Buhlungu's position is more nuanced. They refer to COSATU's relationship with the ANC and SACP as one of 'flexible independence' (cited in Masondo 2010: 27). This description is closer to reality as COSATU displays both independence and subordination towards the ANC and SACP.

A third way in which COSATU is impeding the consolidation of democracy is in its strong intention to make the Tripartite Alliance, and not the ANC, the strategic political centre of governance in the country. The declaration released after the Alliance Summit held in May 2008 bears this out:

It was agreed that the Alliance will work together to formulate policy, and monitor its implementation through joint ANC/Alliance policy committees and other mechanisms. This will include the drafting of the ANC Election Manifesto for the 2009 elections and matters pertaining to deployment. These kinds of interactions will become a permanent feature of alliance processes in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies.¹⁰

It appears that COSATU wants to play an equal role in the Alliance. This was conveyed in a newspaper article by the general secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi. He argued that the country 'needs the ANC-led alliance with its broad base of support to play the leadership role as the strategic political centre'.¹¹ Note that it is the Alliance and not the ANC that is to be the strategic political centre. The leadership role that the ANC is to play is to implement decisions taken by the Alliance partners. As Vavi stated on another occasion, 'Ultimately the state president bears the responsibility to translate alliance positions into programmes of government and to steer the ship of government.'¹²

The SACP, with the support of COSATU leadership, has taken further steps to try to ensure that policies it wants are implemented by the state. At its congress in December 2009 it 'encouraged its members to swell the ANC ranks as part of its strategy to have more influence with the Alliance' and also resolved 'to force its employees in government to account to the party (SACP), despite their being in state positions on an ANC ticket'.¹³ This approach was supported by Vavi at the congress when he told the delegates, 'We, more than ever before, are presented with an opportunity to deploy our leaders to the key levers of power. We cannot abstain from this challenge nor can we subcontract it to others'.¹⁴

An example of the way in which COSATU and the SACP have tried to use the Tripartite Alliance emerged at a meeting of the Alliance in November 2009. They wanted President Zuma to sign a proclamation to amend the Constitution in order to put Ebrahim Patel in charge of economic policy formulation, instead of the Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan.¹⁵ The attempt did not succeed. Had it done so, it would have undermined the democratic foundations of South Africa, because two bodies that do not have a single elected representative in Parliament would have managed to have the Constitution changed in a deal signed and sealed outside Parliament. The Constitution, which is the supreme law of South Africa and based on the will

of the people, can only be amended by a bill emanating from Parliament that requires broad-based support, in the form of at least two-thirds of members of the National Assembly and six of the provinces in the National Council of Provinces (Section 74 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996).

As the country started entering the inter-election period from 2010 onwards, the ideological and political differences between the Alliance partners emerged once again, causing sharp confrontations. Disputes arose over the economic policy of the government and corruption on the part of the ruling party, to the point that Zwelinzima Vavi, general secretary of COSATU, accused it of having a 'predatory elite' and 'political hyenas' within its ranks.¹⁶ COSATU also took a strong stance against the threat to media freedom. It wrote a letter to the ANC warning that it might take the Protection of Information Bill to the Constitutional Court unless changes were made.¹⁷ Cracks also opened up between COSATU and the SACP. COSATU maintained that the SACP, which had come out in support of the Protection of Information Bill, had become too close to the government and that had made the SACP soft.¹⁸ These, and many other cracks that opened up during the mid-election period, have had the effect of considerably reducing the assertive role that COSATU and the SACP were playing in the Tripartite Alliance around the time of the 2009 election.

In summary, COSATU's aim, initially, was that the ANC, together with COSATU and the SACP, should formulate political, economic and social policies for the country, which the government must then implement. Even though the ANC would have none of it, such a goal undermines the essence of democracy. The essence is that a political party that obtains a majority of elected representatives in Parliament in a legitimate nation-wide election governs the country. COSATU leaders have been elected by COSATU members only, and they have only been elected to run COSATU, not the nation. The SACP has not yet fielded a single representative to stand in any election in South Africa since 1994. It, therefore, has no mandate as a political party from any of the electorate to formulate policies for the country. Although the goal of political governance by COSATU and the SACP does not violate the Constitution of South Africa, it violates the spirit of the Constitution and the democratic principles embodied in it. The core of it is that only representatives elected to Parliament by the people may govern in order 'to ensure government by the people under the Constitution' (Clause 42[3] of the Constitution).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered two main themes: firstly, the extent of internal democracy in COSATU and, secondly, the role of COSATU with regards to the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. With regards to the first theme, the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey revealed that COSATU was democratic at the level of the workplace, but oligarchic at the national level. The rank-and-file members still keep their elected shop stewards representative and accountable, but they generally do not know what their national leaders are doing on their behalf.

It was then asked what type of oligarchy COSATU is practising: a free and open or restrictive and closed one. The conclusion was that COSATU is practising a restrictive and closed oligarchy, because it is difficult to remove leaders once they have been elected into office. Furthermore, COSATU's leadership is imposing a restrictive and closed political perspective on their members, by virtue of the fact that they only expose members to a Marxist discourse and analysis. It is also done in a very top-down approach.

With regards to the second theme, the question was asked whether COSATU is facilitating or inhibiting the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. It was decided to answer this question within an African context, because South Africa has been displaying a similar phenomenon to many other African countries, namely, the dominance of a single political party, usually the leading liberation movement, from one election to the next. It was also established that the dominance of a ruling party over a long period of time has prevented both the democratisation and the consolidation of democracy in a large number of African countries. By looking at three country case studies, Ghana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, it was seen how independent trade union movements in all three countries had played a key role in facilitating a process of democratisation as well as the consolidation of democracy.

In the case of South Africa, it was found that COSATU has played a role in the transition to democracy as well as subsequent democratisation, but is inhibiting the consolidation of democracy in South Africa. The reasons for this are, firstly, that it is reinforcing one-party domination in South Africa by being in a Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and SACP and canvassing votes for the ANC during elections. Secondly, by being in an Alliance with the ruling party it has compromised some of its autonomy and is thus not able to play

the role of a truly independent trade union movement, as has been the case in Ghana and Zambia. COSATU has not only subordinated itself to the ANC, but also to the SACP by ascribing to it the role of vanguard of the working class, even though the SACP only has the support of a small minority of COSATU members. The third way in which COSATU is inhibiting the consolidation of democracy in South Africa, is by striving to make the Tripartite Alliance the strategic political centre of governance, in which all three Alliance partners have equal roles and the ANC has the responsibility of implementing the Alliance's policy decisions. Instead of consolidating democracy, such a move would set back the democratisation process, since neither COSATU nor the SACP, as such, have any representatives who have been elected to govern the country. COSATU leaders have only been elected to govern COSATU and the SACP has not yet put up a single candidate for election at national, provincial or local level under its own banner, since the transition to democracy in 1994. The struggle for the consolidation of democracy in South Africa therefore continues.

Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all the survey figures for 2008 in this chapter are taken directly from the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey dataset and for the three previous surveys (1994, 1998 and 2004) from the dataset in the Appendix of Buhlungu (2006: 227–248).
- 2 See Webster (1995) and Gostner and Joffe (1999) for evidence of the powerful voice and influence of organised labour on NEDLAC.
- 3 The laws that were passed during this period were: Labour Relations Act of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, the Employment Equity Act of 1998, and the Skills Development Act of 1998.
- 4 The figures for 1998 and 2004 were obtained from Buhlungu (2006: 237–238).
- 5 See Maree (1976) for a study of a very undemocratic union where exactly such an opposition did exist.
- 6 Bell T, Debate needed on COSATU's SACP agenda, *Business Report*, 2 October 2009.
- 7 Why Vavi is angry with Jacob Zuma, *City Press*, 14 February 2010.
- 8 By 'democratisation' is meant the process of acquiring legal safeguards for individuals, allowing freedom of expression and protest, providing greater space for autonomous working-class organisation, as well as open contestation to win control

of the government by means of free competitive elections. 'Transition to democracy' refers to completion of the procedures and election of a government that is the direct result of a free and universal vote and has the authority to generate new policies. In addition, there is a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. Both definitions are derived from Linz and Stepan (1996: 3). Both of these processes are reversible, that is, countries where democratisation and transition to democracy have taken place could revert to authoritarian rule again.

- 9 Politics of Zambia. Accessed February 2010, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics of Zambia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Zambia)
- 10 Alliance Summit Declaration, 9–10 May 2008, Gallagher Estate. Accessed February 2010, <http://amadlandawonye.wikispaces.com/Alliance+Summit+Declaration,+9-10+May+2008,+Gallagher+Estate>
- 11 Vavi Z, The alliance is the political centre, *City Press*, 22 November, 2009.
- 12 Alliance in fierce power struggle, *Sunday Argus*, 27 September 2009.
- 13 SACP seeks greater influence, *Mail & Guardian*, 18–22 December 2009.
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- 15 Zuma: I'm the boss, *City Press*, 15 November 2009.
- 16 COSATU meeting to focus on alliance summit, *Mail & Guardian*, 18 February 2011.
- 17 COSATU warns ANC to change information bill, *Business Day*, 1 June 2011.
- 18 Cracks deepen in tripartite alliance, *Business Day*, 6 June 2011.

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4 *Making sense of unionised workers' political attitudes: the (un)representation of women's voices in COSATU*

Malehoko Tshoaedi

Women are a strong presence in COSATU, constituting 48 per cent of the total membership (COSATU 2011). They have been a vital component of COSATU unions for most of the federation's existence. Although statistics on gender representation levels for the earlier period of trade union formation are not available, women constituted a considerable proportion of trade union membership in the 1970s and 1980s. The trade union struggles of the early 1970s, including the historic Durban strikes of 1973, included many women, most notably those in the clothing and textile industries (Tshoaedi 2008). The 1973 strikes, which were triggered by demands for higher wages, improved working conditions and the recognition of trade unions, culminating in the formation of unions in several industries and eventually the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979.

Women participated in the historic moments of the labour movement. Lydia Kompe was one of the three shop stewards who led the 1976 strike at Heineman Electric Company against liaison committees (Tshoaedi 2008). The shop stewards, together with 20 other workers, were subsequently dismissed (Hemson, Legassick & Ulrich 2006; Webster 1985). Another example is the 1987 strike by 11 000 predominantly women workers at OK Bazaars and Hyperama, which went on for ten weeks in support of the demand for a living wage. The workers won a R100 per month increase (Tshoaedi 2008). Thus, women were at the forefront of workplace struggles and the founding of trade unions, and continue to be instrumental in post-apartheid trade union politics.

In the post-apartheid era, women continue to be active in trade union activities and struggles at shopfloor level. In 2004, Louisa Modikwe was a regional organiser of the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) in Johannesburg, having joined the workplace in 1995 and become active in trade union activities almost immediately. Modikwe was active in mobilising workers to join SACTWU at her workplace, which was previously organised by a rival union.

When I came into the factory, I conducted my own investigations to find out about other workers' working conditions and benefits in their companies. I questioned how come they had better benefits when we were all working in similar industries ... I started holding general meetings asking workers to debate on the provident fund. And when I became a shop steward, I was able to successfully represent workers. I won most of the cases in the workplace.
(Interview: L Modikwe)

Another younger woman, Hilda Matjee, joined the workplace in 1997 and took an active part in trade union activities. In 2004, she was a South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (SATAWU) shop steward at South African Airways in Kempton Park. Explaining her reasons for being active in the trade union, Matjee highlighted her student activism background.

Joining the union, remember after I had been active in the SRC structures at school, I knew what we wanted. And I knew that as a worker there is COSATU and that workers need to be organised. I knew that I could not solve workplace problems alone, you have to be organised so that problems could be addressed in a collective rather than individually. (Interview: H Matjee)

The COSATU Workers' Surveys conducted in 1998, 2004 and 2008 further demonstrate that women take an active interest in labour movement activities. Women's attendance of trade union meetings (46.9 per cent) is consistent with that of their male counterparts (48.5 per cent). In fact, women's attendance of union meetings (once a month) increased from 33 per cent in 1998 to 46.9 per cent in 2008. The strong presence of women in shopfloor leadership is also reflected in the survey. Women shop stewards interviewed in the 2008 survey constituted about 30.4 per cent and men 69.6 per cent (while in 2004 women constituted 21.6 per cent).

In spite of women's meaningful contribution in labour movement activities, discourses on South African trade union politics are often expressed in neutral terms, habitually interpreted to refer to men only. Conceptualisation of politics and political action is still dominated by male images. The consequence of this approach is that women seldom become the subjects of political debates and their political views or interests rarely become part of the mainstream debates.

This chapter discusses the representation of women's voices within the labour movement. It argues that the domination of men in key decision-making structures of COSATU has grave consequences for the representation of women's voices. Women's views on critical political issues regarding the labour movement are often muted, while unions focus on the politics of those in the majority and in influential positions. The trade union movement has not been open to debating issues that relate to the gendered experiences and collective interests of women. This chapter argues that the principle of worker control or internal union democracy, which includes mandated decision-making and consensus (which is the cornerstone of COSATU), is utilised to control discourses for public debate, and in the process suppresses women's voices within the labour federation.

This chapter reflects on COSATU women's political attitudes based on data from the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey. This is also supported by qualitative interviews conducted between 1997 and 2004. The survey shows that women's responses on various issues differ significantly from their male counterparts. Questions that are of particular interest in this chapter are on the Alliance and support for the ANC in the 2008 national elections. On both questions, women's support has dropped substantially, when compared with the previous surveys in 2004.

These are critical findings that deserve academic discourse. They demonstrate women's attitudes and opinions on key political and organisational matters. They further demonstrate women's agency in claiming the public space and using available political instruments (research in this case) or institutions to voice dissent. However, the results also raise important questions about the extent to which COSATU, as an organisation with diverse membership, is tolerant of voices that diverge from those of the majority. What is the extent to which democratic organisations like COSATU enable voices of dissent to come out? To what extent does the federation allow different opinions to surface and be debated?

The politics of power and domination

Trade union organisations like COSATU emerge within contexts shaped and influenced by the dominant social constructions in society. The interactions and the participation of different individuals within trade unions are defined, therefore, by the beliefs and social values within their contexts. This means that trade unions are likely to be characterised by the same gender relations and gender hierarchies dominant within the society in which they operate. Gender structures social relationships in society and organisations, resulting in different levels of equality and inequality. According to Scott, gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. It is a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated (Scott 1986: 1069). Power is a critical construct that is easily associated with masculinity and therefore excludes women from having major influence in key decision-making structures.

Within organisations such as trade unions gender relations are structured along the axis of power and domination. Men are often regarded as the powerful and dominant ones, as opposed to women. This is exemplified by COSATU's leadership structure that is still predominantly male and is opposed to transformation (Tshoamedi 2008). In research done in 1999 by the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI), women formed 16 per cent of the National Executive Council (NEC) and 18 per cent of the Regional Office Bearers (ROB). According to COSATU's Secretariat Report, women's representation in these structures has increased; at the NEC it is now 30 per cent, while among ROB's it is estimated at 29 per cent (COSATU 2011). However, according to the research done by NALEDI, it was also shown that most of these positions were treasurer positions, which do not hold much political influence or power.

Women have not succeeded in advancing to positions of power, like general secretary or president, in the labour movement. In cases where this happens, they are usually appointed as second deputy president or vice president, positions which do not necessarily hold the same influence and power as positions that are reserved for men. National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), a female-dominated union, elected its first woman deputy general secretary in September 2010. In 2005, NEHAWU elected a woman president, Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, who in 2009 left the union to join Parliament as an ANC MP.

The absence of women in senior leadership positions in unions has major implications for women. Firstly, the dominance of men in senior leadership means that they control the public space and are often in the limelight – they become the faces of the organisation. Hence, when we are talking about trade union politics or doing research on trade unions, their views and opinions carry more weight. Secondly, women are often only consulted about gender-related issues such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination and gender violence.

What is wrong with the picture that, thus, emerges from research on trade unions? What is wrong with this gendered division of labour? It speaks to the significance accorded gender issues and also suggests that these are still regarded as only women's issues: they are not issues that concern the whole organisation. But, more importantly, this gendered division of labour continues to undermine the presence and role of women in public spaces. It categorises their participation in the public arena and again we see women being relegated to the 'private' domain.

Women's struggles for recognition within COSATU

Initial attempts by women to force unions to recognise women's presence in the labour movement and address gender issues took place during the negotiations for the launch of COSATU in the early 1980s, when women challenged the unions on the drafting of a logo that had images of men only. Voicing her disappointment about the initial proposed logo, Mashinini (1991: 118) states, 'it means that our presence, our efforts, our work, our support was not even recognised.'

The COSATU logo, which includes an image of a woman carrying a baby on her back, with one fist raised, is one example of how women successfully challenged the labour movement to recognise and acknowledge their presence (Tshoaedi & Hlela 2006). The image is a symbol of women's presence and active participation in the foundation of the labour movement in South Africa. The image further symbolises contestations over redefinition of the public sphere to include the domestic. It demonstrates attempts by women to challenge the customary conceptions of the public (politics, trade unions and the workplace) as separate from the domestic (household, family and childcare responsibilities). It is a powerful image, showing women's efforts to claim

public space and to demand transformation of this space.

The representation of women in COSATU unions and its leadership structures continues to be contested even in the post-apartheid context. In 1997, women demanded the adoption of a quota system by the federation's National Congress. The women argued that, in order to address the structural inequalities and barriers that impacted on women's development within the labour federation, measures such as a quota system had to be implemented. This proposal was, however, rejected by the male-dominated Congress. Opposition to the quota system was based on the grounds that women were not tokens and that the quota system amounted to window dressing (Interview: T Kgasi). According to the opposition, the quota system compromised well-established democratic principles wherein individuals are elected into leadership positions on the basis of merit.

After the 1997 Congress, gender activists within COSATU investigated strategies that had been implemented by other international federations. As a result, in 1999 they developed a proposal for measures to achieve gender equality and these were tabled at the Special National Congress in September 1999. The chief objective of these guidelines was to increase the participation of women in constitutional and decision-making structures of the federation. The guidelines included the creation of *ex-officio* positions on constitutional structures, portfolio positions and reserved seats for women, deputy secretary positions at regional and local levels, a quota system (with affiliates determining the ratios), proportional representation and representation of sector coordinators on constitutional structures.

The Congress endorsed the measures without prescribing to affiliates how they should be achieved or suggesting any timelines. However, the Congress still did not adopt the quota system, but left it to the affiliates to decide. According to some of the gender coordinators from the different affiliates interviewed, this position was not so different from previous resolutions that had been adopted by COSATU (Interview: L Marumo).

The proposal for measures to be followed by affiliates was an attempt by women to lobby support from affiliates to improving the ratio of female leadership. According to Patricia Nyman, gender coordinator for South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU), and Leah Marumo, a former SATAWU gender coordinator, the quota system is

difficult to achieve within COSATU. There is great opposition to it, since it is a potential threat to the existing positions of power. Nyman argues further, 'people in positions of power are reluctant to raise the issue because you are talking about people's jobs. It means that people will have to be taken out' (Interview: P Nyman).

Paradoxically, at its 2003 National Congress COSATU adopted the quota system in its own structures (as opposed to those of its affiliates). The quotas were set at 50 per cent, and it was supposed to have been implemented by 2006. However, gender activists in COSATU question how a quota system can be achieved without the cooperation of the affiliates. 'COSATU structures are made up of affiliates. Women have to come through the affiliates' (Interview: L Marumo). For women to get into COSATU leadership positions, they must be nominated by their own affiliate unions, which do not have clear policies on gender equity.

Although women activists' struggles for gender equity within the labour movement have been met by strong opposition from some of the sexist male unionists, progress in women's campaigns is observable in the concessions made by COSATU's adoption of policies aimed at redressing inequalities. In the current context in which public discourses focus on equality and gender equity, organisations like COSATU that have the political credentials of fighting against discrimination and injustices are compelled to adopt gender-sensitive policy positions. Such a context, therefore, is positive for women activists, as it presents further opportunities.

COSATU women's political attitudes

While in 1994 there was an overwhelming support for the Tripartite Alliance amongst COSATU members (82 per cent), recent surveys indicate a decline in this support (70 per cent in 1998, 66 per cent in 2004, and 61 per cent in 2008). Tensions within the Alliance and disagreements over the economic policy, specifically Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), which was imposed by government in 1996, and the role of the labour movement in influencing such policies have severely hampered COSATU's relationship with its leading partner in the Alliance, the ANC (Cherry & Southall 2006).

Frustration with the Alliance is demonstrated by a gendered analysis of COSATU members' views (see Table 4.1). The survey shows that only 50 per cent of COSATU women believe the Alliance is significant in advancing

workers' interests in Parliament. This represents a decline of 16 per cent amongst women since the 2004 survey. Furthermore, the number of women who believe that COSATU should not be aligned to any political party has more than doubled (from 12 per cent in 2004 to 26 per cent in 2008).

Table 4.1 *COSATU has entered into an alliance with the ANC and SACP. What do you think of this arrangement?*

	Women (%)		Men (%)	
	2004	2008	2004	2008
It is the best way of safeguarding workers' interests in Parliament	66	50	65	69.1
Workers' interests in Parliament should rather be represented by the SACP alone	3	3.5	4	3.6
COSATU should not be aligned with any political party	12	26.1	20	17.9
Another party could better serve workers' interests	3	3.5	2	1
Workers should form their own party	9	3.1	4	2.8

COSATU's founding principles emphasise carrying out a mandate from the rank-and-file membership. This principle is based on the assumption that the working class speaks with one voice and, in this case, supports continued participation in the Alliance. Close scrutiny of women workers' political attitudes, however, contradicts notions of homogeneity among the working class. COSATU leadership's support of the Alliance is not representative of the other 50 per cent of women who disagreed with supporting the Alliance. The question therefore is: how does COSATU accommodate the views of minority groups within its ranks, which sometimes dissent from the majority? The survey illustrates limitations to the concept of worker democracy and how it is applied within the federation. The notion of consensus (applied in organisational policy decisions) based on the principle of majoritarianism excludes and silences dissenting views of minority groupings within the unions.

On the future of the Alliance, only 53 per cent of women supported COSATU's continued participation, while 24 per cent indicated that they do not believe that the Alliance should continue to contest the elections after 2009. Table 4.2 shows women's responses on the future of the Alliance.

Table 4.2 *Do you think that this Alliance should continue and contest the elections after 2009?*

	Women (%)		Men (%)	
	2004	2008	2004	2008
Yes	65	52.9	63.7	68.7
No, COSATU should not be aligned with any political party	10.8	24	17.3	17.3
No, COSATU would be better off forming its own party	6.3	4.1	6.6	4
I think COSATU should maintain its alliance with the SACP only	3.1	1.8	4.4	1.8
I think COSATU should maintain its alliance with the ANC only	3.6	2.3	4.4	2.2

Women's attitudes towards COSATU's continued relationship with the ANC reflect their dissatisfaction with the Alliance. These attitudes are congruent with COSATU's discourses on and criticism of neo-liberal policies, which include deregulation of labour markets and increased flexibility. Restructuring of workplaces has resulted in scores of workers losing employment and women have borne the brunt of these processes (Mosoetsa 2011). In the period between September 2009 and April 2010, SACTWU and SACCAWU reported the highest membership losses, 19.8 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively (COSATU 2011: 204). The losses have largely been attributed to retrenchments in these predominantly female sectors.

The 2008 COSATU Workers' survey further illustrates that most women workers were dissatisfied with improvements in job opportunities and wages over the last period. Only 28.7 per cent believed that jobs had been provided, while 29.8 per cent of women agreed that wages had improved since the last elections. According to Statistics South Africa (Lehohla 2010), the official unemployment rate for women in 2009 was estimated at 26.1 per cent (for men it was 22.2 per cent), while the absorption rate of women into the labour market was estimated at 36.3 per cent (while for men it was 49.2 per cent).

In a recent publication, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit*, Marais (2011: 178) highlights the discrepancies in employment opportunities between women and men. Between 2001 and 2007, unemployment rates for men fell significantly from 23 per cent to 19.3 per cent, while during the same period unemployment rates among women (particularly African women) increased from 26.4 to 28.4 per cent. Furthermore, the labour market has not completely shed its discriminatory practices against women. It is estimated that, in 1995,

women only earned 78 per cent of what men earned, while in 1999 this figure declined to 66 per cent (Marais 2011: 179). The decline in women's wages reflects on the increased employment of women in non-standard forms of employment (casual and temporary)¹ and the informal sector, which are characterised by low wages and less security.

Women's views on government's progress (or lack thereof) in providing services in their communities demonstrate their discontent with government services. Questions on service delivery indicate that most women workers are not satisfied with progress on various issues.

Table 4.3 *Have any of the following services been provided or improved since 2004 in your area?*

	Women (%)	Men (%)
HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support	67.9	62.1
Better housing	54.3	60.1
Access to better health care	37.7	64.3
Access to clean water	36.2	63.8
A clean and healthy living and working environment	35.2	64.8
Access to electricity	34.6	65.4
Access to education and training	34	66

Women's distinct position in society places direct responsibility for domestic issues, like those in Table 4.3, on women. Not surprisingly, women are most likely to raise concerns about the poor state of these services, as they utilise them on a regular basis.

While there is disillusionment with the Alliance, women workers express high confidence in the trade union movement and its ability to represent the interests of the workers among women union members. An overwhelming majority (88.2 per cent) of women affirmed that workers would always need trade unions to protect their interests. The survey shows women's views on the relationship between political parties and the trade union movement. About 63 per cent of women surveyed believe that workers cannot rely on political parties to protect the interests of the working class.

COSATU women and support for the ANC

The dissatisfaction of women with ANC leadership is further reflected in their responses to the question of the party they are likely to vote for in the 2009 national elections. Consistent with the declining support for the Alliance, the survey shows a general decline in the support for the ANC (56 per cent in 2008). Amongst the women interviewed in 2008, only 42.4 per cent indicated that they would vote for the ANC, while the number of those who did not intend to vote almost doubled (12.2 per cent).

Table 4.4 *Which party are you going to vote for?*

	2004 (% women)	2008 (% women)
African National Congress	68.2	42.4
Democratic Alliance	0.5	5.0
Do not intend to vote	6.8	12.2
Refuse to answer	20.9	26.6

The question is, why did only 42.4 per cent of women indicate their intention to vote for the ANC? What are the contributing factors towards their attitudes towards the ANC? As shown in Table 4.3, possible explanations can be derived from women's responses on service delivery and their projected dissatisfaction with government's progress on various issues. In expressing their considerations when making a decision to vote for a particular political party, most highlighted past performance and policies of the political party.

Table 4.5 *When you decide to vote for a particular party, which is the most important factor behind your decision?*

Factors	2008 (%)
Past performance	32.1
Loyalty to a political tradition	22.3
The leadership	14.7
The policies	26.3
Because the union advises you to	1.3

The policies of the ANC are often regarded as accommodative to working-class interests and this has been the basis of the workers' allegiance to the political party over the years. The Reconstruction and Development Programme

(RDP), for instance, is one policy area that speaks directly to the interests of the working class. It has proposed to address issues of poverty, education and housing within working-class communities. But most of the workers in the survey believe that the government has failed to apply this policy in a satisfactory manner. Among the 72 per cent of women workers who indicated knowledge about the RDP, only 41 per cent of them agreed that the policy was meeting its intended goals.

Support for the ANC by the majority of the African working class in South Africa has mostly been linked to their loyalty to the party as a former liberation movement. However, over the years, this has been declining. An interesting observation in the 2008 survey is the 5 per cent of women who intended voting for the Democratic Alliance (DA), which has no history of struggle credentials among the working-class majority, particularly Africans. Although it is important to note this increase in support for the DA among COSATU workers in the 2008 survey, it is not clear whether this is a new trend, especially when considering the politics in the Western Cape. Buhlungu (2010) notes the political tensions in the Western Cape within COSATU affiliates, specifically SACTWU, which includes predominantly coloured members. His research suggests that most coloured members do not fully support COSATU's policy position to encourage all its members to vote for the ANC. In fact, in the first democratic elections in 1994, most coloured workers in the Western Cape voted for the former National Party (Buhlungu 2010).

The politics of sex in COSATU: when does the personal become political?

The question that arises from the above analysis, particularly within the political context of 2008, is, to what extent was women's declining support influenced by the allegations of rape against the ANC President Jacob Zuma? COSATU as an organisation came out in full support of President Zuma during the trial and announced him as their candidate of choice for the working-class movement. However, the survey suggests that COSATU was not speaking on behalf of most of the women. Only about 42.4 per cent of women indicated that they would vote for the ANC in the 2008 elections, suggesting that COSATU's support for Zuma's candidacy and the ANC was not articulating the political interests of most women.

Defining politics and what a worthy cause is for COSATU has been a thorny and painstaking struggle for women. They have fought hard to bring issues of sexual harassment into the agenda of the federation. The first public debate on sexual harassment in COSATU was at the National Congress in 1989, when women put the demand for a code of conduct on sexual harassment on the agenda. When this demand was tabled, 'there was huge hostility' (Interview: Anonymous interviewee 1), especially from male-dominated unions such as the National Mineworkers' Union. Some men questioned why women were bringing up the issue of sexual harassment. 'There was a lot of resistance against it. There were questions like "Why?", "*Singasanibizi dudlu* ?"; "Are we no longer supposed to touch you?"' (Interview: Anonymous interviewee 2). Many of the male delegates at the conference perceived sexual harassment as a personal or private matter, and, as such, inappropriate to be dealt with in the trade union arena (Tshoedi 2008). It was felt that the women who raised such matters in union forums or structures were bringing private matters into the public arena.

It has not been easy raising gender issues within the trade unions because of the politics. When the issue of sexual harassment was tabled, CCAWUSA (Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa) seconded the motion. I am not sure which union between NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) and NUMSA argued that '*look here; we are talking serious issues here* [emphasis added]. We are talking about our comrades who had been kidnapped by the regime, we are talking about comrades who have been arrested, and we need to take political decisions here. And we can't be bringing issues of this nature to this congress. There is nothing like sexual harassment ... It was dismissed like that!' It was proposed that the issue be closed ... so that the congress can talk about *serious political issues*. [emphasis added] (Interview: Anonymous interviewee 1)

The majority male leadership has consistently utilised dominant masculine identities within the unions to define politics that are relevant for the labour movement, therefore silencing women on gendered issues such as sexual harassment of women members in the trade unions. The patriarchal relations and discourses within the unions promote a hegemonic masculine culture that devalues women's presence in the unions, relegating them to an inferior

status and therefore ignoring their gendered concerns (Franzway 2001: 106). COSATU has been indifferent to issues of sexual harassment² (or sexuality, for that matter) and has failed to encourage debates within its male-dominated structures on such issues.³ Sexual harassment has been treated as a personal and non-political issue that should be addressed outside the labour movement.

The history of COSATU shows that the organisation has eschewed bringing the personal into the public arena. However, it is remarkable to observe that, when allegations of rape against President Zuma became public, it was regarded as a political issue that deserved the organisation's full support. President Zuma was regarded as an important political ally in furthering the interests of the working class within government programmes. Hence, the allegations against him were argued to be a 'political conspiracy' to prevent him from ascending to the Presidency.

This reflects a shift in the boundaries between the personal and the political, particularly from the COSATU male leadership. It suggests that 'interpretations of what is personal and when it is politically significant rely on assumptions about the social identity and position of the people involved' (Holmes 2000: 305). Political power and influence is critical in the definition of politics in the labour movement. Men who occupy positions of power in COSATU leadership define and conceptualise politics and political behaviour in masculine terms. Engaging in 'consensual' heterosexual sex (as in Zuma's case) or flirting with a woman, for that matter, (which often borders on sexual harassment) expresses machoism as well as masculinity. It can also be viewed as demonstrating power and domination over the female counterpart. Hence, such behaviours by men can be deemed normal or natural.

Why were COSATU women silent on the matter? Can the subaltern speak?

In pronouncing support for Zuma during the trial and the campaigns for ANC leadership, union leaders were at the forefront. COSATU spoke as a collective, 'representing' its 'wider' membership. The silence of women within the federation on this issue is noteworthy. This was a gendered issue, which resonated with their daily struggles within the labour movement and the broader society. Why were COSATU women silent on the matter? This question raises more questions than answers, for example: What spaces or

avenues are available for women to voice opinions that sharply differ from their male counterparts? What are the penalties for publicly voicing these opinions?

COSATU has gender structures which have not always been supported by some male leadership. As a result, not all affiliates have functional gender structures or support their existence. Only 10 affiliates out of 21 have full-time gender coordinators (COSATU 2011: 144). Nevertheless, these structures have been very instrumental in advocating for gender equality and demands for women to be represented in senior leadership of the labour movement (Tshoaei 2008). These structures have provided women with an avenue for caucusing and raising issues of importance to their specific gender identity. Women workers have used gender structures to challenge male domination of working-class politics and, consequently, to access the public political space.

The biggest challenge for these gender structures is pushing forward their resolutions inside the male-dominated labour movement. The rules and procedures in COSATU are that, for any major decision (such as those on gender equality) to be implemented, it has to be adopted as a resolution by the National Congress. Such resolutions are first debated and discussed at NEC structures of each affiliate.

Women's voices within the unions are constrained by the internal operations of the unions, which are not favourable for marginal groups. For instance, the system of mandates and consensus, based on the views of the majority, operates on the basis of dominance and power. This often excludes women and restricts the extent to which they can advance an agenda that is specific to their group identity. An example of some of these limitations can be illustrated with the debate on the demand for a 50 per cent quota system in 1997. The COSATU national gender structure made this a proposal for the National Congress in 1997. This was first discussed and debated in affiliates and the mandate was taken to the National Congress for further debate. There, the proposition for a quota system was heavily opposed (Tshoaei 2008).

But what was astonishing about the debate on the quota was that most unions that were in opposition sent female delegates to present the affiliate position. This supported the argument that even women within COSATU did not support the proposition. One of the women who took part in the congress argued, 'Let me say me as a person, I was against the union policy. But when

you are attending a congress and you are given a mandate by the union, you have to present the union's position' (Interview: F Modise).

She further explained the process involved in her affiliate's decision not to support the demand for a quota system:

This was discussed at the NEC. But the problem was that it was dominated by men. So when we advocated for the quota system, it was crushed easily because *women were in the minority*. I would come with a position from the COSATU women's forum, based on our discussions on promoting women within the organisation. But because men are dominant in the organisation, the suggestion was opposed ... So when I attended the congress, I was carrying the mandate from the union. *You cannot change the mandate from the union*. [emphasis added] (Interview: F Modise)

Reports of the congress indicate that this was the only issue on which affiliates in the opposing camps allowed women to present the union position, while in those unions that supported the quota, male delegates presented the union position.⁴ Themba Kgasi, who was a gender coordinator for the Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU) at the time of the conference made a similar observation in her union. She was bound by the union policy of mandates not to advocate for the quota system. She remarks that:

The men who were in leadership wrote on paper and passed on to women to go and present the union's position. When I tried to oppose that, I was told to remain quiet because I was an official and that the union was led by workers and not officials. That woman stood up in the Congress and argued that we as the PPWAWU we do not support the quota. The Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) proposed the quota system, NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) stood up and opposed the quota, NUM stood up and opposed the quota and the quota was lost in that way. And during that period ... we had mobilised as a gender structure. (Interview: T Kgasi)

And there are penalties for those who break away from the pack. Examples include comrade Willie Madisha, former President of COSATU, and Moses Mayekiso, a former general secretary of NUMSA. The conference centre that was named after Mayekiso was renamed after he announced his support for

the Mbeki camp. Yes, trade unions are founded on principles of democracy, but they also have a hierarchical and authoritarian structure that disciplines members when they step out of line (Buhlungu 2010). There are risks of losing one's union position (worse, union membership).

The example of the debate on the quota system elucidates some of the challenges that women face within the labour movement, in terms of making propositions and taking decisions that diverge from the views of the majority. Women in COSATU have created spaces or avenues for advancing their specific agendas; however, they are still limited by the structural relations of power and dominance within the labour movement. Although participation in the public arena is often assumed to be open to all members of democratic institutions or organisations, it is prejudiced against minority groups, and particularly so for women. Participation in the public arena is an act that often involves a display of masculinity, associated with power and dominance. Women, who are often regarded as weak and subordinate, are expected to remain on the sidelines, either as spectators or support actors.

Numerical representation versus representation of diversity

About 48 per cent of COSATU membership is made up of women, which is a greater proportion than the estimated 46 per cent in 2006. Even though women are sidelined in the leadership structures of the unions, their membership in COSATU is increasing. The issue of women leadership or representation in key decision-making structures is central in women's struggles for gender equality in COSATU. And, indeed, this was at the heart of the demand for a 50 per cent quota to increase the number of women in COSATU leadership structures during the COSATU Congress in 1997. The history of COSATU and its politics show that numerical representation is central in decision-making processes. This is reflected by its democratic principles that put emphasis on consensus decision-making and the mandate system.

The political space in the unions is a contested arena that women are still battling to infiltrate. Who defines politics? Who speaks on these politics? Decisions on issues that deserve public discourse are still determined by the location of individuals in the hierarchical structure of the movement. The redefinition of politics is, therefore, driven by the interests of those in powerful positions. Significance is assigned to issues that affect those in positions of

power and therefore have access to resources. The central issue in women's demands for access to senior leadership positions is, therefore, about gaining voice and visibility. It is also about challenging the unions to acknowledge the diversity of its membership and differentiation of their experiences in the workplaces and the economy or politics. The notion of the working class as homogeneous is misleading, particularly in a globalised capitalist society such as ours. The working class includes women and men of different age categories, sexual orientation, ethnic and geographical backgrounds, for example.

Gender identity is critical to the experiences of COSATU members in the workplace and in the labour movement. For instance, the labour market is characterised by inherently patriarchal and sexist employment practices that place women in the worst jobs; in casual and insecure forms of employment with lower wages. Gender discrimination in the labour market and the workplace continues even in post-democratic South Africa, where women and men are proclaimed equal in the Constitution. The unemployment rate of women is much higher than that of their male counterparts; the labour absorption rate of men is much higher than that of women; women and men have different employment opportunities in the labour market; and women continue to earn significantly lower wages than their male counterparts.

The democratic practices and principles practised by the trade union movement need to be adapted to their current context and the challenges they are facing in terms of representing its diverse membership. The notion of democracy that only gives significance to the powerful and influential goes against what the labour movement stands for (protecting and promoting the interests of the less powerful in society; that is, the working class – women included). Democracy that fails to represent marginal groups within its ranks is inadequate and does not promote equality and fairness.

Notes

- 1 It is estimated that in 2008 half of the work force was employed in casual and temporary work, the majority being women (Marais 2011).
- 2 In a study conducted by Tshoaei in 1999, with women administrators and officials in COSATU affiliates, she found that cases of sexual harassment in some unions were seldom resolved, particularly in instances where the accused was in a senior and

- influential position. In some instances women were afraid to report such cases for fear of losing their jobs.
- 3 A code of conduct on sexual harassment was only adopted in 1994, after allegations of serious misconduct by some male delegates at the COSATU National Congress.
 - 4 Resolutions on gender. *The Shopsteward* 6 (5) 1997.

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Interviews

- Anonymous interviewee 1, former SACCAWU shop steward, 2004
- Anonymous interviewee 2, former SATAWU shop steward, 2005
- Patricia Nyman, gender coordinator, SACCAWU, 2007
- Themba Kgasi, former gender coordinator, Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (CEPPWAWU), 2004
- Leah Marumo, gender coordinator, SATAWU, 2007
- Hilda Matjee, chairperson of Gauteng shop stewards' council, SATAWU, 2004
- Faith Modise, shop steward, SACTWU, 2004
- Louisa Modikwe, regional organiser, SACTWU, 2004

5 *The sociology of upward social mobility among COSATU shop stewards*

Themba Masondo

... it was important for the steward that he embodied and acted upon the sentiments and morals valued by his members. The more complete his expression the greater his authority. He had to be free from the taint of personal ambition because social striving was not part of the culture of his members; he could not be a 'rate buster' or 'money-grabber' for that would separate him from the group ethic of the 'fair wage'; he could not be on close and intimate terms with foremen and supervisors for that violated the morality of 'us' and 'them' and roused suspicions of betrayal. (Lane 1974: 199)

Although COSATU has made tremendous gains during the democratic breakthrough in South Africa, the transition continues to pose challenges for the trade union federation. Chief among the threats is the continuing departure of union leadership into government, leadership positions in political parties – mainly the ruling African National Congress (ANC) – the corporate sector, and junior and middle managerial positions in the workplace. COSATU has, over the years, lost thousands of its seasoned leaders who have left the labour movement for greener pastures.

Commenting on this phenomenon during the first eight years after the first democratic elections in 1994, Buhlungu (1994: 24) noted that 'the opening of opportunities for senior positions in the public service, politics, business and non-governmental sector has seen scores of senior unionists leaving positions for greener pastures'. Ex-unionists such as Marcel Golding (former assistant general secretary of National Union of Mineworkers) and Johnny Copelyn (former general secretary of Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union) became wealthy businessmen 'through their leading roles

in the investment companies of their former unions' (Buhlungu 2002: 10). Prominent politicians and senior government officials such as Gwede Mantashe, Membathisi Mdladlana, Ebrahim Patel, Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, Kgalema Motlanthe, Edna Molewa and many others are former COSATU leaders. The departure and upward social mobility of senior COSATU leaders into key government positions and the business sector has received much focus from labour movement scholars (Buhlungu 1999, 1999a, 2000; Buhlungu & Psoulis 1999; Friedman & Robinson 2005; Webster 2001). Yet, little is known about power struggles and politics of upward mobility amongst shop stewards in general and COSATU shop stewards in particular. Drawing from the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey and additional in-depth interviews conducted with current and ex-shop stewards of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), this chapter analyses the sociology of upward social mobility among COSATU shop stewards.

According to Buhlungu (1999, 2000, 2002) the position of shop steward has been used as a stepping stone for upward social mobility by some union leaders on the shopfloor. This has, in turn, resulted in intense shopfloor political struggles amongst workers for the position of shop steward, thus negatively impacting on worker solidarity. In certain instances, this has also weakened the organisational strength of some COSATU affiliates.

The point of departure in this chapter is that, should the ongoing COSATU leadership drain on the shopfloor continue in its current form, this has a potential to hurt the federation's organisational strength in the future. This chapter discusses two modes through which COSATU shop stewards on the shopfloor exit the labour movement for greener pastures, namely, promotion into managerial positions in the workplace and deployment by political parties into local government as municipal councillors.

The exit and upward mobility of shop stewards has been made easier by the changing attitudes of union members to the phenomenon, particularly their willingness to accommodate the ambitions of shopfloor representatives. In the 2008 survey, nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of the federation's members said they were not opposed to the promotion of their shop stewards into supervisory and other managerial positions. More than half (52 per cent) indicated that shop stewards had been promoted into managerial positions in their workplaces. The implications of these findings are discussed further below.

COSATU and the transition from apartheid

In Africa, trade unions are known for their significant contributions into the struggle against colonialism and for national liberation (Freund 1988). Trade unions have historically been at the forefront of political battles against authoritarianism, fascism and dictatorship (Beckman & Sachikonye 2010). The role of organised labour in the struggle for social justice and political freedom is important, in that this social group normally 'has a greater capacity for extensive and effective mobilisation at critical moments than other social groups' (Valenzuela 1989: 189). In South Africa, COSATU is amongst the leading working-class organisations which played a crucial role in the struggle against the apartheid regime.

COSATU is a product of a merger between several unaffiliated unions and those that belonged to the Federation of South African Trade Unions. At its establishment in 1985, the federation set itself three inter-related objectives, namely: to build a strong and militant trade union, to represent the interests of workers against the employers and to challenge 'the might of apartheid' (Baskin 1991). In its efforts to challenge 'the might of apartheid', COSATU joined forces with the ANC, South African Communist Party (SACP) and civil society in their common political programme to overthrow the authoritarian apartheid regime (Baskin 1991: 78). COSATU embraced what Pillay (2008: 283) calls 'working class politics' whose tenets include forging alliances with working-class communities 'to fight the ravages of apartheid oppression and capitalist oppression'. COSATU continued to fight against the apartheid regime, even at the time when the SACP and ANC were officially banned and the United Democratic Front inactive. Taking up a leadership position in any of COSATU's affiliates at the time was regarded as a commitment, not only to service membership, but also to the struggle for national liberation and economic emancipation (Buhlungu 2002).

A distinctive attribute of COSATU shop stewards was their active involvement in community struggles against the apartheid regime. Unlike their African and European counterparts, South African shop stewards 'emerged as crucial leaders in the struggles that began in the 1980s in the townships over rent, shack removals, education and township upgrading' (Pityana & Orkin 1992: 2). Shops stewards in other African countries were involved in the resistance against the colonial rule but this, as it was the case with COSATU shop stewards, did not 'involve the mobilisation of a grass roots working class

movement with a distinct class politics' (Pityana & Orkin 1992: 2).

The demise of the apartheid regime as a system of political domination was followed by promulgation of non-racial 'democratic and social rights for workers, trade unions and citizens and generated at the same time an intense contestation over realisation of these rights' (Von Holdt & Webster 2005: 2). According to Von Holdt & Webster, this transition has 'impelled profound processes of redistribution of power and access to resources, occupations and skills, together with intense struggles over these' (Von Holdt & Webster 2005: 12). The need for redistribution of power and access to resources, occupations and skills have equally been characterised by 'intense struggle'.

The ANC-led government introduced a number of progressive labour and social policies geared towards redressing the racial and structural imbalances of the apartheid era. COSATU made incisive contributions in the shaping of a post-apartheid, socio-political policy framework. The Keynesian-oriented Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was the federation's brainchild. This programme was later adopted as the election manifesto for the ANC and, ultimately, its government macro-economic strategy, after winning the first democratic elections. The RDP made a bold policy commitment to pursue nationalisation and implement some of the policies characteristic to Keynesian economics (Pillay 2006: 189).

The majority of the previously disadvantaged people had expected thoroughgoing transformation and improvement in their social conditions, through the implementation of policies and legislation such as the Employment Equity Act of 1998, the Labour Relations Act of 1995, the Skills Development Act (1998), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (2003). Determined to influence the direction of the ANC-led government, COSATU sent 20 of its top leaders to Parliament under the ANC ticket (Southall & Webster 2010). Amongst the leaders sent were former deputy presidents of COSATU, Chris Dlamini and Godfrey Oliphant; former general secretary of COSATU, Jay Naidoo; former general secretary of National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union, Phillip Dexter; former president of COSATU, Elijah Barayi; former vice-president of Post and Telecommunication Workers' Association, Thaba Mufamadi; former assistant regional secretary of South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), Thami Mseleku; and former president of SADTU, Membathisi Mdladlana, to name but a few.

This was after COSATU took a resolution at its 1993 Special National Congress to forward some of the senior union leaders to Parliament. Other leaders of the federation were forwarded to ANC lists for election to provincial legislatures and local government (Southall & Webster 2010). There is hitherto no evidence that deployment of the COSATU leaders into national and provincial Parliament has benefited the federation in any significant way.

As Southall & Webster (2010: 114) point out:

Although former COSATU members became influential, their presence in government and parliament brought little return to the federation as an organisation, for their allegiance now lay primarily to the ANC and they fairly rapidly lost their close ties to labour. In any case, the loss of many of its more senior and active leaders constituted a considerable 'brain drain'. (Southall & Webster 2010: 141)

This is exactly the opposite of what COSATU originally thought its role would be in government. In his emotional speech at the 1993 special congress, which released him from COSATU for political deployment to Parliament, the outgoing general secretary Jay Naidoo declared with courage, 'we are not taking leave of COSATU. We will be going to the National Assembly to carry forward the work of COSATU, its policies and principles. COSATU has always been, and will continue to be, the guardian of the poor. I want my child and your children to grow up in South Africa free of poverty, crime and oppression' (cited in Madisha 2001). However, this would not be done: all ANC representatives, including COSATU deployees, had to toe the party line.

Seizing the opportunities

Scholarly discussions on the 'brain drain' within COSATU since the democratic breakthrough have focused largely on the departure of the top leadership into public service and business. The reality is that transition to democracy has had a tremendous impact on union leadership at all levels. In addition, it has had an impact on the role of shopfloor leadership and what it means to be a shop steward in the post-apartheid context. According to Von Holdt (2004: 16), 'The end of apartheid and processes of decolonisation created scope for the rapid formation of black elite within which new class forces were crystallising: a nascent bourgeoisie, a political elite, and managerial and

professional middle class.’ The active involvement of shop stewards in the first and subsequent democratic general elections opened up opportunities for advancement of new political careers, while others ‘found opportunities for promotion into the ranks of supervisors and management at work’ (Von Holdt 2003). In his groundbreaking study at Highveld Steel, a manufacturing company based in Mpumalanga province, Von Holdt (2003) found that this phenomenon has not only undermined NUMSA’s organisational strength, but it had also created the perception that being a shop steward was a springboard for promotion and career mobility.

Buhlungu (1999, 1999a, 2000) is amongst the scholars who have paid close attention to the phenomenon of upward social mobility amongst shop stewards at the lower levels of COSATU. Hardly five years into democracy, some shop stewards in the federation had already begun to seize opportunities presented by the ANC-led government, particularly its policies of redress and black empowerment. Writing about the departure of union officials and leaders after the first democratic elections in 1994, Buhlungu (1994: 27) indicated that most shop stewards and union officials were under pressure ‘to prove to the family that sacrifices that they have made over the years in the name of struggle were worthwhile’. As early as 1995, the then NUMSA general secretary, Enoch Godongwana, bitterly complained about a number of organisers and shop stewards who were leaving the union to take up managerial positions in their companies (Buhlungu 1994). The union had dedicated so much time and resources to training these ex-union leaders, but after all the efforts, these stewards accepted promotion instead of investing their experience and skill in consolidating the organisational strength of the labour movement.

Writing about former shop stewards from Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers’ Union (CEPPWAWU), Buhlungu (1999) further showed that large numbers of shop stewards were leaving the union to join management in their companies. One of CEPPWAWU’s ex-shop stewards rose to the position of industrial relations manager at Novartis – a pharmaceutical company born out of a merger between Giba Geigy and Sandoz (Buhlungu 1999). Some ex-COSATU shop stewards were deployed under the ANC ticket to serve in local government. Ruth Mhlongo, an ex-NUMSA shop steward, was amongst the first shopfloor leaders deployed into local government under the ANC ticket (Buhlungu 1999a). The promotion of shop stewards continues even today.

Men and women with two masters

In his seminal work titled *The Union Makes Us Strong*, Tony Lane defines a shop steward as a person 'with two masters', namely the employer and the membership who elected him or her as a worker leader. They are responsible for championing and defending workers' interests, be it on dismissals, improved working conditions, organising social activities and other issues of interest to workers. The most difficult task these men and women face is dealing with the constant pressure and dilemma of managing the conflicting interests of their two 'masters': their employer who pays their salaries and their union which requires representation, often against the employer. As Lane describes the shop steward's role: 'The rank and file pressed him to resolve their grievances, management pressed him to contain his members grievances, union officials also pressed him to control his members—though for different reasons than managers' (Lane 1974: 197).

In South Africa, shop stewards were first introduced in the late 19th century by white craft workers organised into craft unions, most of which were established as branches of British unions (Pityana & Orkin 1992). Until the 1970s, the shop-steward movement in South Africa was rather weak and uncertain. The increasingly repressive apartheid regime and phenomenal growth of the British shop steward movement in the 1970s generated resistance, which ultimately culminated in the positioning of black shop stewards and their committees as key centres of worker power. Depending on the size of an enterprise, shop stewards are elected in different departments to represent specific concerns of members in those departments. Being a shop steward is not an easy task, as it often entails a lot of self-sacrifice and hard work. Shop stewards spend a lot of time with their constituencies in the workplace trying to assist them deal with a wide range of issues which affect them as individuals and as a collective (Pityana & Orkin 1992). Their power and influence in a workplace depends largely on their visibility and hard work in responding to workers' general grievances.

Their work is so diverse that most of them are forced by circumstances to be multi-skilled. They should have some basic knowledge of economics, labour law, social work, politics, industrial sociology, health and safety, conflict and dispute resolution, organising, financial accounting, family counselling and other professions so that they are able to offer decent services to their electors. Shop stewards also serve as a 'link between the union as an organisation and

the membership at the grassroots' (Pityana & Orkin 1992: 4). They hold a strategic position in the life of any union, even in countries such as Germany where works councils are recognised by law as legitimate worker representative structures. Depending on the political orientation of trade unions, shop stewards are also expected to be active in political parties. They must assist in campaigning for their party-political allies during local government and general elections. All shop stewards of COSATU affiliates are democratically elected by members in annual general meetings or branch congresses.

COSATU's two militant giants

In 1987, the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the Motor Industry Combined Workers Union, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union and the United Metal, Mining and Allied Workers of South Africa merged to form what today is known as the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) (Forrest 2011). NUMSA played a crucial role in the South African national liberation struggle, and continues to make a significant contribution in the construction of the new South Africa (Forrest 2005). According to Von Holdt (2003: 186) this union was not only a 'leading protagonist in the evolution of COSATU's strategy of reconstruction', but it also 'developed policies for engaging with restructuring in the metal industry'.

The union is well known for its epic militancy and ability to influence policy direction of the federation. In his keynote address to the event celebrating NUMSA's 20th anniversary in 2007, COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi praised the union for 'its glorious history ... as an all-rounder, producing all-round cadres and leaders of our broader movement' and for teaching the labour movement to understand the dialectical link between workplace and broader community struggles.¹

In 2011, NUMSA was the biggest metalworkers union in South Africa and the second biggest affiliate of COSATU, with 262 976 members (COSATU 2011). The union underwent some severe challenges, with widespread introduction of short time and massive retrenchments, owing to the 2008 global capitalist crisis. NUMSA remains one of the most influential affiliates of COSATU.

Formed in 1987, SAMWU continues to wield significant power in most municipalities across the country. Its role in the struggle against the apartheid regime is also remarkable. The union has a reputation of radicalism and

militancy in defence of workers interests (Barchiesi 2001). Its spectacular quantitative growth in the early 1990s was simultaneously coupled with massive strikes over wages, recognition and racist supervision (Mawbey 2007). In 2004, SAMWU was amongst the top five affiliates with highest membership. Whereas the union's membership increased from 114 127 in 2004 to 118 973 in 2008, the union had lost its position as one of the top five affiliates with the highest membership in the federation by the end of 2008 (Munakamwe 2009). In 2011, SAMWU was the seventh biggest affiliate in COSATU, with 135 679 members (COSATU 2011).

At the 2009 COSATU National Congress in Midrand, SAMWU disagreed with the federation's general secretary during a debate on what constituted a militant or violent strike (Masondo 2010). It also registered its discontent against one of the statements released by the federation condemning the use of rubbish bins to trash and litter streets during one of its national strikes. Commercialisation and privatisation of public services by the ANC-led government is one of the major challenges confronting the union in the post-apartheid era (Barchiesi 2001). The union has embarked upon anti-privatisation campaigns, together with COSATU. This did little to deter the ANC's determination to pursue neo-liberal economic policies, whose standard package included privatisation and tight austerity measures.

'We've paid a heavy price for this freedom'

While Lane's (1974) remarks about the high moral and ethical standards that shop stewards were expected by their members to follow (see quote at the beginning of this chapter) – particularly in the era of resistance against apartheid – it is no longer self-evident that these standards apply to shop stewards in the post-apartheid environment. It would appear that trade union members have relaxed the standards and are therefore more tolerant of ambition for upward mobility on the part of the shopfloor representatives. The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey shows that the majority of COSATU members (63 per cent) approve of shop stewards' promotion into management in their workplaces. In the apartheid era, the promotion of a shop steward into management was frowned upon for it represented a deviation from the revolutionary morality of the workers' movement. The 2008 survey also shows that 52 per cent of the respondents indicated that some shop stewards at their workplaces had been promoted into managerial positions. Tables 5.1 and 5.2

bear testimony to the dramatic ideological changes taking place within the federation.

Table 5.1 *Have any of your shop stewards in the workplace been promoted into managerial positions?*

Yes (%)	No (%)
51.5	37.8

Table 5.2 *Is it acceptable (i.e. do you approve) for shop stewards to be promoted into management?*

Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
32.3	31.1	11.7	13.5
Total	63.4		25.2

In order to gain in-depth understanding of the sociology of upward social mobility among COSATU shop stewards, in February and March 2010 the author of this chapter conducted semi-structured interviews with current and ex-NUMSA and SAMWU shop stewards. These two unions were selected because of the distinct sectors in which they organise. The focus on the two unions is useful, in that it allows for critical comparative analysis of the promotion of shop stewards into management in both the public and private sectors. NUMSA organises workers largely in the private sector and SAMWU generally organises workers in the public sector, municipalities in particular.

As it will be shown below, the data gathered from the interviews with ex-NUMSA and SAMWU shop stewards helps us to begin to understand the main social forces driving members' approval for shop-steward promotions into managerial positions. Some shop stewards have been promoted into management positions, whilst others have been deployed into local government as councillors on an ANC ticket. One of the ex-NUMSA shop stewards interviewed has now been promoted as a manager in the human resource department in a subsidiary of an American multinational company. Some of the current shop stewards in his workplace still hold him in high regard and often consult him for advice. Asked why he left the union to join management:

We have paid a heavy price for this freedom. We suffered in the trenches with a common goal of destroying apartheid. Now that

we have the freedom, we need to be at the forefront of addressing the injustice and the pain we suffered under apartheid. We all agree with the ANC that we need to take the transformation struggle to new heights. (Interview: NUMSA interviewee 1)

He further indicated that it was COSATU that fought for the post-apartheid transformation policies such as employment equity and black economic empowerment. This ex-unionist seems comfortable with his promotion, as he associates it with the broader transformation of South African society. As found in the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey, it is clear that some ordinary union members in the plant are comfortable with the promotion of their leaders into management. The ex-NUMSA shop steward tried to shed some light on this:

Union members do understand that transformation is not negotiable ... they understand our objective as a Congress Movement as outlined in the national democratic revolution. They know very well that white people benefited a great deal under apartheid ... our government has given us a chance to occupy positions which were previously reserved for the whites. (Interview: NUMSA interviewee 1)

An ex-SAMWU shop steward who is now serving as a human resources manager in a municipality in the Vaal area echoed the same sentiments as the ex-NUMSA shop steward. He argued strongly that:

In government, these are some of the opportunities brought about by democracy. It is not like we do not have training and skills. We do have them, you understand. Shop stewards get a lot of training and when their term of office lapses we can't remain in the same position ... we must move on with life. (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1)

It is difficult to establish the general state of relationship between the union and ex-COSATU unionists who have been promoted into management. A former branch leader of SAMWU in a municipality in the Vaal area indicated that he still enjoys a good working relationship with the union, to the extent that his management colleagues once suspected that he was a union link in management. He indicated that, despite 'normal' differences, he generally enjoys a healthy relationship with the union.

There are no problems. We go to the meetings with a common approach on issues. They can phone me anytime to discuss issues outside formal meetings. I can say that the relationship [with the union] is balanced. They even call me on weekends. The other advantage is that they do not make unreasonable demands. I think this is the backbone of our healthy working relationship. Initially I had a serious problem with this. Management always viewed me as pro-union. (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1)

The one problem with the phenomenon of shop-steward promotion into management is that the union loses well-trained and seasoned unionists, as the ex-SAMWU shop steward puts it, ‘The number of people with experience [within the union] is becoming increasingly low. This issue is weakening the union’ (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1). It has also somewhat tamed the union’s militancy in his workplace. Some union members sometimes can become so sympathetic to the extent that they view any confrontation against the municipal management as a fight against their comrades and ex-leaders. Coupled with this is the ex-steward’s observation that some current shop stewards regard the position of shop steward as a stepping stone to management: ‘There is a perception that if you become a shop steward you will be promoted. For them this is some sort of a promotion ticket. But this is not true. Promotion comes with necessary skills, experience and qualifications’ (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1). The union is to be partly blamed for this because it ‘no longer organises political education on a bigger scale. The current crop of shop stewards is not being given enough education on political issues’ (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1).

What is striking about the promotion of shop stewards into managerial positions, in both the corporate and public sectors in South Africa, is that most of them get promoted into human resources or industrial relations departments. Some ex-NUMSA shop stewards at Volkswagen, Daimler Chrysler, BMW and Ford are now serving as human resources officers in their respective companies. NUMSA’s head of collective bargaining, Alex Mashilo, attributes this to employers’ interest in ensuring industrial quiescence and to weaken the union (Interview: A Mashilo). In some instances, according to Mashilo, management embarks on a vigorous process of identifying stronger shop stewards for promotion, in order to divide workers and weaken the union. However, some ex-NUMSA unionists now serving as managers hold a different view:

... we are here not to render the union irrelevant. We understand where we come from and we know workers' concerns. When we do our work we do take into consideration those issues. You need to understand that we do have revolutionary consciousness. Remember we were born in the struggle. (Interview: NUMSA interviewee 1)

An ex-SAMWU shop steward argued that promotion of their shop stewards is not necessarily a problem, because 'we are assisting our ANC government to function well. This, as I said earlier, is our hard-won power. Who will run this government if not us?' (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 1). SAMWU's former national treasurer, Sam Maloka, indicates that it is hardly the case that shop stewards who have been promoted into managerial position will be labelled sell-outs within the union. According to him, many of the union members in most ANC-led municipalities 'believe that this is a new government which must be given a chance' (Interview: S Maloka).

The risks of political deployment in local government

There seems to be reluctance on the part of shop stewards in the private sector to leave their full-time jobs to serve as ward councillors in local government. Shop stewards interviewed complained that being deployed in local government as municipal councillors had potential risks, such as recall, political dishonesty and job insecurity. As one NUMSA shop steward puts it:

What is in for you as a councillor compared to having a decent permanent job in a company? I do not know, what I know are the comrades who excitedly left their jobs to be councillors. I can tell you without doubt: they have never been happy. Every time [when you are a councillor] you need to please your political party and your constituency ... but if they are unhappy they can remove you anytime. To be a councillor is seasonal, what happens if your party loses election ... you also lose your job. (Interview: NUMSA interviewee 2)

Former SAMWU national treasurer, Sam Maloka, also indicated that there are instances where some union leaders have been let down by the ANC after being promised influential positions in local and provincial government

(Interview: S Maloka). Despite some of the risks associated with political deployment into local government, some COSATU shop stewards still accept nomination to serve in local government as councillors. An ex-SAMWU shop steward based in the Limpopo province is amongst the few shop stewards who were brave enough to accept ANC deployment into local government as a ward councillor. She was initially hired in a district municipality as an administrative assistant in a municipal department. She argues that there is no reason at all to worry about job security because she is serving the ANC government, whether she is a councillor or she works for the municipality as an employee (Interview: SAMWU interviewee 2).

She seems confident that, even if she were to lose her job as a ward councillor, she would not experience serious difficulties in getting back her former job as a government bureaucrat. She also appeared unfazed by possibilities of recall or losing political deployment in the next local elections. Her worry was less about being a councillor or serving government as an employee and more about losing political integrity, in the event that her electors should revolt against her. For this reason, she would prefer to be deployed in the next election as a proportional representation councillor, rather than as a ward councillor. In her assessment, being a proportional representation councillor is more secure than being a ward councillor. The main difference between a ward councillor and proportional councillor is that the former is directly accountable to the voters, whilst the latter is accountable to the political party. Whenever there are community protests and riots against any issue concerning municipal service delivery, ward councillors are often the first to be blamed.

The observation that shop stewards in the public service are more willing to be deployed as ANC councillors in local government suggests that a sector in which a shop steward is based somehow influences their choices on whether they accept political deployment or not. Those who work in the private sector are more reluctant to accept political deployment into local government as councillors as compared to their counterparts in the public sector. However, there is always the possibility that individual comparative considerations such as wages and working conditions may motivate shop stewards to accept deployment into local government, irrespective of the sector in which they are employed. Some ex-SAMWU shop stewards do not see any political difference between serving as councillors or bureaucrats in local government.

Making sense of this

The COSATU Workers' Survey results, from 1994 to 2008, and the data gathered from the interviews show that the social meaning of being a shop steward is changing with the times. Gone are the days where a promotion of a shop steward into management was rejected as a symbol of moral and political bankruptcy. Evidently, there has been a tremendous change in the political attitudes of COSATU's membership since the advent of democracy in South Africa. Just like any other social phenomenon, there is no clear-cut analytical framework that can help us make sense of the fact that most COSATU shop stewards are increasingly getting promoted into management and that its members are quite supportive of this.

There are several questions arising out of the changes in COSATU members' attitudes: Is it because they regard the post-apartheid state as a vehicle through which they get rewarded for their involvement in the struggle against the racist apartheid regime, or is it because of the erosion of 'working class culture' (Pityana & Orkin 1992)? Is it part of the pervasive and widely felt aspiration to a middle-class lifestyle in post-apartheid South Africa (Buhlungu 2008) or due to a 'consumer culture' (Sitas 2004)? Is it just because unions are viewed as stepping stones for individual social mobility (Buhlungu 2002) or, lastly, is it part of the capitalist project to consolidate its hegemony by weakening trade unions? With regard to the COSATU shop stewards who left the labour movement to join local government as ANC councillors, does this represent a success with the federation's call to its members to 'swell' the ranks of the ANC and the government? Or does it represent a general economic transformational trend in South African society?

These are some of the questions for which there is no single answer. However, this social phenomenon can better be analysed from a sociological perspective. Notwithstanding the ongoing debates amongst scholars in sociology, there is a general theoretical leaning towards a materialist perspective that emphasises social structure in order to understand human behaviour. However, this does not suggest that social beings are passive subjects of social circumstances. The changes in the South African political context and the economic system within which COSATU operates undoubtedly have an influence over its members' socio-political attitudes. Equally, a union's organisational culture and tactical political position can also influence its members' views and attitudes. The changes in the domestic political context and the general capitalist interest in ensuring

industrial quiescence are some of the factors that can help us understand the rapid procession of ex-COSATU shop stewards into managerial positions.

Change in political context

The capitalist apartheid regime is notorious for its legacy of systematic dispossession and disempowerment of black people. Black persons were systemically denied opportunities by a system that not only ruled through the gun and violence, but also benefited a white minority. Racial restrictions to skill development and the impoverishment of the black majority were deliberately imposed to force the black majority into cheap labour (Wolpe 1972). Von Holdt (2004) describes the apartheid work order as ‘the apartheid workplace regime’ where black workers were subjected to racially despotic authoritarianism and denied access to opportunities for occupational mobility. According to Von Holdt (2003: 287), ‘Apartheid oppression was not something found outside the factory: it was also internal to the workplace and indeed structured management relations with black workers.’

When the ANC took political power in 1994 it introduced social and economic policies to redress the social inequalities accumulated under colonialism and apartheid. The post-apartheid state would later take an active role in the implementation and monitoring of such policies. Bentley and Habib (2008) argue that implementation of the redress project by the post-apartheid state involves three inter-related but distinctive elements, namely, legislation, the establishment of institutional structures to ensure implementation and the provision of financial resources to fast-track the redress agenda. Through legislation such as the Employment Equity Act of 1998, the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act of 2003, the post-apartheid government aimed to contribute to the social and economic transformation of South Africa. At the centre of these policies is the need to promote increased participation of black people in the economy and alter apartheid composition of management in most workplaces. All these efforts are understood as an attempt to dismantle the colonial and apartheid legacy of dispossession and disempowerment of the black majority during apartheid (Southall 2004).

Key government institutions such as the 1999 Employment Equity Commission, the 1996 Commission for Gender Equality and the 1998 Black

Empowerment Commission were established to monitor and apply pressure for the undoing of the apartheid socio-economic legacy. The government has invested and continues to invest considerable financial resources for skills development and training for the previously disadvantaged. With regard to BBBEE, the government provides 'loans from the public purse to black and other disadvantaged groups with a view of diversifying the ownership and managerial profiles of South African corporate' (Bentley & Habib 2008: 21). About R2.2 billion of government money was used to support BBBEE initiatives in the 2002/03 financial year (Seepe 2004).

The government's redress agenda saw scores of historically disadvantaged citizens taking up top positions in the civil service and the private corporate sector. In 2009, the president of South Africa Jacob Zuma lauded his political party – the ANC – for the increase in numbers of the black middle class. He wrote: 'Our effective BBBEE and affirmative action policies have over the years contributed to the growth of South Africa's black middle class by 2.6 million in 2007'.² However, transformation in the South African private sector is moving at a snail's pace. The Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant, has expressed disappointment at the slow pace in transformation of South African workplaces (Ramutloa 2011). The 2010 annual report of the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) showed that white people occupy 73.1 per cent of the top level management jobs (CEE 2010/11). According to Minister Oliphant, this 'disturbing' reality represents 'pure resistance by the captains of industry' (Ramutloa 2010).

Surely, COSATU shop stewards are not passive observers of the redress project as championed by the ANC-led government. They were together with the ANC in the struggle against apartheid. After all, their federation was one of the main protagonists of the redress project, particularly in the realms of the workplace and the labour market, and society in general. The promotion of shop stewards into managerial positions today is more politically acceptable because it is consistent with post-apartheid policies on affirmative action and black economic empowerment. It is no surprise that some ex-COSATU members and leaders cited economic empowerment of the previously disadvantaged as one of the reasons for accepting promotions into managerial positions in the workplace. It was difficult for shop stewards during the apartheid era to use their positions as springboards for promotion. The increased promotion of ex-COSATU shop stewards is a logical outcome of post-apartheid processes

of class formation driven by the government's redress policy framework and processes.

Capitalism and its historical tendencies

The political transition from apartheid to liberal democracy did not alter the capitalist character of the South African economy. South Africa is amongst the states that are committed to capitalism. COSATU does not only operate under liberal democracy, but also capitalism. Capitalism has a host of tactics which have historically been used to sap the strength of trade unions and worker militancy. These include the use of violence, repression, worker participation (Mandel 1973) and co-option of union leaders (Lane 1974; Mandel 1973). Co-option of influential working-class leaders and their organisations into the capitalist system is one of the oldest tactics used by those who own the means of production to weaken and suppress workers' organisational strength. In the industrial world of work, the promotion of shop stewards 'is a common device for dividing shop-stewards' (Pityana & Orkin 1992: 5). Much of the classical Marxist tradition highlights a tendency by the capitalists to co-opt militant trade union leaders as part of its perpetual attempt to resolve the crises of profitability and legitimacy (Burawoy 1979; Lane 1974; Mandel 1973; Mills 1948; Ramsay 1977; Webster 1985). Capitalists have a deep interest in co-opting union leaders with whom they have problems into their power structure. Promotion of shop stewards into management can also be understood as part of capitalists' attempt to maintain hegemony over the workplace by silencing dissent and weakening trade unions.

The history of trade unionism is an expression of the desire by workers to counter the exploitative and unequal power relations between labour and capital. Individual workers cannot withstand the exploitative power of capital on their own. Work under capitalism is a highly contested terrain, with labour and capital contesting each other over its control. Put simply, trade unionism is about the power of organised labour to challenge the power of capital. It is the power of organised labour that leads capitalists to resort to quick fixes such as co-option of influential and militant union leaders into management, so as to neutralise and weaken the organisational strength of labour. In an industrial context, characterised by severe disputes and conflicts, employers adopt a variety of strategies to tilt the balance of power on their side, including co-opting the militants into their ranks.

Conclusion

COSATU shop stewards are part of a society which is transforming from a legacy of dispossession and disempowerment. They are not passive observers of the transformation agenda, as pursued by the post-apartheid regime. Moreover, they are susceptible to the capitalist historical interest which seeks to sap the organisational strength of trade unions. What is worrying is the organisational and political impact this phenomenon has on the federation. Organisationally, there is no doubt that the departure of shop stewards into management positions or political careers comes at a cost to unions in terms of skills and experience.

Notes

- 1 Vavi Z, COSATU GS salutes the metal workers on the occasion of the NUMSA's 20th anniversary celebrations, *COSATU Daily News*, 19 May 2007.
- 2 Jacob Zuma on plans for economic transformation. 13 November 2009, Accessed November 2011, <http://blogs.timeslive.co.za/hartley/2009/11/13/jacob-zuma-on-plans-for-economic-transformation-full-text/>

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Interviews

- NUMSA interviewee 1, ex-NUMSA shop steward at an American subsidiary plant, March 2010
- NUMSA interviewee 2, NUMSA shop steward at BMW Rosslyn plant, March 2010
- SAMWU interviewee 1, ex-SAMWU shop steward at a municipality in the Vaal area, February 2010
- SAMWU interviewee 2, ex-SAMWU leader at a municipality in the Limpopo province, February 2010
- Alex Mashilo, Head of NUMSA's department for organising campaigns and collective bargaining, February 2010
- Sam Maloka, former national treasurer of SAMWU, March 2010

6 *COSATU, the '2010 Class Project' and the contest for 'the soul' of the ANC*

Ari Sitas

Since the proclaimed defeat of the '1996 Class Project' in 2009 in the politics of the Tripartite Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and COSATU, what has become obvious is a new and even stronger class project, the '2010 Class Project'. This, of course, is a short-hand expression for a political power-bloc which is networked around the Polokwane victors, a network which is trying to turn political advantage into economic gain. According to senior COSATU office-bearers, the new power-bloc would rather see COSATU and the SACP 'put in their place', see the removal of any left-leaning leaders by 2012 and assert a non-class bias in the politics of the ANC which, in the name of the people, will entrench its economic power. 'You see ... this bloc has no political history and has no mass base, they are gaining support by demonising communists and trade unionists', asserted an office bearer of one of the largest trade unions in COSATU, 'and they are assisted by a section of the mass media' (Interview: Z Nkosi). 'These people were not in the accumulation queue during Thabo's [Mbeki] reign' (Interview: M Mphafudi).

Such sentiments are echoed in the words of COSATU's general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, that this is a small group that fights for 'positions for personal accumulation and their agenda of crass materialism'. Vavi also asserted that 'they' wanted to wrest control of the Alliance by spewing allegations of a communist takeover of the ANC, and anti-COSATU and anti-communist rhetoric. 'They thrive on rumour-mongering with all manner of claims that communists are gunning for certain positions (at the ANC conference) in 2012. This tendency will stop at nothing, including the use of the race card and tribalism.'¹

The most vocal part of this 'faction' was to be found in the leadership of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), until the disciplinary hearings against the top echelon of the youth wing were instituted by the ANC, in the latter part of 2011. It will take pages to capture the barrage of statements, positions and attacks that have emanated from the ANCYL. It had not been shy in using every issue and every possible medium to create a critical climate around the directions the ANC should be taking in the post-Mbeki era. The ANCYL was strident on the imperative for nationalisation of the mining industry, going back to the letter and meaning of the Freedom Charter, but – at the same time – rubbishing both democracy and socialism. The tensions between the left-wing in the Alliance and the above-mentioned 'power-bloc' as represented by the ANCYL reached a crescendo after the Youth League's president, Julius Malema, was booed at the December 2009 SACP Congress. Malema, the ANCYL's face and voice, upped the temperature by readily accepting an 'invitation to war'.

Whereas some of the fire and brimstone has decelerated, tensions over the leadership and direction of the ANC seem to be manifesting themselves within the organisation, within the state apparatuses, between and within provincial leaderships. COSATU's critical voice has also been gaining its own momentum, but there are signs of divisions within the federation on issues of leadership and direction of the ruling party (see Chapter 12 of this volume).

This chapter presents a discussion that provides the social, political and organisational context necessary for understanding the results of the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey discussed in this volume. However, the chapter does not discuss the survey results per se, but seeks to understand how the federation is being reconfigured and to fathom whether or not such reconfiguration will make COSATU sustain its contestation over the 'soul' of the ANC. Whereas previous surveys showed that the Alliance was well-supported by COSATU members, does the current polarisation within the ANC signify polarisations in workers' dispositions and priorities? In the same breath, what could the precise role of the working class and of the trade union movement be and can the leadership of the trade union movement count on its mass base?

The dilemmas of polarisation were not lost to COSATU's 2009 Congress. The leadership asserted its commitment to continue with a transformation agenda, with building a socialist movement and as a leadership 'anchored in the

Congress and Comintern traditions' to continue with the Alliance's priorities. It also recognised that the federation's strength, perhaps its main strength, at work and in the community was still the 'shop stewards ... COSATU's two million members and leaders at all levels. These comrades are the bedrock and lifeblood of the federation; and continue to work tirelessly, often without reward, to continue the struggles of the workers. Without their contribution, COSATU will not be a force to be reckoned with' (COSATU, 2009).

Whereas the Alliance priorities prevailed, the public sector strike of 2010 was to create further polarisation and, for the first time in the Alliance's history, tensions between the trade union movement and the SACP. Unfortunately, our data speaks to the period before the latest tensions and we have to reflect critically on the attitudes and dispositions of the 'bedrock' and the 'lifeblood' of the federation.

It has become a habit for some to spend an inordinate amount of digital space and paper to demonstrate that, as an institution, COSATU is not 'independent', or that it is part of the current capitalist status quo. Furthermore, it is argued that it is not sensitive to the emerging new social movements and not sensitive to the aspirations of casual, temporary, marginal workers and the poor. Although this is hard to sustain, given nuanced work by Ercument Celik (2010) on the material interconnections between shopfloor workers and 'the poor', an argument could be made that it might be more about rhetoric rather than about common forms of action. It might also be going through an internal crisis, what Sakhela Buhlungu (2010) has argued around the 'paradox of victory': that the federation has gained influence and lost power vis-à-vis capital. The current research dealt with what COSATU and its members 'are' as opposed to what they 'aren't'.

If the aforesaid '2010 Class Project' is trying to marginalise COSATU from influence, left-wing critics of the Alliance have raised persistent doubts about whether the federation can survive this period and whether it is as revolutionary as it asserts (Lehulere 2005). To such criticisms are added observations about its increasing business unionism practices and the question is often raised whether it is anything more than a 'glorified TUCSA'.² Also, the quandary is whether COSATU's members are increasingly becoming part of a labour aristocracy which does not represent the poor and has been a central player in the class compromise that has assisted a narrow Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)³ victory.

What can be answered through the data are seven inter-related questions: Has the social composition of the federation and its affiliates changed and what is the significance of that? Has, therefore, the representational capacity of COSATU changed? Has the observed support for the ANC during previous surveys changed and, if so, how does it relate to the above? Are COSATU and its affiliates harder on the state and the public sector, as opposed to the private sector/capital? Have the dispositions and forms of consciousness of its rank-and-file leadership changed? Are the federation and its affiliates shifting from 'strategic unionism' towards a new approach to participation and resistance and, by implication, are rank-and-file members more active in social movements? Is a clear pattern of interaction between workplace and community struggles in evidence? Answers to these questions have implications for COSATU's ability to maintain its power and influence and therefore engage in a successful contest for the proverbial soul of the ANC. What follows below is a discussion that examines these questions.

'Of social composition'

The social composition of COSATU has been changing for some time. Since the early 1990s the shift to a more urban – as opposed to a migrant – labour force has been marked. This was very marked by 2008, where only a third of shop stewards were migrant workers. This does not mean that many workers do not have rural links, dependents or major interests in the countryside.⁴ What it means, though, is that, increasingly, the leadership is drawn from a more urban pool of talent. In the 2008 survey, less than a third of COSATU members claimed their status as migrant, and within this, more men (35 per cent) than women (21 per cent) claimed so.

Furthermore, although women remain a strong minority in COSATU's leadership, what has shifted is their composition; the large numbers of women worker leaders drawn from sectors such as clothing and textile and commercial and allied sectors in the past have been giving way to more professional women in the public and private sectors. This is reflected in the 2008 survey, as 101 of the 226 (44.7 per cent) women interviewed worked in professional and clerical occupations, as opposed to 37 (16.3 per cent) in the unskilled and semi-skilled categories, which would previously have been the preserve of unionised workers from the former sectors. Furthermore, 71 of the 226 (31 per cent) women were skilled workers. Men were drawn more heavily

from the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled categories, with only 22.9 per cent from the professional and clerical categories.

Finally, the age cohort is more or less similar to what it was during the 2004 survey, but the 18–35 year-olds who are there now are more educated. The holders of a qualification at the level of Standards 9–10 (Grades 11–12) peaks by a decimal point in the 18–25 and 26–35 age categories, the holders of a technical diploma peak in the 26–35 age category and the holders of a university qualification peak in the 36–45 age category. Simply put, the younger age cohorts are more educated than in the past. The number of those with educational levels up to Standard 8 (Grade 10) declined to 19 per cent in 2008 (the 2004 survey had them at 36 per cent). There is also a significant gender correlation with education levels; 19 per cent of women in this sample have university education, as opposed to 9 per cent of men.

As other parts of this chapter will demonstrate, there are strong correlations between all three variables and dispositions shared by shop stewards and workers in COSATU.

'Of representation'

The representational capacity of COSATU has changed fundamentally. There is no doubt that some of the empirical points of the left critique of COSATU are correct. The 2008 survey indicates a growth in white-collar and professional categories. Furthermore, as a trade union federation, it represents the more permanent and stable members of the labour force and not the casualised and the sub-casualised: the 'precariat'. The overwhelming majority of workers in the 2008 survey sample (88 per cent) were in permanent, full-time jobs.⁵ Therefore, COSATU leadership represents core, established workers, rather than those on the margins of the workplace and the labour market. Similarly, COSATU office-bearers and leaders have to always make sure that, no matter what social action, politics or social policy, they have the support of established and relatively more secure workers.

It has been argued in the broader labour studies literature that the increasing significance of white-collar and public sector workers in the unions of the COSATU affiliates, like teachers, nurses and clerks in the state sector, and bank officials and commercial office workers in the private sector, do not only bring with them higher qualifications, but also different aspirations and dispositions.

In the broader international trade union literature, the growth of white-collar unionism has been associated with a decline in federation-level militancy associated with factory workers. They also constituted, according to C. Wright Mills (1964), the new 'cheerful robots' of modern capitalism – conservative, individualist and careerist. This argument and hypothesis will be partly tested below. What is important to articulate at this stage is that both the changing social composition and the employee base of COSATU are shifting as trade unions are declining in manufacturing and blue-collar jobs, and increasing in new areas made up of lower-middle-class and middle-class strata.

Worker leaders and the ANC

In the first three COSATU Workers' Surveys (1994, 1998 and 2004), support for the ANC among the federation's members was very strong (averaging at 74 per cent). However, in 2008 this trend was reversed as support for the ruling part dipped to 57 per cent. This obviously raises questions about the hegemonic power of the political current. Phrased differently, support for the ANC has waned significantly, membership of the SACP has remained small but stable, but trust in COSATU and its leadership has remained high.

The 'waning' of the support is ambiguous: support for the Alliance and its endurance is at 63 per cent. Here, there is no doubt, respondents have answered with a strong 'yes' to questions of political preferences and affiliations. The ambiguity arises because the majority of those who did not say 'yes' were not forthcoming: they refused to answer the question. The increase of this category is significant, but needs more nuanced qualitative work if a more meaningful answer is to be provided.

Then follows the ambiguity of what it means to 'belong' to the ANC. For socialist critics of the ANC and of COSATU, it would have been assumed to be obvious that the more middle-class an organisation becomes, the more it would support middle-class and petit-bourgeois movements. It would have been easy to match that with an image of the ANC as a pro-capitalist movement, content with a narrow BEE focus, whose main preoccupation is the transformation of a black petit-bourgeoisie into a wealthy bourgeois class. The shift in COSATU's base away from the unskilled and semi-skilled workers would have therefore entailed an increased support for the ANC. In fact, the 2008 survey shows the opposite: the younger, the more educated and

the more skilled respondents showed less support for the ANC (and/or they fell into the 'refuse to tell' category); while the blue-collar, the unskilled and the semi-skilled respondents, and those who were migrant and male, showed more support for the ANC (and the number of respondents with this status in the 'refuse to tell' category decreased).

As shown in other parts of this chapter, the 58 per cent support for the ANC correlates highly with more poorly educated workers (Standards 2–5, or Grades 4–6, and lower qualifications). Support is at its highest in the oldest group of workers and shop stewards (56–65 year-olds) who would have been 19–28 year-olds during the Durban strikes of 1973, at the time when the contemporary trade unions were formed, and in their prime of their 30s and early 40s during the struggles of the 1980s. The greatest and most unambiguous support will be found among miners and construction and allied workers, that is, the highest support will be in the National Union of Mineworkers and, by implication, also among migrant workers and those who have the most household dependants. This can also be traced in other industrial unions that had their heydays of militancy in the 1980s and early 1990s.

For a careful analysis of what has been happening in local politics in the poorer sections of the urban and rural areas in the last decade, this is not surprising. As many new social movements have been discovering, a high degree of ANC grassroots power, especially during and since the 'Zuma tsunami', has taken hold of local mobilisations.

'Of shifts in consciousness?'

In 2000, during a study of black worker leadership, which involved a longitudinal ethnography for over a 30-year period, it was possible to argue that the 'elastic band' that held their comradeships together survived into the 2000s, despite mobility and differentiation (Sitas 2006). However it was stretched, this 'elastic band' held people who had experienced rapid mobility after the 1994 period, people who remained 'stuck' in their old jobs and people whose life-chances had deteriorated through job losses and unemployment.

Those 'stuck', who remained on the shopfloor and who were involved in defensive struggles over job losses, were suspicious of the new generation of workers. The reality of a changing guard and of younger shop stewards 'coming in' who did not share their histories and traditions was palpable. I argued then

that any future dissonance, alterity or resistance on the shopfloor by workers will have to understand a 'negotiation' between the two generations. Does the COSATU Workers' Survey, a few years on, indicate such a 'negotiation' – or a changing of the guard? Unfortunately, the answer remains a research question: a more decisive attempt at an answer, on the basis of the survey, will demand a recoding of the questionnaires and different questions. From what exists in the age-correlations, there seems to be – at first glance – a definite changing of the guard, at least at the level of political dispositions. At first glance, too, there seems to be more coherence and continuity across age-cohorts within the industrial unions and less so within the service and public sector unions.

'Of capital and state'

Does the COSATU Workers' Survey indicate whether there is a hardening stance towards managements and/or capital, in general, or a hardening stance towards the government? Sakhela Buhlungu (2010) has argued how, for objective and subjective reasons, COSATU's power vis-à-vis capital has declined. This has gone hand-in-hand with a growing influence on the state.

COSATU leadership's statements are within the ambit of a conception that sees the federation as central in the national democratic revolution and part of the Alliance, but also as a militant defender of the rights of workers and critical of capital and of the state's attempts to roll back public sector workers' gains. Its analyses are quite distinct from the ANC and the ANCYL and, on economic policy, more 'hard-line' than the SACP. It also sees itself as an international player, involved in international labour rights struggles and in forums like the World Social Forum.

Have COSATU's grassroots leaders and workers changed in their positions and dispositions? The answer is 'no', but there is a softening of the old culture of adversarialism (of a very tight 'us versus them') on the shopfloor. The level of strike activity has not gone down in any significant sense over the last five years, although much of it follows the rhythms of industrial bargaining. In 2008, the majority of respondents (68 per cent) had participated in strike action since the previous survey and, although the more dramatic strikes had been in the public sector, the frequency of strikes in the private sector also remained high.

Yet, there is an ease with which the crossing of the shopfloor divide is tolerated – to become part of management if the worker was formerly a shop steward

and to not meet with the expected opprobrium. In the 1980s, there were worker plays about such 'betrayals', for example, *'Death to Iscariot Impimpi'* (written by Mi Hlatshwayo, who was then a Dunlop worker) was a radical restatement of the popular feeling at that time. However, by the 1990s, I found in my research that there was a lot of self-blame among the leadership of the shopfloor who did not enjoy mobility (2006). Realising that they were stuck, about a third of the respondents in that study started attending a variety of classes and training programmes to improve their personal position. This had not been easy, as the pressures on them from their families and networks to act in a variety of supportive ways as the only wage earners in a sea of unemployment added to their 'burden'.

They had understood what their 'deficit' was in terms of mobility, but felt too constrained by 'pressures' to redress it. Yet, there was still an 'us versus them' divide in the early 2000s. This has eased into, for lack of a better set of words, a 'cooperative alterity'. There is, in other words, recognition of conflicting interests, but at the same time a need for cooperation and participation. A number of correlations were attempted to test significance rates of participation in strikes; attendance at union meetings; active or non-active shopfloor culture, region and skill: but no significant variations were found to suggest a shift in the respondents' understanding of their relationship to capital and the state.

Has the core consciousness of its grassroots shifted?

The way government or capital is perceived is one aspect of people's dispositions; another crucial one is the degree of self-perception about their collective social role. Does the survey point to shifts in this type of self-consciousness? Work in the early 1990s found that there was a growing sense of pride associated with the collective word of *abasebenzi* (workers) (Bonnin 1988; Nzimande 1991; Sitas 2001). In its broadest sense, it was not exactly akin to Marx's concept of labour power, but closer to a notion of 'the productive classes'. The meaning attached to it resembled something very similar to the one enunciated by the Physiocrats, the Proudhonists and Ricardo-influenced pamphleteers of the 19th century in Europe. It was about, to use jargon, a real and metaphoric, polysemic cluster – there are elements of martyrdom, heroism, transcendence, harshness, patience, nation, mixed-up with lack, want and creating the wealth of the nation, but receiving none of it. But then, it was

bounded by a sense of racial oppression – as the popular song *Munt'omhlope* asserted in its refrain, 'you white person, you will regret / what you are doing to the black person'. But although 'bounded' by it, it does not express the central project embedded in their narrations: that they are building a nation, as another popular song asserts, '*izwe solakha ngolaka*' ('we are to build this nation through our struggle'). This slippage from race to nation and back, and its co-existence with a class perspective, made for a volatile challenge to any status quo.

The sense of being the creators of wealth, the source of all value and being the 'productive classes' of the society, allowed for a more generous definition of belonging that could easily encompass both blue- and white-collar workers, all the way to junior management. This broad self-conception continues and facilitates unity of purpose, even where there is a gradual shift of notions about how parasitical capitalism and capitalists are. The old discourse married the capitalist with the white oppressor and with 'badness': capitalists, alias whites, were parasitical. Now it seems this has become more ambiguous.

The younger generation in the 2008 study presents some continuities – democracy is appreciated, accountability is demanded, more direct control of elected representatives is preferred; the question of whether a socialist consciousness exists or not, though, is a moot one. However, this younger generation shows very little of the radical echoes of the past. If the old generation demanded the return of all land, wealth and benefits to the black nation, the new one tends to argue about a rightful share of the wealth.

It would be important to follow these preliminary findings with a more qualitative, in-depth study of 30-year-olds in the workplace and beyond. The deep ethnography being undertaken by Sthembiso Bhengu, in one of the most militant shopfloors in the country, points to a reality caught somewhere in-between. What is common across the two generations, though, is a deep trust of their own elected leaderships.

Is there a departure from strategic unionism?

At the formal level, there is no retreat from the strategic unionism of the transition period. The respondents would like COSATU participating at all levels; the involvement of all tiers of leadership in the contestations leading to Polokwane show that they are ready to shape the character of the Alliance and,

further, the character of state intervention in the economy. They claim that the transformation of such policies after the 2009 period is due to COSATU's pressure. Furthermore, the public sector strike of 2010 and the solidarity around it demonstrated how decisive is COSATU's ability to mobilise members, and also demonstrated members' readiness to even take on the government. Although the federation's leadership may be accused of whipping up discontent and then sitting on it to ensure political gains, the levels of mass mobilisation and support are extraordinary.

It is also a fact that, as COSATU found itself siding with social movements against a number of government policies that were seen to be of the '1996 Class Project', it continues to do so in the new dispensation. The conflict, for example, between the Durban Municipality, the ANC leadership and businessmen (read, '2010 Class Project') on the one hand, and market traders, on the other, found COSATU, street vendor movements and the SACP on the same side opposing the municipality and its allies.

None of the responses, though, indicate that mass involvement will substitute for strategic unionism and participation.

Is there a connection between workplace and community struggles?

Most of our work in the Industrial and Organisational Labour Studies (IOLS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban has provided a sustained critique of the 'labour aristocracy' thesis. We showed how formal wage labour was the backbone of much of the more casualised livelihoods (Sitas 1998; 2006). Webster, Bezuidenhout and Lambert (2008) pointed to the necessity of linking struggles in production with those in the sphere of reproduction and survival: the community. This was shown to be indispensable for a 'counter-wave' against market despotism. Similarly, Ercument Celik's (2010) study of the emergence of a street vendors' movement in Durban pointed to the multiple connections between workers in the formal and the informal economy.

The point, though, that the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey shows, with stark clarity, is that the kind of labour we have been addressing is shrinking within the most important labour federation in the country, and its representation and voice is getting weaker. Furthermore, very few union members participate actively in social movements (they are active, though, in their union

structures). Their involvement in community life and community politics is indirect. Nevertheless, the idea that the state should provide for the poor is key to most respondents.

Conclusions

COSATU remains a key pillar of South Africa's democracy, yet it is most certainly not the organisation that it used to be in either the 1990s or the 2000s. The sociological transformation underway is profound. Generational, educational, skill-based shifts are occurring in its ranks and, within that, the old variables of gender and urban workers/rural workers/migrancy are assuming new forms of importance.

The federation remains a key, but not the only, vehicle for the ANC's hegemony in South Africa's political life and, as the downward indicator of support, its base is not exactly a reliable power-base. That this correlates well with skill, education, modernity and gender should worry COSATU's leadership. At the same time, shop stewards and members are very committed to their own structures and their own forms of participation and accountability.

Like in the broader trade union literature, one is faced with two interpretative traditions of the left, an 'optimistic' and a 'pessimistic' one (Hyman 1975). The former still sees trade unionism as a school for democracy and socialism and the first step to creating a sense of an alternative to existing systems of exploitation. One could build an optimistic argument out of the 2008 survey data. This perspective would see COSATU playing a crucial and, possibly, decisive role as a bulwark against the emerging '2010 Class Project' within the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance (COSATU 2010; Southall & Webster 2010). In this regard, the changing character of the federation, as discussed above, would not have a destabilising effect on its ability to contest for 'the soul of the ANC'. However, a pessimistic view would see trade unions as a sectarian and economic force which would, if not nudged by vanguard movements from the outside, remain a reformist institution that reproduces and co-regulates capitalism. One could also build a pessimistic argument from the data of the 2008 survey. Certainly the reconfiguration of COSATU, as discussed under the seven inter-related questions above, would make this a plausible argument.

However, in reality, the 2008 survey sits uncomfortably between the two. The challenges discussed above and also enunciated in previous analyses of

the federation (for example, Buhlungu, Southall & Webster 2006) remain, but what is clearer by now is that COSATU is not only holding a democratic lifeline to the future, but, increasingly, a serious class lifeline that is articulated in stronger ways, despite the increasing white-collar influence of its members. What is also clear, though, is that the current attack by a cohort of ANC leaders (the '2010 Class Project'), who would like to see a curbing of the federation's influence, will find very little support across the generational divide of its members. The Class Project will not reach the elders and it will not reach the younger and more skilled members of the membership.

In the words of a key woman leader of one of the public sector unions:

COSATU did not fall from the sky. Each worker or professional knows that we come from a long history of struggle. The new generation has found the structures in place – sometimes they are ignorant and negligent but ... they face the daily problems in the hospital wards and down the mine ... We can say this government is ours but it does not help on a daily basis. (Interview: T Gcaba)

Notes

- 1 Vavi cited in Mbanjwa, X, COSATU calls for censure over insults, *Sunday Tribune*, 18 December 2009.
- 2 TUCSA (Trade Union Council of South Africa) was the white federation of trade unions that had a cosy relationship with the ruling National Party government, from its inception in the 1950s, until its demise in the mid-1980s.
- 3 BEE, short for Black Economic Empowerment, refers to a set of redress mechanisms in the economic sphere which claim to champion the empowerment of all black people. The reality, however, has been that BEE policies have enriched a small number of black 'fat cats'.
- 4 This is demonstrated by Sthembiso Bhengu's work at Dunlop in Durban (2010), Nomkhosi Xulu's work in the KwaMashu hostels and work done by Lungisile Ntsebeza's and his cohorts in the Eastern Cape, in the 'Land and Democracy' research unit. I am privy to their research data and drafts, but this crucial work will only be available from the end of 2011.
- 5 Significantly, though, the figure of 88 per cent represents a slight improvement in the situation and shows that more workers in 2008 were not part of the core of the permanent, full-time workforce, compared to the figure of 91 per cent in 2004. This

is accounted for by a corresponding slight increase in union members on temporary, full-time contracts (i.e. on fixed contracts) (from 4.5 per cent in 2004 to 5.6 per cent in 2008) and union members on permanent, part-time contracts (up from 1.7 per cent in 2004 to 4.8 per cent in 2008).

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Interviews

(pseudonyms used)

Zakes Nkosi, Office bearer, NEHAWU, 12 July 2010

Mark Mphafudi, Office bearer, SACTWU, 13 July 2010

Thandeka Gcaba, Office bearer, DENOSA, 14 July 2010

7 *'What would you do if the government fails to deliver?' COSATU members' attitudes towards service delivery*

Sarah Mosoetsa

The COSATU Workers' Surveys of 1998 and 2004 indicated a slight decline in perceptions of availability of government services for COSATU members in their areas of residence. There is a pronounced decline in the 2008 COSATU survey, particularly in the delivery of housing, health and education. COSATU members' expectations of service delivery in 1994 were radically different from their assessment of real service delivery in 2008. In 2004, more than 70 per cent of surveyed COSATU members said that, if the government failed to deliver, they would participate in ongoing mass action. This chapter asks, now that several years have passed since the 2004 survey, what have COSATU members done about their declining access to government services and unmet expectations of democracy.

The chapter has two central aims. The first part discusses perceptions of service delivery by COSATU members over time, but focuses mainly on the COSATU Workers' Survey of 2008. The second part considers action taken by COSATU members, given their growing dissatisfaction with service delivery. The 2008 survey shows that the majority of COSATU members do not participate in local government structures and in community protests to demand service delivery and challenge the state to deliver on its election promises. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the complex political reasons for this lack of community participation and failure to force the state to account; which amounts to COSATU members going back on their 2004 undertaking to participate in ongoing mass action, if the government fails to deliver.

It is worth beginning this discussion by noting the government's stated service delivery record. According to various reports by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) (1996, 2001, 2007a and 2011), access to services has improved, with more households having access to basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation. In 1994, it was estimated that, nationally, 12 million people lacked formal water supply and about 20 million people had no formal sanitation. The majority of people with no access lived in the former homeland areas (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry 2002). Since then, the number of households with access to electricity, water, and sanitation has increased. Access to electricity has increased by 23 per cent, with more than 10 million households with electricity in 2007, compared to over 4 million in 1996. Households with access to water increased from 80 to 89 per cent and those with access to sanitation increased from 83 to 90 per cent. In 2010, the percentage of people living in formal and fully owned dwelling was 58 per cent. The majority of households (82 per cent) had access to electricity (StatsSA 2011).

Yet, numerous studies in South Africa have revealed a growing dissatisfaction with access to services (Desai 2002; Khunou 2002; McDonald 2002; Mosoetsa 2010). This growing dissatisfaction in many communities has been corroborated by the escalating incidence of community protests. While not all community protests have been only about lack of service delivery – but also about poverty and unemployment – most protests have included demands for access to services. According to the Municipal IQ (2011), between 2004 and 2008, there were 105 community protests. In 2009 alone, a total of 105 were reported and the majority of these occurred in Gauteng (28 per cent), North West (13 per cent), Western Cape (13 per cent), Mpumalanga (12 per cent), and Free State (11 per cent). There seemed to be a decline in 2010, with only 64 service delivery protests reported by April, but by the end of the year, there were a total of 111 protests reported. There was, interestingly, a 33 per cent decline in protest in 2011 (81 protests) compared to 2010 (Municipal IQ 2011).

Therefore, many communities have responded to their perceived lack of services by staging numerous protest actions. This chapter will show that COSATU members, by contrast, have been less vocal about their dissatisfaction with access to services. The chapter argues that the declining participation in community 'service delivery' structures and willingness to participate in ongoing mass action deprives the country's civil society of the strategic,

organisational and leadership skills and resources that the federation has built up over the years in struggles to improve the conditions of its members and the community at large.

The COSATU Workers' Survey: perceptions of access to services, 1998–2008

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey shows a decline in workers' perceptions of access to government services such as health, education and housing. As Table 7.1 below shows, for union members the expectations of 1994 have not been fully realised in most of the services, with the notable exception of access to water and electricity. Perceptions of access to education have been consistently declining since 1998. What is significant is that, for the majority of services, COSATU members' expectations of democracy as documented in the 1994 COSATU Workers' Survey have not been met. There is, therefore, a contradiction between what members expected in 1994 (the advent of democracy) and the reality of their experiences in 2008 (after more than a decade of democracy).

Table 7.1 *Worker expectations in 1994 and assessment of access to services, 1998, 2004 and 2008*

Service area	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
Better housing	91	51	61	57.6
Access to clean water	82	87	87	83.9
Access to electricity	72	88	87	82.2
Better transport	(not asked)	63	61	57.2
Access to better health care	87	71	58	56.0
Access to education & training	90	68	68	64.4

As Table 7.1 shows, workers' expectations of access to health care and housing have significantly declined. These findings are consistent with data gathered by other studies. For example, qualitative research into housing service delivery in Gauteng offers explanations why delivery in housing is not improving and is generating criticism by citizens. Lack of consultation, slow pace of delivery, corruption and lack of transparency are cited by communities as reasons for the lack of community access to housing. In a study conducted

in several communities in Gauteng, disgruntled community members stated the following reasons for their dissatisfaction with housing delivery:

I did not vote for a flat, I voted for a house. They gave me a flat and I do not want it. I am old and do not want to be going up and down these stairs all my life. (Interview: M Sithole)

Too many things are wrong with this house. Look, the roof is leaking, there are cracks everywhere. On the day of allocation, I told them that there was a problem with the window. The project manager said it will be fixed the following day. They never came to fix it. (Interview: V Wezi)

The project took long to start. I remember the MEC came here after people took to the streets. At that time, the issue was not housing but about toilets. She came here and promised us more than a thousand houses. That was in 2003, I think. The project only started in 2008. Officials kept on saying they are waiting for EAs [Environmental Assessments]. They took too long. (Interview: T Tshabangu)

Similarly, in 2008, most COSATU union members expressed dissatisfaction with service delivery offered by local government. When presented with the statement, 'Local government service delivery in my area is satisfactory and effective', 31 per cent disagreed, while 24 per cent strongly disagreed. Significantly, 12 per cent of the workers answered, 'don't know', while only 22 per cent agreed and 11 per cent strongly agreed with the statement. Therefore, the majority of union members (55 per cent) were not satisfied with the services they received.

The foregoing discussion raises another dimension to service delivery, namely, that it is problematic to measure service delivery only in quantitative terms (that is, counting the number of households with access). Service provision has a qualitative dimension, too, as the quality of the services is crucial for long-term sustainability of services and, indeed, of municipal assets. Citizens' satisfaction with services has to do with both the number of people who have access to the services as well as the quality of these services. Thus, access to electricity does not mean much, when there are power cuts every winter season because the main power sub-station has not been serviced. Access to a house does not mean much, if the house was built using poor quality materials, or

if the workmanship was of a poor standard. In reality, these problems are, at present, found in many municipalities where the authorities have been struggling to, for example, produce maintenance plans, maintain asset registers and prioritise their budgets accordingly (National Treasury 2008).

At provincial level, union members' perceptions of declining access to services reveals a different picture to that presented by national government statistics. The StatsSA Community Survey shows that of all nine provinces, Gauteng and Western Cape have relatively high access to services (StatsSA 2007b). However, Table 7.2 shows that COSATU members' perceptions of access to services in the Western Cape were very low, even when compared to the other provinces. The reason for the discrepancy between official statistics and union member perceptions is that national and provincial statistics often use methods of measurement that are incapable of capturing local realities and dynamics. A more plausible argument is the one that acknowledges service delivery problems due to do the government's inability to provide services in townships and rural areas because of lack of capacity in terms of skills, staff and financial resources (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs 2009). Furthermore, with regard to the Western Cape, the attitudes of COSATU union members to service delivery might be influenced by provincial party politics. For example, it might be contended that COSATU members, the majority of whom vote in favour of the African National Congress (ANC), would not be happy with service delivery in the Western Cape, where another political party is in power. This would partly explain their views on lack of service delivery in that province.

Table 7.2 Perception of access to services by province, 2008

Area	Gauteng (%)	North West (%)	KwaZulu-Natal (%)	Eastern Cape (%)	Western Cape (%)
Better housing	59.5	66.7	61.9	62.4	40.2
Access to clean water	86.9	85.7	82.3	85.0	76.0
Access to electricity	87.0	58.7	80.5	80.2	73.4
Access to land	45.1	57.1	44.6	45.8	28.1
Access to a landline telephone	64.0	52.4	64.6	73.7	70.2
Better transport	61.4	66.7	54.0	60.2	43.5
Access to better health care	59.8	60.0	56.3	60.6	38.3
Access to education and training	68.0	90.5	59.6	69.2	47.9

Another important argument is that service delivery trends amongst union members are influenced by affordability of these services for workers, who are either employed in relatively secure jobs and have a regular wage, or are in insecure jobs and earn relatively low wages. The income levels of the majority of COSATU members and their households are often too low to enable them to afford some services, but also too high to qualify for reduced tariffs such as government's exemption policies. This makes them ineligible for inclusion in the indigent register, where the maximum income level is often calculated at two social pension grants (R2040) per month per household. Such income requirements and means tests are unrealistic, as they do not take into cognisance the burden employed workers carry by taking care of unemployed family members. Similarly, McDonald and Pape conclude that their research findings on service delivery in South Africa, 'offer a picture of post-apartheid service delivery that is at best plagued by affordability problems and overly aggressive bureaucrats bent on recovering costs, and at worst, a deep failure on the part of government (both local and national) to ensure an affordable supply of essential services to all' (McDonald & Pape 2002:176).

Table 7.3 *Yes, these services have improved since 2004 elections.*

	Number	%
Access to clean water	510	83.9
Access to electricity	498	82.2
Better wages	178	29.2
Jobs/employment	176	29
Clean and healthy living and working environment	385	63.5
HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support	390	64.1

Generally, union members think that there has been an improvement in access to most of the services since the 2004 elections, particularly clean water and electricity (Tables 7.2 and 7.3). But the tables also show that there are areas of great dissatisfaction, such as education, health, jobs, land, transport, housing and wages. These perceptions about service delivery are informed by both access to these services as well as the quality of the services.

Table 7.4 *In which ONE of the following areas would you like to see improvements after the 2009 elections? Select the most important one only.*

Service area	All in sample	Gauteng (%)	North West (%)	KwaZulu-Natal (%)	Eastern Cape (%)	Western Cape (%)
Higher wages	28.2	31.2	28.6	33.3	21.6	23.0
Employment/jobs	20.9	17.7	14.3	13.5	40.8	11.5
Better housing	15.5	15.6	19.0	13.5	9.6	25.3
HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support	13.0	14.3	14.3	17.1	9.6	10.3
Access to land	3.8	5.2	0.0	2.7	4.0	2.3
Access to better health care	4.2	3.9	0.0	4.5	4.0	5.7
Better transport	1.4	1.3	0.0	2.7	0.0	2.3
Access to clean water	1.0	0.4	9.5	2.7	0.0	0.0
Access to electricity	0.9	1.3	9.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

Union members were asked to select the area where they would most like to see improvement after the elections in 2009. Table 7.4 shows that union members across the provinces (28 per cent) prioritised improvement in wages over access to services. Although many are probably aware that wage increases are not a matter for the government to determine, but are subject to negotiation between unions and management, they still chose to prioritise it. What is significant is that unionised workers, most of them in permanent jobs, are concerned about the state of the economy, particularly unemployment. As a result, many COSATU members had high expectations of the government creating more jobs. The provision of housing also came up high on the list of priorities the union members identified for the government after the elections in 2009. When the data is cross-tabulated by province, there were some prominent differences regarding the service that union members would most like to see prioritised for improvement after 2009. Access to better housing was identified as the most important issue amongst union members in the Western Cape (25 per cent), followed by those in the North West (19 per cent). Better wages was identified as a priority by union members in KwaZulu-Natal (33 per cent), followed by union members in Gauteng (31 per cent). Job creation was most significant for union members in the Eastern Cape (41 per cent), followed by union members in Gauteng (18 per cent). Finally, HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support was a major concern for union members

in KwaZulu-Natal (17 per cent), and both North West and Gauteng, at 14 per cent each.

The most interesting aspect of the findings in Table 7.4 is that a large number of union members want jobs and better wages above, for example, water and better transport. Even though no qualitative explanation was provided, it cannot be assumed that these union members have access and therefore do not require these services. A likely explanation is that union members believe that it is better to have a job that pays well than access to water, electricity and land. This is especially true if all of these services require a regular income, as they come at a cost for those who access them. Therefore, on its own, access to a service is not adequate. As argued earlier, the biggest question is no longer whether households have access to services, but whether they can afford the services. Indeed, without a regular job and good income, access to services or service delivery is undermined.

What actions have COSATU members taken to address their dissatisfaction?

One of the key questions this chapter seeks to probe is the set of strategies COSATU members have adopted to address the growing dissatisfaction reflected in the 2008 Workers' Survey results. The question is addressed by examining member responses in three broad areas of the study, namely: involvement of COSATU members in local government or community-based development initiatives; the participation of members in community mass action, in support of demands for improved service delivery; and how the politics of the Tripartite Alliance may be shaping COSATU members' responses to unsatisfactory provision of services.

Participation in community and local government

The 2008 Workers' Survey sought to establish whether or not union members were involved in the political affairs of their communities. Sixty per cent of COSATU members were not involved in local government or community-based development initiatives in the areas where they lived. However, as Table 7.5 demonstrates, some union members indicated that they were involved in local government affairs as community members, members of a political party, elected delegates or as elected councillors.

Table 7.5 *Involvement in local government or community development initiatives*

Are you involved in local government or community-based development initiatives:	2008 (%)
As community member	28.0
As member of political party	7.4
As elected delegate	3.4
As elected councillor	1.4
No	59.8

The union members that do participate are generally of a particular age cohort (aged 46 and older), mainly men. This seems to suggest that women and the youth have been left out of community participation processes. Of the 232 women union members surveyed, only 34 per cent were involved in local government or community-based development initiatives and most were not even in elected positions or as members of a political party, but were involved as community members. This is of particular concern, given that other research has shown how the burden of service delivery (lack thereof) is mostly carried by women (Hemson 2004; Mosoetsa 2005; Samson 2003). For this reason, making the voice of women heard would seem to be important for the success of community involvement in government-led development projects.

The reasons for community members' non-participation in local government or community development initiatives are varied. Firstly, the enormity and complexities of service delivery often lead some government officials to conclude that community participation is a waste of time. As some researchers have argued, the pressure to deliver tangible outcomes often becomes an overriding imperative:

In a rush to address political imperatives for the delivery of services, the building of infrastructure and the consolidation of post-apartheid state, energy and resources have focused on the physical elements of delivery of development. (Oldfield 2008)

As a result, participatory structures are overlooked in a rush to fast track service delivery, without any realisation that community participation is part of service delivery. Furthermore, such community participatory structures and many other institutions established after 1994 are often patriarchal and, therefore, tend to marginalise or exclude women. Indeed, women might also be choosing not to participate in these structures, instead choosing alternative

structures where their voices are heard. Given the burden of survival that rests on their shoulders, it will not be surprising if the majority of COSATU women surveyed deliberately choose not to participate in structures that do not empower them.

Secondly, although the Constitution (especially the Bill of Rights) and legislation pertaining to the right to access basic services should be implemented, these remain ideals and often the context and reality in many communities makes implementation thereof difficult or almost impossible. The existing local government framework and legislation are premised on the fact that communities have the necessary skills, capacity and time to engage with the complexities and trade-offs required for service delivery to be effective and beneficial for everyone. Yet in many communities, this is simply not the case.

Thirdly, some scholars argue that the youth are not involved as they are discontented, disinterested and thus disengaged from community participation forums and consequently in politics generally. Others are of the view that:

Rather than blame the youth it would behove us all to look inwardly and ask not why the youth have disengaged from political and social movements, but why political and social movements have become disengaged from the youth. In other words, political movements have consistently failed to communicate to youth and address their concerns. It is this that lies at the root of youth disengagement rather than the erroneous idea that the youth are politically apathetic. (Sachs 2005)

Finally, the changing composition of COSATU members might also shed light on their lack of interest in community participation. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of COSATU's membership is below the age of 30 years (COSATU 2011). Over the last ten years, from 1998 to 2008, the longitudinal data has shown that three quarters of COSATU members fall into the most active component of the workforce that is 18–45 years of age. The COSATU Workers' Survey of 2008 shows that over a third (38 per cent) of COSATU members were below the age of 36. Existing research suggests that this dominant age group of COSATU members may have other priorities beyond politics. The limited time they have is spent at home taking care of their immediate and extended families, wives and children (Buhlungu 2006). Indeed, there may be other more pressing life and death concerns for this group, such as the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Participation in mass action

If union members do not participate in local government structures, what recourse do they have if the government fails to deliver? Survey participants were given five alternative answers to this question:

- Put pressure on ex-unionists in Parliament;
- Vote for another party in the next elections;
- Form an alternative party;
- Participate in ongoing mass action; and
- Do nothing.

Table 7.6 *If the government to be elected fails to deliver, workers will: (more than one possible) (percentages)*

Options	1994	1998	2004	2008
A. Put pressure on ex-unionists in Parliament	66	89	86	23.5 (N 146)
B. Vote for another party in the next elections	40	37	42	20.4 (N 127)
C. Form an alternative party	29	33	38	6.1 (N 16)
D. Participate in ongoing mass action	72	75	73	39.1 (N 243)
E. Do nothing	4	20	5	3.9 (N 24)

Table 7.6 shows that, over time, responses by union members to the question, 'What would you do if the government fails to deliver?' have been changing. Up until 2004, the most common response was, 'Put pressure on ex-unionists in Parliament'; followed by 'Participate in ongoing mass action'. It is significant that, in 2008, the most common response was to 'Participate in ongoing mass action'. However, there is a decline in the number of COSATU members who say that they will participate in ongoing mass action if the government does not deliver. This is a significant finding, as it suggests that while there is growing dissatisfaction amongst COSATU members with government's delivery of services such as housing, health and education, the majority of COSATU members no longer prefer to use mass action as a tool to force government to deliver. Another factor, of course, is the possible influence of renewed optimism and trust in the new ANC leadership in the aftermath of the Polokwane triumph of the Zuma faction.

In 1998 and 2004, the majority of all union members (over 70 per cent) in all COSATU affiliates said they would participate in ongoing mass action to force the government to deliver. In 2008, only a few affiliates said they would

participate in ongoing mass action to force the government to deliver (see Table 7.6). But there are some affiliates such as National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), South African Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU) and South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) which have consistently stated that ongoing mass action should be used as a tool to force the government to deliver. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is these same unions (excluding SAMWU) that have embarked on community protests since 2004 and have had the most strikes.

Table 7.7 *COSATU affiliates on participation in mass action, if the government fails to deliver (1998 to 2008)*

Cosatu affiliates	Yes – 1998 (N)	No – 1998 (N)	Yes – 2004 (N)	No – 2004 (N)	Yes – 2008 (N)	No – 2008 (N)
CEPPWAWU	77 [^]	21 [^]	28	6	27	39
CWU	*	*	16	14	12	15
DENOSA	*	*	*	*	1	4
FAWU	20	7	25	23	9	20
NEHAWU	37	13	35	8	32	29
NUM	21	10	43	12	27	24
NUMSA	59	23	68	22	34	35
POPCRU	*	*	66	21	24	21
SACCAWU	28	10	35	5	14	35
SACTWU	60	11	59	17	13	43
SADTU	*	*	35	11	32	42
SAMWU	22	8	38	9	17	12
SASBO	*	*	6	4	5	7
SATAWU	*	*	14	5	25	24
SARHWU	2	1	*	*	*	*
TGWU	17	0	*	*	*	*
ANSA	2	0	*	*	*	*
CAWU	0	1	#	#	#	#
TOTAL	345 (76.6%)	105	468 (70.5%)	157	272 (43.7%)	350

Notes

*not part of the survey / union does not exist anymore

[^]These figures are from predecessors CWIU and PPWAWU

#CAWU merged with NUM in 2001

As shown before, most COSATU members are dissatisfied with access to services offered by the government and state that their expectations of democracy are not being met by the ANC-led government. But, since 2004, only 44 per cent of COSATU members have participated in community protests. Community protests are sparked by many issues, but the most common demand is access to government services. Community protests are also about poverty, unemployment, corruption, political accountability and crime. Some community protests have mainly been about service delivery. For example, when community protests happened in Kliptown and Pennyville, Soweto, they were associated with the problems in the delivery of low-cost housing. Community members stated their dissatisfaction with how housing delivery was taking place in their area and shared their reasons for their public action:

They said these houses were for us, even the flats. But soon after the flats were ready for occupation, they were given to other people from elsewhere, from Eldorado and even foreigners. There was a major toyi-toyi, the police came and arrested us but we were later released. (Interview: A Mthethwa)

There were enormous problems with allocation. It was mainly Zamimpilo residents not wanting other people to benefit from the housing project. They told me that it was their project, their houses and not for anyone else. It [public action] became violent. Other residents were not allowed in. Property of Orlando residents and other residents was destroyed. I was shocked but powerless as well. (Interview: Z Modise)

It is no coincidence that all of these community protests have targeted one sphere of government, namely, local government. Even though communities' demands have been about services, such as water and electricity, which local government is responsible for, demands such as housing, education and health are the responsibility of provincial governments. Therefore, communities have put councillors under pressure to provide services that often fall outside their jurisdiction. This has been because communities do not necessarily know the different functions of the three spheres of government. The most important explanation is the proximity of local government and its officials to communities. Councillors who live in these communities are seen to be acting as agents of the government and thus 'bear the brunt' of angry citizens,

when there is mounting perception that the government is not delivering on its promises.

Of the COSATU members who have participated in community protests since 2004, many are men and above the age of 36 years. Women and young COSATU members also participate in community protests but, in comparison to men, the number of women is rather low (Table 7.8). However, this could be partly due to the fact that community protests are often contested political spaces, riddled with gender power dynamics that often exclude women. It is, therefore, not surprising that fewer COSATU women take part in many of these community protests.

Table 7.8 *Participation in community protest action since 2004 by gender*

Participation in community protest action since 2004	Female (%)	Male (%)
Yes	33.9	50.4
No	64.3	48.8
Don't know	1.8	0.8

Most COSATU members who participated in community protest action since 2004 are from the North West and Gauteng provinces. One would have expected that, since there is greater dissatisfaction with access to services in the Western Cape, participation in community protests would have been higher in that province compared to Gauteng, for example.

COSATU members who participate in community protests are mostly from NEHAWU, NUMSA and NUM (Table 7.9). Another cause of uncertainty is the fact that COSATU and its affiliates do not have policy positions on whether or not members should participate in these community protests. There are a number of reasons for this ambivalence. COSATU's alliance with the ANC is probably a powerful influence on this. But, most importantly, the lack of service delivery partly reflects COSATU's own failure, because some of their own members work in municipalities. The latter explanation might also explain why, for example, a significant majority of SAMWU do not participate in community protests.

The participation, or lack thereof, by union members in community protests is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the survey sheds light in terms of who is involved or not involved in these protests. The majority of them are

certainly not union members. Yet, COSATU leaders have not condemned these protests. In his address to the Business Unity South Africa Anti-Corruption Business Forum, COSATU General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, stopped short of endorsing the protests – ‘the recent community protests are stoked by legitimate grievances about the terrible levels of poverty and poor service in our poor communities’ (Vavi 2009).

Table 7.9 *Have you participated in community protest action since 2004? (by union)*

	Yes (N)	No (N)
NEHAWU	40	22
NUMSA	36	30
NUM	25	26
SADTU	32	40
CEPPWAWU	28	38
SATAWU	22	27
SACTWU	18	35
POPCRU	18	37
FAWU	18	11
SAMWU	13	16
SACCAWU	13	35
CWU	12	15
DENOSA	1	4
SASBO	1	12

Secondly, community protests, even though they have been defined as ‘service delivery protests’, have mainly been about more than just services. They have especially been about unemployment, as well as corruption, nepotism and political accountability. These are legitimate and broader issues that affect the working class. Why, then, have COSATU members not participated in community protests? Part of the answer might be that, even though issues of poverty and unemployment are important to union members (young and old, women and men), because they are employed, there are more immediate shop-floor issues that union members are grappling with, including retrenchments, job security, better wages and general industrial relations matters.

Thirdly, the timing of many of these community protests has not been convenient for union members. These mostly have happened during working

hours and not weekends, making participation impossible, unless union members do not go to work, which is not an option for many in a context of job insecurity and the likelihood of dismissal. Therefore, non-participation, or unavailability to participate, by COSATU members does not necessarily mean non-support of community protests. Yet, the timing of these protests limits participation by all citizens and thus undermines the benefit of collaborating with formal organisations such as COSATU. Nonetheless, the findings of this survey confirm that the majority of COSATU members do not participate in community protests. Very importantly, the results could be construed as evidence of a shift from what many termed 'social movement unionism', a mode of union organising that linked workplace struggles to community struggles, to a kind of unionism that is inward-looking and self-interested.

The politics of the Tripartite Alliance and community participation

Even though more union members were dissatisfied with service delivery in 2008 compared to 2004, the majority of COSATU members did not participate in ongoing mass action to get the government to deliver on its electoral promises. This is in spite of the stated position as captured in the 2004 COSATU Workers' Survey. This might imply that, even though there is greater dissatisfaction with access to services, COSATU union members do not think that the government has failed. Rather, there is optimism that there will be better service delivery and thus no need to participate in ongoing mass action for the time being. The perceived improvements in some service areas such as the provision of electricity and clean water might be one of the reasons for this optimism.

The overwhelming majority of COSATU members supports the Alliance and hence do not think that the government has failed. The view seems to be that the government will deliver, but it needs to be given time. This is probably the reason why many members of the federation are reluctant to participate in community protests for service delivery. Even though there is declining satisfaction with the provision of services, the majority of COSATU members surveyed before each election from 1994 to 2008 continue to hold the view that the Alliance should continue and contest the upcoming elections. It is therefore not surprising that, in the 2011 local government elections, the ANC won most of the eight metropolitan councils, 226 local councils, 44 district councils and 4 277 wards. All of the above seems to suggest that COSATU

members are caught up between, on the one hand, their own experiences of a mixed record of success and failure, characterised by some successes in the provision of certain services, unfulfilled promises, lack of resources and skills and corruption, and on the other, the politics of loyalty to the alliance led by the ANC. In this context, the alliance acts as a powerful restraining influence on COSATU members.

Conclusion

The above discussion reveals discrepancies between the government's official statistics and COSATU members' perceptions of service delivery. While South Africa's national statistics show growth in the number of households who have access to services over time, the COSATU Workers' Survey shows a general decline in satisfaction with service delivery in most sectors, including health, education and housing. These differences have often led to a strained relationship between government officials and communities demanding access to services and political accountability. In the 2004 survey, the majority of COSATU members stated that if the government failed to deliver, they would force it to deliver by participating in ongoing mass action. In view of this statement, one would have expected that a perception of a decline in accessing government services since 2004 would ignite ongoing mass action by COSATU members. However, the 2008 COSATU survey shows a decline in participation in community service delivery structures and a general reluctance by COSATU members to participate in ongoing mass action, including community protests. Another concern is that only a minority of COSATU members who participate in community structures and protests are women.

As argued in this chapter, there are a number of explanations why COSATU members seem to be reluctant to give effect to their promise to force government to deliver on its election promises, including: the politics of the ANC, SACP and COSATU alliance; the continued faith in the ANC to deliver; and, most importantly, COSATU members' prioritisation of shopfloor and labour market concerns – such as better wages, job security and employment creation – over the issue of service delivery by the government. Given the historical role that COSATU and its members played in many communities during the struggle against apartheid, including its strategic linking of township political struggles with shopfloor demands, many would expect

that community participation (in local government structures or community protests) would be one of the top items on COSATU's agenda. The federation's leadership and the organisational skills of its members would undoubtedly be a great asset to a restless civil society that is plagued by a lack of leadership, strategic skills and resources. However, there is some hope that things may change. Some local structures of some COSATU affiliates, such as NUM and NUMSA, have been working to revive the tradition of linking labour and community struggles.

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Interviews

(Pseudonyms have been used)

Andile Mthethwa, Community Leader. Kliptown, Soweto, 2010

Miriam Sithole, Community Member. Pennyville, Soweto, 2010

Thokozani Tshabangu, Community Leader. Impumelelo Township, East Rand, 2010

Vusi Wezi, Community Member. Impumelelo Township, East Rand, 2010

Zakes Modise, Councillor. Pennyville, Soweto, 2010

8 *COSATU's influence on policy-making in post-apartheid South Africa: fact and fiction*

Grace Khunou

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey continues to illustrate the trend that COSATU is still a vital actor in the policy-making arena. The results continue a trend identified in earlier surveys. With reference to the 2004 COSATU Workers' Survey, Cherry (2006: 145) made the same observation and further argued that, 'what is notable about the results of this survey is that they demonstrate clearly how the understanding of workers does correspond substantially with that of the union leadership'. However, while the continued trend is statistically accurate, a closer examination of the facts shows that the notion of union influence on policy is doubtful. This chapter argues for a multi-faceted understanding of policy-making and how social movements such as trade unions may influence it. Once a multi-faceted approach is adopted, COSATU's ability to shape or influence policy-making will become more precarious. The federation's ability to effectively influence progressive policy in South Africa is impacted upon by a variety of factors.

It is important to begin the discussion in this chapter by addressing the widely-held, but erroneous, understanding of social and economic policies as mutually exclusive. Economic production and social reproduction are two sides of the same coin and, thus, it is incorrect to assume that it is feasible to satisfy one and not the other. Unfortunately, this separatist view continues to influence social policy processes and thinking, both in the government and within significant social sectors like labour. At the level of government, this unacceptable philosophy has led to undemocratic articulations and enactments of 'biased' macro-economic strategies. Such approaches tend to assume that the state is less efficient than the market; that women and children will be provided for by the income of a willing and able male breadwinner; and

that there are low inflation, low debt and low budget deficits, among others. These misleading assumptions are complemented by biases that advantage those who are dependent on wage labour for their survival. Barchiesi (2005: 386) succinctly illustrates the reality of these misconceptions in his analysis of the social welfare scenario in post-apartheid South Africa, when he argues that, 'the post-apartheid policy discourse has responded to the material collapse of wage labour as a condition for dignified existence with an aggressive reassertion of wage labour centrality as a mode of social inclusion'. As a consequence, citizenship is limited to participation in work, which this chapter argues should not be the case.

Again, the comprehension of social and economic policies as being separate has consequently led to the rejection, downplaying and ignoring of the mutually constitutive nature of these policies (Mkandawire 2004: 3). In the South African policy-making arena, this was witnessed in the imperatives underpinning the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic strategy of 2006 and through the fact that COSATU failed to influence and challenge its articulation and implementation. Contemporary researchers have, however, shown that this disconnected comprehension presents various challenges for sustainable social development. These researchers illustrate that the social and the economic are intricately connected and are similarly connected in how human beings live their lives (Elson 2004; Mkandawire 2004). This chapter argues that the separatist conceptualisation of social and economic policy is at the centre of COSATU's challenges, with regards to consolidating its power and charting a sustainable and coherent social policy for post-apartheid South Africa. Even though the federation has played a significant role in the establishment of the South African welfare regime, it is facing challenges, due to the imperatives of the neo-liberal macro-economic framework, globalisation, increasing unemployment and the economic recession, among others.

At the level of labour, this separatist thinking leads to incoherent articulation of policy options for negotiation. Although, on the surface, labour seems to be progressive in its understanding of the relationship between social policy and macro-economic strategies, this is not coherently facilitated at the level of processes followed to materialise it. Their lack of success with regards to the reversal or influence of GEAR meant that they had to continually compromise and work within the constraints it has set, thus forcing them to define social

policy as an 'add-on'. This is also evidenced and articulated in the COSATU Workers' Survey of 2004, where it is illustrated that COSATU is still, to a large extent, the representative of the full-time, permanently employed worker. This, then, further constrains the ability of the federation to fully address the needs of social constituencies beyond its unionised members. Where COSATU has tried to include the demands of the precariously employed and the unemployed, those issues have been short-changed by the limiting considerations of the permanently employed, by COSATU's capacity problems and by the fact that COSATU depends on the growth of the permanently employed for its own survival. Consequently, the federation's preoccupation with survivalist politics restrains its ability to seize social power and to use it effectively.

This chapter makes the assertion that the problem with the policy-making arena in South Africa in general is a lack of integration between the 'social' and the 'economic'. Consequently, the problem with COSATU in the policy-making arena is their inability to coherently address social policy as essential to macro-economic considerations, due to their being ambushed by GEAR. The chapter illustrates this through a critical analysis of COSATU's failed attempts to challenge the 'non-negotiable' stance of the government with regards to GEAR. It further maintains that the federation failed to exploit its social power and rather relied on their unstable and unequal tripartite relationship with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Again, the chapter reiterates that the federation's inability to present itself as a voice for the broader South African citizen has to do with its inability to transcend its mandate as a trade union federation. In this chapter, the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey is used as a departure point to a more conceptual analysis of COSATU's role in policy-making in South Africa.

COSATU and policy-making since 1994

Trade unions played a major role in challenging the apartheid state and in shaping the emerging post-apartheid political and economic dispensation. This challenge was aimed at achieving egalitarian redistributive objectives. Part of the contestation by labour sought to ensure the active involvement of labour in the policy-making process. This preference was manifested in the significant role played by COSATU in:

- the formulation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as a government macro-economic strategy;
- the call for an expanded social welfare system;
- submissions for a comprehensive social security system in 2000.

In its mobilisation inside communities, workplaces and political parties COSATU lobbied for better employment conditions, while at the same time fighting the apartheid system. This mobilisation resulted in the modification and decline of the political, social and institutional base of apartheid (Khunou 2001). Changes in the global economy, the changing profile of COSATU members and the changing balance of power between unions and employers following the adoption of GEAR in 1996, all combined to drastically reduce the power of unions and, thus, their reach. This also gave rise to a tension between the egalitarian principles of the RDP and the market-based distribution underpinned in GEAR. The policy change that GEAR represented set the post-apartheid development trajectory on exclusionary premises. Commenting on this change, Nattrass and Seekings (1997) have concluded that class is 'the new race ... now the excluded are the unemployed' (1997: 464).

The adoption of GEAR by the new government without proper dialogue with other stakeholders, especially labour, is said to have 'indicated that large-scale capital and the financial markets were going to remain far more influential than organised labour with regard to the making of economic policy' (Webster & Sikwebu 2006: 142). Consequently, this move also suggested that labour, or any other actor in the social policy arena, did not have any real power to influence social policy, since it is connected to macro-economic policy. Hence, poverty, unemployment and inequality have continued to rise in South Africa, notwithstanding the claim by some that COSATU has been seen to be successfully influencing the social policy-making arena.

Since 1994, COSATU has employed a variety of ways to influence social policy in post-apartheid South Africa. These methods have minimally advanced a consistent and coherent COSATU position. COSATU's strategies over the past 16 years have included: mass mobilisations or strike action; negotiations in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), parliamentary democracy and their unstable but continuing Tripartite Alliance. Through a discussion of these different tactics, this chapter will illustrate that COSATU's influence on the social policy-making arena is restricted.

The continuing decline of COSATU's capacity: a challenge for policy-making

In 1997, COSATU's September Commission argued that unions did not have the capacity to undertake all the things they sought to achieve (COSATU 1997). Naidoo (2003) echoed the same sentiments in a Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust talk hosted by the Centre for Policy Studies in Johannesburg. He argued that COSATU's 'organisational capacity must be increased or the scope of engagement must be reduced, in any case, there would have to be much more strategic focus' (Naidoo 2003: 6). This call for a strategic focus has been made since the report of the September Commission in 1997. It was coupled with a strong argument for the renewal of the organisation so as to allow it to better serve its members and, most importantly, to meet new challenges. The significance of this revitalisation process was considered imperative for COSATU to anticipate and consciously deal with change rather than to be constantly reactive (COSATU 2003). The other rationale for the organisational renewal process was to help the federation safeguard its traditions and organisational culture. The call for revival illustrates the challenges that the federation has faced since the inception of democracy and the reintegration of the country into the global economy. This revitalisation process was meant to address the following issues:

- the impact of globalisation;
- internal weaknesses within the federation and its affiliates;
- engaging with the democratic state and its institutions;
- charting a common approach for the federation and its unions (COSATU 2003).

None of these have been achieved in their entirety because of the hindrances articulated by Naidoo (2003). Again, the challenge of capacity is also an obstacle to the revival of the organisation. This is worsened by the complex and multi-faceted nature of the federation's participation in the policy arena. This participation involves:

- advocacy;
- negotiation at NEDLAC;
- participation in parliamentary proceedings in the form of lobbying and making submissions;
- political processes in the Tripartite Alliance with the ANC and the SACP;
- mass mobilisation.

Although a variety of these strategies has been successfully utilised to fight the apartheid state and employers, the nature of engagement in a democracy has forced the federation to adopt other strategies. As Buhlungu has argued, 'the history and struggle of the trade union movement did not equip the unions to deal with new issues in a democratic society' (2000: 78). This weakness has repeatedly been cited as a serious and continuing challenge. COSATU's discussion on the leadership challenges also makes note of this as the federation articulates the following measures to improve the organisation:

- Limit who from the COSATU CEC [Central Executive Congress] can stand for election to the ANC NEC [National Executive Committee];
- Ensure regular report back and accountability to the COSATU CEC;
- Leadership must be well-schooled and strong on policy so that they cannot be manipulated by bureaucrats, hostile international interests and reactionaries seeking to roll back whatever gains we get from the change of leaders;
- Consider a limit on participation by other interest groups, particularly cabinet members and big business. Cabinet members, in particular, should not be strong enough to compel the NEC to adopt their policies unquestioningly. More so we are aware of the dangers posed by the domination of business and its interests in ANC structures. (COSATU 2007)

This implies that continued capacity challenges persist, not only within the federation, but also in terms of its ability to exercise power in the Alliance. Thus it is accurate to argue that COSATU has, 'remained incapable of adapting [its] organising strategies and structures to confront these conditions. An example is the failure of unions to develop strategies and structures to organise informal sector and casual workers' (Buhlungu 2005: 712–13). The federation's diminishing capacity was also argued to impact on implementation of social dialogue agreements, which is most problematic, given the time and resources used to arrive at those. 'Many excellent policy decisions and social dialogue agreements remain unimplemented, hamstrung by the need to stick within available resources' (Naidoo 2003: 7). Even with the move by COSATU towards organisational renewal, it is unclear how lack of coherent implementation can improve upon their ability to focus on non-unionised members and the unemployed. There is, therefore, a real need for strategic unionism.

Influencing policy through participation in Parliament

The 2008 survey results illustrate that COSATU members generally agree that elected political institutions, including Parliament, best serve the interests of workers. Respondents who strongly agreed were 30.8 per cent, while 31.7 per cent agreed. These figures suggest that workers have trust in the ability of Parliament to positively influence their lives. This is somewhat consistent with the efforts of COSATU's approach of engaging Parliament and its committees, since the beginning of democracy in 1994. This has also been in line with the purpose of Parliament as the arena for representative and participatory democracy.

In the past 17 years, COSATU's participation in Parliament has provided a consistent, well-thought through, varied voice, challenging inequality. The federation's interventions have somewhat influenced discussions in Parliament, particularly after 1995, when COSATU saw the necessity of establishing a parliamentary office to improve its participation in the infant parliamentary democracy. Its purpose was to enhance COSATU's ability to make inputs on legislative discussions, principally in the form of oral and written submissions to different parliamentary committees. A case in point is the federations' submission on the transformation of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) in 1999, where the federation voiced its difficulties with the fragmented social security system, and suggested the provision of a social wage. COSATU might have raised the issues in Parliament, but the fruits of their efforts are still to be reaped, something that is probably due to lack of political will on the part of the national legislature. Or, as February has argued, 'the issue of public participation in policy-making is one of those easier-said-than-done cases ... there are no uniform rules applying to the weight attached to or the treatment of submissions to Parliament' (February 2006: 137).

The efforts of the COSATU parliamentary office have been strengthened by the establishment in 1993 of the federation's research wing, the National Labour and Economic Development Institute, with the purpose of strengthening the federation's policy function. COSATU's participation in Parliament has, however, been unsuccessful in consolidating the Alliance relationship. Since 1994, COSATU and SACP members have been added to the ANC electoral lists before national, provincial and local government elections. However these members are expected to see through the ANC mandate, irrespective of disagreements in the Alliance and lack of continued contact with the federation.

Unfortunately, there is no official policy governing the Alliance relationship at this level. Misra (2008) shows that the participation of COSATU and the SACP members in Parliament and other government institutions was not based on a strategy to utilise their involvement in government towards achieving the goals of the federation. This was a limitation on the side of COSATU, illustrating unreasonable faith in their political relationship with the ANC.

The fact that a high percentage of COSATU members agree that Parliament is an important institution does not at all suggest that its function is understood by all members. This puts in question the egalitarian understanding of open member participation in COSATU, because lack of knowledge by workers of the workings of Parliament suggests that workers on the shopfloor do not fully participate in the policy-making process. Again, this might be a reflection on COSATU's persisting challenges with capacity and decline in their participatory democratic tradition.

Labour and its participation at NEDLAC

NEDLAC is modelled on European social dialogue tripartite institutions, except that it is not only restricted to trade unions, employers' organisations and the government. It also includes community organisations. Its organisational structure, thus, includes organised business, organised labour, government and organised community groups. However, with regards to the representation of community constituency, there are questions around which organisations would be most suitable to represent the community. This is especially important, because of the high level of exclusion and marginalisation of groups such as the long-term unemployed – who include women, the youth and the informally employed – especially because these groups tend to lack skills and are vulnerable. At the same time, these groups do not have a strong and structured presence inside NEDLAC, therefore their capacity to influence policy is greatly limited. Webster and Sikwebu identified these challenges in their review of the organisation. The review report raised a number of questions in its assessment of community representation at NEDLAC, including the following:

- Is the community constituency the equivalent social dialogue institution to that of labour and business, which are structured to engage in the dialogue process?

- How does the community constituency obtain its mandates, as it does not have the same membership-based structures that apply in the case of business and labour?
- Who does the community constituency represent?
- How do we define a representative community organisation?
- A range of organisations are not represented by the current community constituency. (Webster & Sikwebu 2006: 39)

NEDLAC's inception was based on the Laboria Minute, that argued that all decisions which had an impact on labour would be considered by employer bodies and the major union federations before being sent to Parliament (Naidoo 2001). However, the capacity problems experienced by COSATU led to a situation where organised labour was not able to participate effectively and contribute meaningfully to debates at NEDLAC. Naidoo argues that:

Since 1994 there has been a great pressure on COSATU to engage with a massive array of policy and legislative challenges. At a policy level, the federation is required to engage with Parliament, parliamentary committees, 20 government departments, provincial government, sectoral bargaining structures and the tripartite council NEDLAC, to give just a partial list. Through these engagements at the various levels, many policy advances that have been achieved such as the labour laws, the constitution with a socio-economic Bill of Rights expanded social security and 50 per cent member trustees in all pension funds. This necessary role does, however, make it more difficult to maintain worker control and mandating as policy demands become increasingly complex. (Naidoo 2003: 6)

Although the introduction of NEDLAC was decisively shaped by the demands of the labour movement during the South African transition, this has not been translated into an institution with a clearly defined policy-making capacity, and NEDLAC retains features of a consultative body. The way policy-making is structured gives Parliament more powers to finalise policy than it does to NEDLAC. Given the continuous contestation of policy, Webster and Sikwebu (2006), in their review of NEDLAC, ask pertinent questions about the role of NEDLAC in post-negotiation stages of policy formulation. How they respond to these questions has implication for how the recommendations of

their report are taken forward, especially with regards to the government's ambivalence to NEDLAC and labour's response thereto.

Then again, as an institution that has been developed to accommodate workers interests, it is surprising that the majority of COSATU members are still not knowledgeable about NEDLAC. The 2008 survey shows that a surprisingly large 70.3 per cent of COSATU members did not know what NEDLAC was and only 26.3 per cent recorded that NEDLAC was an important body through which COSATU can influence policy which is of direct importance to workers. Again, this can be read as an additional sign of a discontinuity in COSATU's tradition of shopfloor democratic participation and of its persistent capacity problems.

On another note, research has shown that NEDLAC, since its inception, has played an important role in influencing the passing of socially favourable legislation. However, this legislation has not had an impact on the alleviation of poverty, inequality and unemployment, because GEAR's limitation on public expenditure has constrained NEDLAC's ability to bargain over such allocations. Thus, GEAR's austerity measures have reduced the role of this corporatist institution to the definition of technical details of policies whose parameters and scope are, to a large extent, defined externally. COSATU acknowledges that, when NEDLAC was established, the federation did not insist on the rigid application of the NEDLAC Act, because of political pressure applied by its allies. This, COSATU maintains, was because 'a legalistic approach particularly in the early years of NEDLAC's development could have poisoned relationships' (COSATU 2000b). At another level, this implies that institutions like NEDLAC, since they arise in historical moments where the working class emerges as a challenge to capital, have the potential to reduce labour's social power. As Khunou (2001) has argued, even though the participation of labour in NEDLAC is a form of power, it creates sensitivities around maintenance of political relationships within the organisation, thus constraining the federation's ability to use stronger approaches to influence policy. This suggests that the notion that labour, business and the government can operate harmoniously to undertake joint decision-making is problematic. This is because these sectors operate on and occupy different levels of power and seek to achieve different objectives which are often contradictory. Business has economic power, the government has political power and labour has social power, based on its ability to mobilise. Although none of these sectors operates

only within one of these spheres, they are each limited in their influence of the policy process to the sphere where they can best fully exercise their power.

The social policy-making process is about the exercise of power and different policies require the deployment of different forms of power. NEDLAC is already constrained by the parameters set by the macro-economic principles of GEAR, as well as the government's ambivalence towards the institution. If COSATU is going to effectively use NEDLAC, the institution will have to be transformed, so as to facilitate the alteration of its approaches and processes towards social policy and to balance internal socio-economic forces.

GEAR: a lost opportunity for labour

The passing of GEAR as a macro-economic strategy for South Africa was not favourable to the majority of SA citizens, who are either unemployed or precariously employed, nor was it favourable to COSATU's constituency. Government's unilateral decision to pass GEAR also marked a shift in the Alliance relationship. In the 2004 survey, only 33 per cent of COSATU members reported knowing what GEAR was, compared to 67 per cent who did not know what it was. Similarly, the 2008 survey illustrated a decline in those who knew what GEAR was, with only 24 per cent reporting that they knew what it was and 74 per cent reporting that they did not know. This information is contrary to the core principle of union representation.

The anxieties that the adoption of GEAR generated among unions was understandable, particularly in view of the democratic processes and power the enactment of the RDP as a government strategy gave them. Given this tension, one would have expected stronger resistance through the use of NEDLAC or other more radical strategies, such as taking government to the Constitutional Court and militant strike action. COSATU acknowledges its lack of a coherent strategic power in challenging GEAR as part of the problem. They show that, had they 'insisted on the provision of the [NEDLAC] Act being followed, the bypassing of NEDLAC on key issues of policy such as GEAR could have been challenged' (COSATU 2000a).

Once more, COSATU's engagement on the GEAR issue should have been coupled with mobilisation of its members and the broader civil society in the country. By doing this, they would have used their social power to deal with the pressure that the government was putting on them when it presented GEAR

as non-negotiable. As Webster and Sikwebu have observed, 'the government's imposition of GEAR confirmed COSATU's subordination within the Alliance' (Webster & Sikwebu 2005: 142).

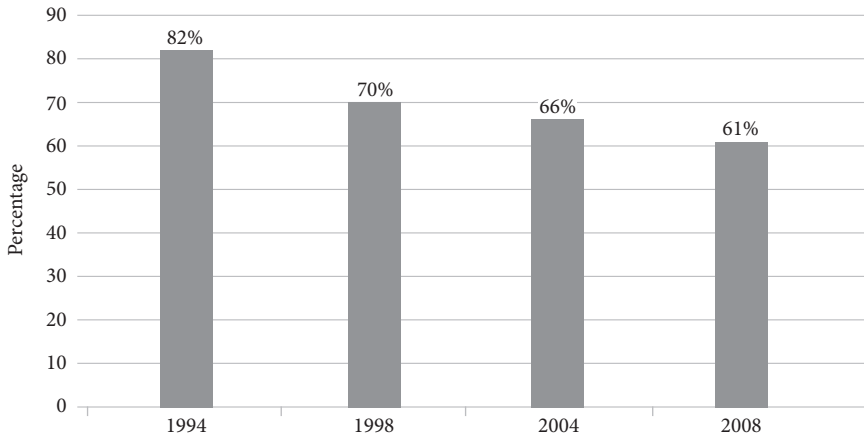
This, then, shows that one of the federation's challenges is that the negotiation of macro-economic strategies at NEDLAC is not mandatory, thus making it an inadequate forum to formally influence mainstream macro-economic strategies. Critics inside the unions argue that institutionalised bargaining between business, labour and the state contains dangers of union 'co-optation' in the management of capitalism (Giliomee & Simkins 1999). They argue that participation in such forums deprives the labour movement of its capacity for independent action. This explains COSATU's reluctance to challenge GEAR.

The Tripartite Alliance: labour's nostalgia for the past

Labour theorists maintain that there is a general fragility between union-party alliances in the contemporary world. This is also true of the Tripartite Alliance between COSATU, the ANC and the SACP. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Alliance played an important role in facilitating COSATU's early strategic participation in shaping post-apartheid policy-making, including the shaping of the Constitution, the RDP and labour legislation. 'The Alliance is the political forum where the three parties are meant to thrash out their positions' (Cherry 2006: 154). However, there seems to be an absence of a clear strategic approach to policy-making, with the result that policies developed within the Alliance have little impact on the government (Cherry 2006). These tensions are also manifested by the continued decline of COSATU members' support for the Alliance since 1994 (Figure 8.1).

This decline illustrates a significant shift, even though the members who supported the Alliance in 2008 were still in the majority. Another way of looking at this decline in support is that it is symptomatic of the tensions and disagreements on policy that exists between the parties in the Alliance. However, as the following extract from a COSATU statement illustrates, Alliance partners continue to deny these suggestions:

The Alliance has always been based on shared values and principles but has also tolerated and encouraged robust engagement and debate on areas of disagreement, without this calling into question the necessity for the Alliance. (COSATU 2009)

Figure 8.1 COSATU members' support for the Tripartite Alliance, 1994–2008

Notwithstanding denials such as this one, the different policy imperatives of the government and those articulated by COSATU stand in contradiction to each other. In this context, questions about the relevance of the Alliance have been raised by the media and researchers, as well as by members of COSATU itself. The general view among those who raise the questions is that, 'the Tripartite Alliance doesn't seem to do very much. Its influence on government policy is practically zero' (Naidoo 2003: 8). Naidoo further suggested that there have been more statutory binding agreements at NEDLAC than there have been at the Alliance. Buhlungu concisely captured the weakness in this relationship thus: 'over the last nine years there have been signs that underneath the semblance of cohesion within the ranks of the Alliance, serious tensions and strategic differences exist and continue to grow' (2005: 709). These observations attest to the fact that the historical bases of this relationship have shifted.

It is proper, then, to argue that the resolve to maintain the Alliance attests to COSATU's nostalgia for the opportunities this relationship has offered in the past. This issue is especially pertinent, given the fact that 'the post-1994 period has resulted in a marked decline in the role and influence of COSATU within the Tripartite Alliance' (Buhlungu 2005: 709). COSATU argues that the federation's role in the Alliance was not a good strategy to transform

macro-economic policy. COSATU further argues that, 'instead of GEAR being modified in the light of its dismal failure, as COSATU had at one stage hoped, the logic of conservative macro-economic policy is being extended to some other aspects of governance, for example, local government' (COSATU cited in Cherry 2006: 157). Even by the federation's admission, the Alliance is not effective in consolidating COSATU's ability to influence policy:

Throughout this period concerns have been raised mainly by COSATU and the SACP that the Alliance is only made relevant during the elections and once this is over they are marginalised and excluded from major policy decisions. (COSATU 2007)

Thus, it may be concluded that COSATU's desire to maintain old political relationships for their own sake curtails its ability to coherently readjust, and effectively influence social policy.

The need to mainstream the conception and making of social policy

Given the normative thinking that social policy is separate from macro-economic policy, societal institutions have also been arranged in line with this division. This separation is at the heart of the neo-liberal approach which 'overemphasised these differences, and made the assumption that each strand of policy could be pursued independently of the other' (Elson 2004: 63). Nevertheless, this idea is deeply entrenched in policy-making processes, thus making it tricky to modify. The conception of social policy suggested in this chapter will influence, and in cases illustrated above, limit how these policies are made.

In his analysis of social welfare in post-apartheid South Africa, Barchiesi identified one of COSATU's weaknesses as a lack of appreciation for social policy. He argued that:

traditional labour discourse and practices had in particular maintained a clear separation between state-provided social assistance and social security for the poor, long-term unemployed and groups with special needs, and a realm of employment-based, employer-funded social insurance for the employed, mainly in

the form of unemployment benefits, retirement and healthcare.
(Barchiesi 2005: 349)

This flaw results from viewing social policy as an 'afterthought'. This is evident in how the policy process is advanced, with macro-economic strategies as non-negotiable and the egalitarian claims of citizenship as an addendum. It is, thus, virtually impossible to achieve socially desirable outcomes, when they are not articulated as the intention of development strategies. Social policies should not continue to be introduced only to right the ills of the market. This idea also calls for a shift from considering social policy as a 'residual category of safety nets' (Mkandawire 2004: 3).

In the same vein, there is also an urgent need to rethink 'the design of macro-economic policies and the organisation of the policy process' (Elson 2004: 64). This, it has been argued, should be done through, 'the establishing of social issues in the mainstream of macro-economic policy' (Elson 2004: 64). Mainstreaming is considered better than the 'adding-on' that characterises the current development of social policies. This is because mainstreaming is more transformative of the dominant paradigms and the biased socio-economic forces. Mainstreaming is said to be characterised by the following:

- a rethinking of macro-economics;
- a rethinking of the organisation of macro-economic policy processes;
- recognition of the salience of social issues and social policy. (Elson 2004: 64)

Mainstreaming as suggested by Elson calls for circumstances where access to socio-economic rights is linked to citizenship, not involvement in wage-work, as is currently the case. A similar view was advanced by Natrass and Seekings early on in South Africa's democracy, when they argued that, 'the extension of industrial citizenship has focused more on developing the rights of employed workers, than on extending access to employment for the unemployed' (Natrass & Seekings 1997: 473). This failure to extend socio-economic citizenship to the majority of South Africans is a serious flaw, which suggests that social policy imperatives in post-apartheid South Africa continue to be trapped in past assumptions of full employment and the notion of a male breadwinner. This implies a lack of imagination and systematic enquiry in policy-making.

Developments since 2008: signs of COSATU's continued loss of power

In concert with the 2008 findings of the COSATU Workers' Survey that COSATU members are not happy with the Alliance, other researchers have also found that the election of Jacob Zuma into the presidency of the ruling party and the country has increased this tension within the Alliance (Ceruti 2011; Vircoulon 2010). Some researchers on labour and South African politics suggest that efforts put in by trade unions and the SACP to get Jacob Zuma elected into the presidency served to deepen cracks in the relationship and made its collapse almost inevitable (Basset et al 2008; Bond 2009). These tensions have been especially visible between the SACP and COSATU, as they no longer seem to speak with one voice (Vircoulon 2010). For a while after the ANC's Polokwane conference, the election of Zuma was seen by many general members of the Alliance as a turn to the left. However, when this did not materialise, as illustrated in Ceruti's (2011) analysis of the 2010 public sector strike, it led to disappointment among many in the Alliance and heightened tensions. (For further discussion of recent development in the Tripartite Alliance see Chapter 12 in this volume).

Discontent with Zuma's administration has also highlighted the growing gap between general union members and their leadership. Ceruti (2011) shows that the unilateral decision by COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, and a few other leaders around him, to accept the government's wage to public sector workers in 2010 without first discussing it with members, is contrary to the federation's democratic culture. This is clearly a sign of a widening gap between what members expect and what the leadership is able to provide. Ceruti further argues that, 'in 2010 members forced the strike onto a leadership who were either reluctant to strike or naively believed they would not have to' (Ceruti 2011: 152). This illustrates the power the ANC holds in driving alliance politics (Bond 2009).

Linked to the myth of the necessity of the Alliance and the reluctance by COSATU to acknowledge the influence of neo-liberal ideas on the post-Polokwane ANC leadership, is the continuing misconception that unionists in government will push labour's line. The appointment of SACP general secretary, Blade Nzimande, as minister of higher education and the appointment of a new cohort of union leaders as ministers, including former

secretary of the South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, Ebrahim Patel, and National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union president Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya, does not necessarily indicate a move away from neo-liberal policies (Bond 2009). This explains why the left in the Alliance, principally in COSATU, continue to criticise government policy, particularly the role played by national treasury (Vircoulon 2010). Clearly, developments after the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey suggest that the growing tension within the Alliance is not dissipating. (This theme is explored further in Chapter 12 in this volume).

Conclusion

Since 1994, COSATU has participated in a variety of strategies to enhance its engagement in the South African policy-making arena. These have included involvement in Alliance politics, participation at NEDLAC, submissions to Parliament and the general maintenance of the organisation. Although these strategies have brought about some gains, they have failed to provide a consistent ability for the federation to influence the policy-making process. The inconsistency in the effectiveness of these approaches is because they have at times been ignored, or have been weakly implemented or undertaken.

This chapter has illustrated the misinformed normative assumptions underpinned in neo-liberal thinking, which hold that social policy is separate from macro-economic policy. COSATU's ability to effectively influence social policy was initially lost when it became unable to effectively challenge the passing and implementation of GEAR. Again, this inability was reinforced when the federation prioritised engagement in NEDLAC to the exclusion of other approaches, such as building a powerful bloc of civil society organisations and the use of legal processes. COSATU's nostalgia for old political relationships that fail to yield results currently reduces their ability to act strategically. This is especially true, given that a growing number of the federation's members clearly are against the continuation of the existing political relationship. For COSATU to restore its effectiveness in the policy-making arena, it needs to review its principles, including a revival of militant community action, coupled with completely new strategies to take into account new challenges. Most importantly, it should begin to listen to the growing number of its members who have reservations about the efficacy of the Tripartite Alliance as a strategy to shape policy.

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9 *COSATU members and strike violence: what we learn from quantitative and qualitative data*

Karl von Holdt

Just over 11 per cent of COSATU members surveyed at the end of 2008 agreed that, at times, it is necessary to use violence against non-striking workers; while a further 30 per cent agreed that non-striking workers 'should be taught a lesson in non-violent ways'. This represents a significant minority of COSATU members who may support the use of violence against non-strikers, or who may have an ambivalent attitude to the use of such violence; and, as discussed below, this is likely to be an undercount of those supporting the use of violence.

Strikes were frequently accompanied by violence during the 1980s in South Africa. Strikers were regularly beaten, arrested and shot by the police. Strike-breakers were intimidated, beaten and sometimes murdered by striking workers.¹ Labour analysts ascribed the high levels of worker violence to the conditions under which trade unions organised and engaged in collective bargaining during the apartheid era: in particular, the failure to fully institutionalise industrial conflict, and, more broadly, the absence of political rights which imbued industrial action with a strongly political dimension (Von Holdt 1989, 2003; Webster & Simpson 1990). The implication was that, with the political incorporation of workers into a post-apartheid democracy and with the full institutionalisation of industrial conflict in new post-apartheid labour legislation, strike violence and the high levels of mass militancy which sustained it would decline.

While strike violence may have declined in comparison with the 1980s, it does remain a persistent feature of South African industrial relations. Indeed, over the past five years or so, strikes have increasingly been accompanied by heavy-

handed police action – beatings, shooting with rubber bullets, arrests; while intimidation, assaults and murders of strike-breakers have been a persistent feature of many large-scale strikes. Violence is defined here as physical violence or the threat of physical violence, and it is important to include police violence in the analysis, as the violence of state agencies is frequently rendered invisible in media accounts.

This chapter explores the reasons for the persistence of strike violence, by supplementing the quantitative data gathered through the membership survey, with a qualitative study of strike violence that took place in the public health sector during the wider public service strike in 2007.² This strategy reveals tensions between the survey data and the qualitative findings: whereas the survey suggests a low disposition towards violence among members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), the case study suggests a greater disposition towards violence. This tension does point to the difficulty of using opinion surveys for understanding real-life actions. The 2007 strike, in contrast to the strikes of the 1980s, took place at a time when public service workers had full trade union and collective bargaining rights, and when a constitutional democracy had been in place for more than a decade. Nonetheless, despite conditions that appeared propitious to the institutionalisation of industrial conflict, the strike was characterised by considerable violent intimidation of non-strikers.

The chapter concludes with the argument that the limits to institutionalisation cannot be understood only with reference to the dynamics within the field of industrial relations, but that institutionalisation implies acceptance by all parties of the underlying social order, of which industrial relations is simply one component. Where the underlying social order is unsettled or contested, institutionalisation is likely to remain partial and precarious. Research into institutionalisation, then, has to go beyond the analysis of formal institutions and procedures, and investigate the informal networks and rationales that underlie this, and what these tell us about the broader social order.

The survey data

Interesting patterns emerge from the survey data, although, as argued below, this can, at most, be taken as suggestive, because of certain problems with the methodology and with the particular questions posed. Respondents were

given four statements regarding the use of violence by striking workers, and asked to choose one only. The four statements were:

- 1 There are times when it becomes necessary to use violence against non-striking workers.
- 2 Violence is not acceptable but non-striking workers should be taught a lesson in non-violent ways.
- 3 Non-striking workers should be engaged with politically to convince them to join the strike.
- 4 Non-striking workers should be left alone to go to work if they so decide.

The lowest percentage of workers (11 per cent) agreed that sometimes it is necessary to use violence, while the greatest percentage (38 per cent) preferred political engagement. Thirty per cent preferred teaching non-strikers a non-violent lesson, while 21 per cent thought non-strikers should be left alone. However, interpreting these results is not a straightforward matter.

Firstly, the second option is ambiguous: it rejects violence at the explicit level, but implies a degree of coercion with the idea that non-strikers should be 'taught a lesson'. It could be construed by respondents as a euphemism for endorsing the use of violence – which is how it appeared to be taken, judging by the laughter, at a report-back meeting to COSATU on the survey results. The implication is that a certain portion of those selecting this option actually supported option 1.

Secondly, the questions do not correspond to the reality of the choices workers have to make in a strike situation. While some workers may want to move directly to the use of strike violence, for most the use of strike violence is likely to only become an issue when political persuasion or non-violent 'lessons' have failed. Thus workers do not confront a choice between using violence or using persuasion, but rather the choice whether to use violence if persuasion fails. The way the survey question poses these as alternatives, therefore, is likely to undercount the percentage of workers willing to countenance violence if persuasion fails.

Finally, the illegality of using violence, the public opprobrium attached to it, and the fact that admitting to violence could damage the reputation of their trade union organisation, may incline respondents to a degree of self-censorship in answering this question.

All three of these factors imply that there could be an undercounting of

support for the use of violence against non-strikers. This view is supported by the qualitative data discussed later in the chapter: whereas the interviews with worker activists from NEHAWU in the public health sector suggests at least a fairly widespread acceptance of violence, the survey finds that only 5 per cent of NEHAWU members chose this answer to the question. If this discrepancy for one union can be extrapolated across many of the COSATU affiliates, then the percentage of members supporting the use of violence is significantly higher than the interview response suggests.

The questions can be arranged (as they were in the interview schedule) in a gradient from violent to passive (1–4). They can also be clustered, with 1 and 2 indicating a greater propensity to violence (41 per cent), and 3 and 4 indicating a preference for non-violence and persuasion (59 per cent). Alternatively, questions 1 and 4 can be considered the poles of violence and non-violence, with 2 and 3 clustered as the activist but non-violent middle (67 per cent).

Despite the difficulties of interpreting the data, it does provide a suggestive picture of attitudes towards strike violence. The picture is highly varied between COSATU affiliates (see Table 9.1):

Four out of 14 affiliates provide a significantly higher degree of support for the use of violence than the average, that is, over 15 per cent compared to 11 per cent, and the highest of these is South African Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU), with 27 per cent. This is the union that was at the centre of the most violent post-apartheid strike, the security guards strike in 2006. The others include two manufacturing unions, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU), and one public sector union, Police and Prisons Civil Rights' Union (POPCRU).

The four affiliates with the lowest response rate to this option are South Africa Society of Banking Officials (SASBO) and Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA), both with zero responses, a public sector union, National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), and a manufacturing union, Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (CCEPWAWU). SASBO, a bank employees union, and DENOSA, a union for nurses with a history as a professional association, have different backgrounds to the rest of the COSATU affiliates, having affiliated in the democratic era and seldom embarking on strike action.

Table 9.1 Attitudes towards violence during strikes (by COSATU affiliate)

	There are times when it becomes necessary to use violence against non-striking workers.	Violence is not acceptable but non-striking workers should be taught a lesson in non-violent ways.	Non-striking workers should be engaged with politically to convince them to join the strike.	Non-striking workers should be left alone to go to work if they so decide.	TOTAL
Avg	11.3%	29.8%	37.6%	21.2%	100%
N	70	184	232	131	617
SATAWU	27.1%	31.3%	27.1%	14.6%	100%
	13	15	13	7	48
SACTWU	16.7%	35.2%	40.7%	7.4%	100%
	9	19	22	4	54
NUMSA	16.4%	28.4%	38.8%	16.4%	100%
	11	19	26	11	67
POPCRU	15.6%	24.4%	31.1%	28.9%	100%
	7	11	14	13	45
SACCAWU	14.3%	32.7%	28.6%	24.5%	100%
	7	16	14	12	49
CWU	12%	28%	28%	32%	100%
	3	7	7	8	25
SADTU	8.1%	14.9%	48.6%	28.4%	100%
	6	11	36	21	74
NUM	7.8%	31.4%	39.2%	21.6%	100%
	4	16	20	11	51
FAWU	6.9%	13.8%	44.8%	34.5%	100%
	2	4	13	10	29
NEHAWU	4.9%	39.3%	47.5%	8.2%	100%
	3	24	29	5	61
CEPPWAWU	4.5%	28.8%	37.3%	19.4%	100%
	3	26	25	13	67
DENOSA	0%	40%	40%	20%	100%
	0	2	2	1	5
SASBO	0%	23.1%	7.7%	69.2%	100%
	0	3	1	9	13

Note: Totals might not add up to 100% due to rounding.

What is it that explains the variation between different COSATU affiliates? It is easy to explain why SASBO and DENOSA are at the bottom of the table, as

remarked above. If we replace them with the next two unions least supportive of violence, we get Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU), a manufacturing union, and South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), a public sector union. Thus we have manufacturing unions and public sector unions in both the most supportive and the least supportive positions in the table.

SATAWU's membership is divided between the state-run railways, road freight and passenger buses, and contract cleaning and security. The latter three sectors are relatively vulnerable and difficult to organise, and security guards, like the POPCRU membership, are expected to be comfortable with the use of coercion in their jobs. These factors may account for the much higher support for the use of violence in this union than in any other affiliate. With regard to the manufacturing unions, there are no obvious reasons why NUMSA and SACTWU should show greater support for the use of violence than CCEPWAWU and FAWU. This does raise the question whether internal organisational culture, rather than structural factors, may account for some of the variation between affiliates. This cannot be explored without further data.

If we analyse the answers to all four questions across these eight affiliates, we get interesting results. For the first four affiliates, that is, those with the highest support for violence, there is a very low response to the fourth option and a considerably lower response to the third option, compared to the average response rate to these two options, while the response to the second option is close to the average response for this option.³ In other words, the increased support for the option of violence corresponds to a reduced support for the passive option of leaving strike-breakers alone.

For the second group of four affiliates, that is, those with the lowest support for violence, SASBO is an extreme outlier, with 70 per cent supporting the last, passive, option. If we bracket this affiliate, we get a different response pattern to that of the first four affiliates: here there is a significantly higher than average response to the two middle options, while the response to the last, most passive, option, is average except for NEHAWU, which is strongly below average.

What could these patterns mean? In the four affiliates with the highest level of support for violence, the answers cluster towards the left-hand columns of the table; that is, towards unambiguous, as well as ambiguous, support for coercive practices, so that the supporters of violence may find considerable additional

support from among the ranks of the ambivalent. In three of the four affiliates with the lowest level of support for violence, there is dramatic increase in the ambiguous column and a clustering of attitudes around the middle – in favour of political persuasion or teaching a non-violent lesson – rather than towards the passive right-hand column.

This data tends to suggest that, even in affiliates with a lower proportion of members declaring themselves supportive of violence, rather than a corresponding increase in the proportion supporting the passive fourth column, there is an increased pool of support for the ambiguous second column and for the third, which advocates political persuasion: positions which may, if such practices fail, be converted to supporters of violence. This interpretation is supported by the qualitative study of members of NEHAWU, which is one of the unions least inclined to use violence, according to the survey data.

Regarding gender, the survey data indicates that women workers are only slightly less supportive of violence (9.8 per cent compared to 12.4 per cent for males), while almost double the proportion of women support the most passive option – leave non-strikers alone – (29 per cent compared to 16.8 per cent for men). While the response to the latter option supports gender stereotypes that portray women as less likely to engage in activism and/or violence, the responses to option 1 suggest that where women are active in their organisations, they are almost as likely as men to support violence. Again, this finding is consistent with the qualitative research into strike violence, in which several strong advocates of strike violence were women; indeed, one woman respondent suggested that women have even less mercy than men, because they know the pain of sending children to bed hungry. These findings suggest that a fresh perspective on gender and collective violence may be necessary.

With regard to shop stewards and rank-and-file members, the survey indicates that the organisational leadership (shop stewards) may play a role in reducing strike violence, though not a big one: 7.1 per cent of shop stewards support the use of violence, compared to 13.2 per cent of rank-and-file members. On the other hand, a very substantial 54 per cent of shop stewards supported political persuasion, with only 11 per cent endorsing the idea of leaving non-strikers alone, while the figures for rank-and-file members were 32 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. In the qualitative research, however, shop stewards were

found to be supportive of the use of violence by members, which may indicate that shop stewards, conscious of their leadership role, are more inclined to self-censorship in answering this question.

Finally, the Eastern Cape shows the highest level of support for violence (20 per cent), while the Western Cape shows the highest level of support for leaving non-strikers alone (39 per cent). For other options, these two provinces, as well as the three other provinces covered by the survey, pretty much cluster around the averages.

Let us turn now to the qualitative case study, to see what that tells us about strike violence.

The 2007 public service strike

Overview of the strike

By the time of the 2007 public service strike, the full range of employee and trade union rights enshrined in national labour legislation applied to public service workers. Trade unions had the right to access members, represent them, organise, strike legally without dismissal, and picket. Collective bargaining was institutionalised across the public service. Public service unions had overtaken many industrial unions in size, and NEHAWU was COSATU's third biggest affiliate. The negotiated transition had produced a constitutional democracy and the former liberation movement, the ANC, with which COSATU had a structured alliance, governed with a large majority. In other words, all the necessary conditions for the 'institutionalisation' of the working class appeared to be in place.

Nonetheless, like a growing number of strikes through the mid-2000s, the public service strike was accompanied by considerable violent intimidation. This section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the strike, based mostly on participant observation at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, before exploring in some detail the views of worker activists regarding the strike violence.⁴

An alliance of public service unions launched the strike in mid-2007, in support of demands for a substantial real wage increase. The strike turned into a protracted test of strength and will between government and the unions, and lasted four weeks. At the level of industrial relations, the right to strike in the

public health sector itself became a matter of dispute, with government arguing that it was defined as an essential service in labour legislation and obtaining a court interdict against striking in the hospitals. This enabled the government to declare the strike in these workplaces illegal. The unions argued that this was an underhand tactic, as the legislation did not envisage all health sector workers being defined as essential service workers, but obliged the employer to meet with the unions in order to negotiate the scope of 'essential services' in the health sector. This had not been done. This dispute over the quite fundamental issue of the legality of the strike, at least in the hospital sector, qualifies the extent to which industrial relations procedures can be regarded as fully institutionalised at a formal level, as will become evident below.

Politically, too, the strike was charged with considerable tension. Firstly, the ANC government under Thabo Mbeki had adopted a tough position on the public service unions, generally negotiating aggressively, as well as imposing a programme of downsizing in the mid- to late 1990s. A bruising encounter for the unions had been their defeat in the 1999 strike, which was undermined by disunity and fizzled out, allowing the government to impose a unilateral wage increase. Secondly, a tacit political aim was to demonstrate labour's strength in the context of a leadership battle in the ANC, in which COSATU was allied with a range of forces committed to replacing President Thabo Mbeki with Jacob Zuma. For labour, the stakes in the 2007 strike were therefore high, both in terms of the imperative of reasserting itself in the public service and in terms of the struggle against a 'neo-liberal' leadership of the ANC.

The strike started on 1 June, a Friday, with strong support, particularly in the public health and education sectors. On that day, the heads of all hospitals were instructed to hand the unions a copy of the court interdict prohibiting essential service workers from striking. On the Sunday, government announced that any essential service workers still on strike by 10 a.m. on Monday would be dismissed. On Monday morning, the Army medical corps was drafted into hospitals to run the kitchens and provide cleaning services. At Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital (CBH), as the 10 a.m. deadline approached, groups of strikers toyi-toyed between the wards, pulling out any nurses or support workers who were still working. On the Wednesday, government announced that picket lines would be removed from hospitals and other institutions; on Thursday, the COSATU general secretary addressed a rally of strikers at CBH – always seen as a strategic workplace in the health sector – and called

on workers across the country to shut government down; and on the Friday, the police moved the picket line out of the hospital. Thus the first week of the strike was characterised by each side ratcheting up the pressure on the other. While government made use of legislative provisions and the court interdict to declare the strike illegal, the unions took a decision to ignore the interdict and rely on collective action to support their demands. Both parties continued to mobilise their resources over the following week.

On the second Monday, the 11th day of the strike, dismissal notices were posted in every hospital, listing between 30 and 40 strikers from that hospital who were declared to have been dismissed in light of the illegality of the strike. Every day, a further 30 to 40 strikers per hospital were listed as dismissed. On the Wednesday, COSATU mobilised a national general one-day strike in support of the public service unions, an unprecedented display of solidarity for striking affiliates from the federation as a whole. This was the high point of the strike. Over the following days, the number of strikers gradually diminished in the public health sector and government administrative offices, but it remained extremely solid in the schools. The strike was sufficiently strong for the unions to hold out and force government back to the bargaining table with new offers. Eventually, the strike was settled after four weeks, with government having revised its wage offer from 5.3 per cent to 7.5 per cent, and agreement to increase salaries by a further 1 per cent above inflation in 2008. There were also substantial increases in housing and medical aid benefits, and agreement to fast track the 'occupational specific dispensation' (meaning increased salaries) for underpaid and scarce-skill categories such as doctors, nurses and teachers. Although the increase was significantly below the 10 per cent demanded by the unions, they claimed the result as a victory for public service unions.⁵

Intimidation started even before the strike had begun. Two days before the strike, groups of men appeared in both the adult and the paediatric intensive care unit (ICU) in the Burns Unit at CBH, and forced the nurses on duty to accompany them to a meeting. Fortunately, two nurses were able to conceal themselves and remain behind, so averting a potentially hazardous crisis. The men were unknown, and there was speculation that they were from other hospitals or schools. By the middle of the first week of the strike, there were increasing reports of intimidation of non-strikers, particularly nurses. On the Friday, after COSATU's call for government to be shut down, nurses in the

surgical wards panicked and fled the hospital after a barrage of SMS messages and phone calls to the wards threatened that their homes and children were known. Doctors and matrons spent the rest of the day preparing patients for removal to private hospitals, and by the end of the night most of the wards had been closed. By the Monday, when the first dismissal notices were posted, strike violence – mostly in the form of verbal threats and assaults – was extensive in hospitals and in schools, as well as in communities where non-strikers lived.

It is important here to draw attention to the specific character of the labour force and unionisation in the hospitals. The labour process combines intensive use of high-level professional skills with a diversity of less skilled non-professional support workers. Thus at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital there were almost 2 000 nurses and several hundred doctors, and perhaps 2 000 support workers, including those directly involved in the clinical process, such as clerks, cleaners and porters, as well as indirect support in the form of kitchen workers, laundry workers, drivers and, again, clerical workers. NEHAWU is most strongly organised amongst support workers, and to some extent, among nursing assistants. Nurses are organised by DENOSA, a COSATU affiliate, and by a non-COSATU union, Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPERSA), which also organises clerical staff.

While NEHAWU is the majority trade union, its base is among the militant and relatively unskilled support workers, not the professional workers, who are central to the clinical labour process. The professional ethos of nurses means they are reluctant to strike, even when strongly aggrieved, and strikes in the public health sector are generally led by NEHAWU and characterised by often bitter divisions between different categories of workers and their unions. This also works against the institutionalisation of industrial relations, since, while DENOSA and HOSPERSA prefer to make use of institutional channels and procedures to assert their professional concerns, NEHAWU and its members tend to make use of collective action to overcome a sense of marginalisation. Intimidation of non-strikers may be seen as the only way to disrupt the core labour process of the workplace.

The 2007 strike was remarkable, in that it was a joint initiative of most unions in the public service, both COSATU and non-COSATU. This held out the possibility that intimidation might be greatly reduced. However, a few days into the strike, the support of DENOSA and HOSPERSA became increasingly

lukewarm and, in practice, they ceased supporting the strike. Once again, NEHAWU, as well as a smaller independent union, National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NUPSAW), and the support workers, were on their own.

Interviews with worker activists

In interviews, some shop stewards and worker activists⁶ referred specifically to their sense that the employer had flouted legal and institutional procedures by declaring the strike illegal and dismissing workers:

All proper procedures were followed, but they declared the strike illegal, stopped our salaries, served us with dismissal letters. That is where everything broke out of proportion. We decided we were going to smash everything.

The LRA [Labour Relations Act] and the Constitution seem not to bind the employers – they can do anything, they don't follow procedure, but the unions are expected to follow procedures.

They are above the law, the seniors in government break the law.

But most of them focused on the fact that violence is intrinsic to strike action, drawing on their own experience:

Since I was born, I have seen all strikes are violent. There are no such strikes as peaceful strikes. Some workers do not join a strike because of fear. We must develop a mechanism for all these workers to participate. By force they must join the strike. Otherwise anybody would do their own thing.

You know you are holding a peaceful strike, but practically you do not do it peacefully. You defend what is yours. My job is my job, it belongs to no one. I know what I am fighting for. If you don't use force, problems won't be resolved speedily. This puts pressure to the management or government to act.

Violence sends a message to the whole country, those responsible will quickly realise they must resolve things. So the violence assists to wake up the entire country, that the innocent will suffer.

Workers, then, are disposed to use violence in strikes, because it is intrinsic

to the meaning of the strike and because it has proven its effectiveness. Violence is a necessary element in maintaining the solidarity of the union and strengthening negotiations. A strike is a power struggle and has its own morality, which is not affected by the fact that South Africa is now a democracy with the former liberation movement in government. In the words of a woman worker:

There's no sweet strike, there is no Christian strike ... A strike is a strike. You want to get back what belongs to you. You want the response must be positive and quick. You won't win a strike with a Bible. You do not wear high heels and carry an umbrella and say 1992 it was under apartheid, 2007 is under ANC. You won't win a strike like that. You need to wear takkies and jeans.

The use of violence explicitly breaks the law, but is justified by a different law, the law of the majority in the union; where they clash it is difficult to remain 'upright':

I do not think the law is wrong as such. Law is supposed to defend the right to strike and the rights of those not on strike. But how can we follow that law? *Thina*, how are we going to be successful in winning our demands? We can't always be upright. *Umthetho oyaphulwa, oyenzelwe oko phulwa.*⁷ We must follow the majority. The majority vote for a strike. We must find ways to make those others join the strike and the decision of the majority. You are working, we are on strike. You must be afraid for your safety.

The authority of the law and the state has its limits when confronted by the imperatives of strike action. According to a woman worker:

Everybody has rights. You have rights, I have rights. That's why when workers do it they hide it. They know they are not supposed to do that ... A *sjambok* is during the night, but during the day they sing. Everyone has the right to be covered [by the law]. That's why they assault at night, not daylight. Yes, they know it's illegal to assault. They are breaking the law. Yes, when it comes to a fight they don't care.

What emerges from these interviews is that the collective action of a strike carves out a domain with its own laws and rationales, and its own codes of

conduct, beyond the authority of the law or the moral codes that govern 'normal' individual interactions in society. These rationales and codes work against tendencies towards institutionalising industrial conflict. Several of the interviewees referred to broader social and economic injustices to explain their readiness to see the law and the authority of the state put aside; in the words of a woman worker:

When you're in a strike you are in a war. Even if the ANC is the government, it is not yet *uhuru*. Workers' issues and demands have not yet been met, although we are compromising.

There will be no peace until the revolution has been completed:

We know according to law it is an injustice to *sjambok* or assault somebody. You cannot say because of anger, an individual must assault somebody. I do not say that law must be amended, because we will be living in a lawless country. But we know that during a strike there will be lots of casualties. Since our revolution, until we try to live according to its true nature, there won't be peace.

The position of workers in society is cause for anger, especially when compared to their aspirations and the promises made to them during the liberation struggle:

Workers are still poor, most workers are still not educated, most workers are still suffering. Transparency is not practised. Agreements are reached but they are not implemented. There's lots of corruption in the health department, money is misallocated. This brings frustration, when salaries come workers have hope, but when workers do not get what they want they get frustrated and violent. Service delivery is not properly made, even in local authorities.

Democracy in itself is inadequate, because it does not improve the lives of workers:

The struggle continues. We have democracy, but the struggle is an economic one – you need to maintain your family. It is a democratic country, but you cannot sit back and just drink water.

Thus broader socio-economic conditions and the continuing social injustice that workers have to bear frame the specific rationales and codes of the strike and of union organisation, providing a broader justification for strike violence.

Part of the explanation for the durability of strike violence and the continuing transgression of the laws and procedures through which conflict is institutionalised, lies at the subjective level, with the sense of empowerment and agency that workers who occupy dreary repetitive jobs experience when participating in collective action. This was evident, both during the 1980s and in the 1992 public service strike (see Von Holdt 2010 for analysis of these case studies). A woman worker describes the same sense of liberation and agency through taking part in strike violence in 2007:

During the strike it's an exciting life. After the action we will be laughing – 'did you see how she jumped?' We will be excited that we made the rat⁸ busy. In the past we used to call it Rutex, now we call it Hale Phirimi,⁹ after eating that it won't return. It's nice to deal with a rat. It's exciting to deal with a rat. We go on strike voluntarily because we know what we want. We know why we are on strike. To be in a strike is to be a leader, you are not a leader because you benefit. In fact being a leader you lose a lot.

Again, this feeling is associated with the special morality of the strike: when workers meet a strike-breaker with bags of groceries, even though they do not have food at home, 'we just throw it into the streets for cars to smash it, we kick it, we will take nothing'.

This special morality of the strike is conveyed by one of the stories a shop steward told about the strike. A nursing assistant dressed up in bulky clothes and used ash to alter her complexion, and participated in the *sjambokking* of nurses at the taxi rank. The following day, seeing the nurses she had assaulted toying and singing on the picket line, her comment was: 'See my patients over there – see my medicine has cured them!' In this inversion of the normal meanings of 'patient' and 'medicine', non-striking nurses are regarded as ill, and beating with a *sjambok* is a medicine which cures them and brings them out on strike.

Collective action and violence is associated also with the visceral sense of oppression and marginalisation which the least skilled workers experience, particularly in a skill-intensive institution such as a hospital:

When you fight with an illiterate, you must be ready to fight. I might start thinking you take advantage, or you do not respect me because I am not educated. Even our members have an inferior

complex, when others start speaking English we start thinking *laba abafundile baqalile*.¹⁰ We use all our force, we pull all the masses. You will never defeat us.

It is not that striking in the health services does not pose moral dilemmas. Indeed, it does.

It's very painful, because you see patients suffer. But you can't serve your patient while ... [pause] they must serve my interests first, so that I can serve my patient.

This puts nurses, specifically, in a difficult position:

It's difficult to be a nurse during a strike. We take them as *amagundwana*.¹¹ But deep down we know they are not *amagundwana*. We understand they have to be there to take care of patients, but there is a strike. If they are not there patients will die. We feel pity for them, but there's nothing we can do.

In the moral tension between the claims of patients and the duty nurses feel to them, and the moral imperatives of worker solidarity, solidarity comes first. However, an individual reflecting on her role in strike violence may feel a strong sense of guilt about actions that are unavoidable to those who have to act in the real world, on 'earth':

You pray. God, please forgive me, I know I have sinned, but this is earth. You console yourself that you destroyed property, you did not kill. Please help me in resolving this strike. I remember in 1992 we held prayers, we went to the mountains and held a night vigil. We prayed. But you motivate your prayer that at least I did not kill somebody. Even my kids are sleeping with an empty stomach, their children are sleeping with a full stomach. When you are many you feel better and enjoy [the strike], but when you are alone you think about the situation.

The local moral order constituted by collective action in the form of the strike, and by the union as the agency through which the strike is organised, should not be regarded as a coherent and all-encompassing counter-order of the same kind as the counter-order constructed by workers and community activists during the struggle against apartheid in the 1980s. Firstly, the 2007 strike remained limited to economic trade union demands, and never

explicitly posed larger questions about the nature of the socio-economic order. Secondly, and related to this, the sense of the unfairness of the emerging post-apartheid socio-economic order remains relatively inchoate, in contrast to the clear demands for democracy and the end of apartheid in the 1980s.

Thirdly, while a core of activists among the workers clearly regarded intimidation and strike violence as a legitimate practice, it is not clear how widely this view is shared. It is certainly true that in 2007 the majority of nurses rejected the idea that collective solidarity took precedence over their professional ethos of patient care, even while they supported the goals of the strike: a standpoint that is reflected in the survey results for COSATU's nursing affiliate, DENOSA. According to the quantitative survey of COSATU members discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an average of 11 per cent across affiliates support the use of violence against non-strikers, while only 4.9 per cent of NEHAWU members do. Nonetheless, these practices had sufficient support for the union to retain its support and even increase its membership in the course of the strike, which suggests, as argued earlier, an undercounting in the survey of those prepared to support violence.

Finally, it is important to avoid imputing to interviewees the kind of systematic worldview that sociologists attempt to construct through the process of theorising about social phenomena. The local moral order that emerges during strikes may be a quite transient construction, one that surfaces during episodes of collective action and then becomes dormant again, rather than an ongoing stance in relation to state authority and moral codes. While the counter-order constructed in the struggle against apartheid may have shared some of this flexibility in its significance for the daily living of many individuals, it nonetheless seems to have been a much more durable and encompassing order, posing a real alternative to the apartheid order imposed by the state.

The general secretary

The general secretary of NEHAWU, Fikile Majola, was interviewed in late 2010 about strike violence, in the light of both the 2007 strike as well as the even more violent 2010 public sector strike. The overriding reason for strike violence, in his view, is the relative weakness of union organisation and strike action.

As long as the unions are not strong enough to mobilise for strike action that has overwhelming support, strikes are going to remain violent. When workers think that they might lose their pay, and that they might even lose the strike and lose their job whilst others are going to work, it becomes a life and death issue and you can understand why there would be no peace. When a strike is powerful and has almost 100 per cent support, the conditions would not exist for violence. Who would it be directed at? (Interview: F Majola)

Pointing out that, as Webster and Simpson (1990) argue, the picket line is an essential institution for maintaining workers' unity and exerting moral pressure on would-be strike-breakers, Majola blames the police for 'inciting' workers by trying to break up picket lines:

If the police come there and destroy the picket line and people now go back to work and people who are on strike begin to think they will lose the strike, they become violent, and I can see why they do it. What do they do? The picket lines move to the township, to the streets, so those who are working get attacked there. Picket lines can be very peaceful ... If there are no police there you never find workers break the picket line. Police should be there, but breaking the picket line, acting to weaken the strike, that's what causes the problem. (Interview: F Majola)

Given this, Majola argues that a reduction in violence depends on unions strengthening their ability to organise, as well as on a shift in the way strikes are handled by employers and the police. A properly negotiated national minimum services agreement would establish a mutually accepted basis for agreeing on who can strike, and police acceptance of legal picketing would provide a legitimate mechanism for exerting pressure on strike-breakers.

While the union general secretary's analysis of violence focuses on the institutions and power balance in the field of industrial relations, there is an implicit sense that, where workers have insufficient power, the resort to violence in order to bolster their bargaining position is an understandable and inevitable response, especially where police and employers act to weaken a strike. This is consistent with the views expressed by workers in the interviews cited above, and suggests that they reflect a broad, and perhaps tacit, consensus within the union.

Violence continues to be a feature of strike action across sectors, and in the years since the research analysed here (2007 for the qualitative study, and 2008 for the survey). In 2011, for instance, both the large-scale road freight strike involving over 65 000 workers, and the metal and engineering sector strike, were marked by worker and police violence. As shown in Table 9.1 earlier in this chapter, the two central unions in each of these strikes, SATAWU and NUMSA, figure among the three unions at the top of the table for positive attitudes towards strike violence.

The truckers' strike gave rise to allegations of intimidation, assault, arson and attempted murder on the part of striking workers, with trucks ambushed and torched, their windows broken, and drivers pulled out and assaulted. Strikers were severely injured when police fired rubber bullets at them in at least one incident. The metalworkers strike was described by employers as the most violent and 'bloodiest' in the history of the sector. Allegations included severe intimidation and assault of strike-breakers, and intimidation of customers and suppliers. A number of factories in industrial areas on the East Rand had to be closed after mobs of strikers moved from factory to factory threatening strike-breakers and management. At one plant in Krugersdorp, a supervisor shot two strikers at the factory gates, accusing them of intimidation and assault. At least six NUMSA members were hospitalised because of injuries caused by the police.

Analysis of the 2008 survey and the 2007 case study remains relevant, then, to our understanding of industrial relations conflict in South Africa.

Concluding discussion

The interviews with workers who took part in the 2007 strike take us beyond the quantitative data gathered by the COSATU survey, to suggest several factors that mesh together to propel unprocedural action and strike violence. Some of these factors belong to the industrial relations field, while others arise from the broader political and socio-economic order beyond the industrial relations field, and some straddle the two.

Located in the field of industrial relations are the disputed nature of some of the procedures themselves, the relatively weak bargaining position of the support workers and their union, and the historical repertoire of practices that are experienced as intrinsic to striking.

Located in the broader socio-economic order is continuing social and economic injustice, bolstered by the sense that the liberation struggle has not achieved its full ends and by the limited reach of the authority of the law and the state.

Straddling the two are the sense of an alternative local moral order which coheres around the collective decision of the majority, and the subjective experience of agency and empowerment fostered by going on strike, transgressing laws and procedures, and deploying violence against non-strikers.

It is clear from this research that industrial conflict is only partially institutionalised in post-apartheid South Africa. On the one hand, trade unions and employers make regular, indeed daily, use of the institutions and procedures for resolving conflict between individual employees and employers, as well as for collective dispute resolution and collective bargaining. On the other hand, procedures may be disputed or regarded as unfair, and collective action not infrequently involves violence and intimidation, including violence by the police. Explaining the partial quality of institutionalisation needs to take account both of the industrial relations factors and the factors located in the broader society.

In the field of industrial relations

Despite the fact that post-apartheid labour legislation was shaped by extensive consultation and, at times, tough negotiations between labour, business and government, the fairness and meaning of some of its provisions remain contested between unions and employers. This was clearly evident in the dispute over essential services and the legality of the strike in the hospitals in the public service strike. Declaring the strike illegal fuelled trade unionists' determination to use illegal methods themselves, firstly, by ignoring the interdict, and secondly, by stepping up intimidation.

More important, however, is the fact that many sectors of the labour force are denied an effective voice, even though they have formal access to substantial trade union rights. To some extent, this was the case in the public service strike. Semi-skilled and unskilled support staff have full access to trade union rights and have seen their basic wages increased substantially in the years of democracy; nonetheless, they do not form a majority of hospital staff and feel marginalised in an institution that values the ethos and voice of professionals

relatively highly, and even though they form a majority of the unionised workforce, their impact on the clinical labour process is relatively marginal. Striking, and using violent and disruptive strike tactics, is one way of making their power felt, as the 'illiterate' worker quoted above makes clear, and of course the subjective sense of agency becomes even more important in these circumstances.

Marginalisation and disempowerment is experienced by workers in many sectors of the economy. Indeed, the employer strategy of casualising and outsourcing workers is explicitly designed to undermine union power and reduce workers' access to labour legislation; this effectively denies large sections of the workforce substantial access to employee and trade union rights, despite the existence of these rights at a formal level (Theron 2005; Von Holdt & Webster 2005). In these circumstances, industrial relations cannot be institutionalised. One would expect workers in this position to more readily resort to violence in order to enhance their weakened bargaining position, and indeed, much of the violence in the past few years has taken place when relatively vulnerable workers have engaged in strike action, such as in the security guards' strike of 2006 – the most violent strike in the post-apartheid period – in which 57 people died (Ehrenreich 2007; Jansen 2006; Makgetla 2006), and in the construction sector strike in 2009. The growing tendency for heavy-handed and violent policing of strikes – which was particularly obvious during the security guards' strike – is a factor which straddles the industrial relations field and broader political and social factors. In the field of industrial relations, it suggests an underlying failure on the part of the state to accept the institutionalisation of industrial relations enshrined in legislation, since police action frequently violates the rights to gather, picket and march.

There is, in other words, a persistent ambivalence towards institutionalising industrial relations procedures on the part of unions, employers and the state. At the COSATU 10th National Congress, held in 2009, the Secretariat Report criticised the use of violence and the trashing of streets in strikes, arguing that this delegitimised the strike weapon in the eyes of the public. Many of the affiliate leaders were clearly uncomfortable with this view, and argued that provocative and brutal police action, and the use of scab labour to undermine strikes, drove workers to use such tactics. These rationales illustrate that industrial relations procedures and the industrial relations order remain matters of deep contention.

The institutionalisation of industrial relations implies an acceptance of the underlying industrial order and the balance of power between workers and employers. The ambivalence of all parties to industrial relations institutions expresses an underlying contestation over the industrial order and the relative position of workers and employers in it.

Beyond the field of industrial relations

However, strike violence also takes place where workers occupy a relatively powerful position in the labour market and are not subject to the kind of *de facto* exclusion or marginalisation described above. During the public service strike in 2007, there were persistently high levels of intimidation and violence in schools, often directed against school principals, despite the fact that the strike was extremely strong and that teachers can in no way be described as vulnerable or insecure workers, as they have a similar professional status to nurses. Municipal workers, in their national strike in 2009, engaged in widespread disruption and trashing of towns and cities, despite occupying a relatively strong labour market position with full access to the rights enshrined in labour legislation (in this case, police ‘provocation’ in initiating violence was cited by trade union leaders). In order to understand violence in these conditions, one cannot rely on explanations that refer only to problems within industrial relations itself; one has to explore the factors beyond this field.

Here, the prevailing sense among organised workers, reflected in the interviews, that the current social order is unjust, a view which is fuelled by the legacy of radical rhetoric that was current during the anti-apartheid struggle, has to be the pre-eminent factor. The struggles COSATU has engaged in to neutralise the ‘neo-liberal’ leadership of the ANC and shift its policies towards the left, and its calls for a more socialist orientation, reflect the same sense that the legacy of apartheid continues to blight workers’ lives. This stance implies a lukewarm and conditional acceptance of institutions that may be held to buttress an unfair social order, including the institutions and procedures that define the industrial relations field. The outlines of the post-apartheid social order are, therefore, provisional and contentious.

It is not only COSATU and organised workers that engage in this kind of contention; virtually every matter of public policy, public morality and public interest – urban policy, land policy, public transport initiatives, policing,

housing policy, the meaning of HIV/AIDS – all are contentious, all are matters of dispute, and involve interest groups in heated argument, conflict and, sometimes, violence. The relative power of different interests, hierarchies and authority, rights and expectations, are subject to contestation, negotiation, definition and redefinition. The nature of South Africa's society and the post-apartheid social order are not settled matters.

Partly arising from this, and partly exacerbating it, is the limited reach and authority of the state. As Tilly points out, the scope for contentious politics and collective violence is expanded in societies characterised by low-capacity states. Where the state has limited powers to enforce the rules of the game and punish transgressors, non-state actors are able to push back the limits of contention and transgress laws and deploy violence with impunity (Tilly 2003: 41ff). This description can be applied quite convincingly to South Africa. In the public service strike, the unions and their members flouted the court interdict against illegal striking with impunity, and no workers have been charged with intimidation or violence. Nor has anyone been charged with any of the murders arising out of the security guards strike. There is, in other words, very little cost attached to subverting the institutionalisation of conflict. The violence of the police in response to legal and peaceful strikes – as well as to other conflicts, such as community protests – is an aspect of the same problem: where order and the authority of the state are continually placed in question, the police themselves tend to behave in an unpredictable and even arbitrary fashion. Uncertain of their authority, they too can transgress the law and the bounds of legitimacy, frequently with the same impunity as their adversaries.

These factors beyond the field of industrial relations heighten the salience of the factors that straddle industrial relations and the wider social order, and that serve in some ways to connect wider contention to industrial contention: limited state authority can be eroded or supplanted by local moral orders which legitimate alternative authority, in this case, the authority of the collective decision made by union membership, which is buttressed by the sense that the prevailing order is unjust and unsettled. Likewise, the subjective potency of the experience of agency fostered by industrial action or collective violence is enhanced by the sense that it is part of a wider contestation. It is also the wider reality of contestation and instability that heightens contestation within the industrial relations arena, not only over the ends prescribed by the

industrial relations system, but over the very legitimacy and acceptability of elements of the system itself.

This is not to say that efforts to strengthen industrial relations institutions by negotiating mutually acceptable codes of conduct and procedures, as suggested by the NEHAWU general secretary, can have no impact. Indeed, this may be one way of beginning to stabilise the industrial order and lay the basis for negotiating longer term social transformation.

However, the difficulties are considerable. As was the case in the apartheid era and the transition, the broader dynamics of South African society have a profound impact on trade unions and industrial relations. Although there is a greater degree of institutionalisation than before, it is only partial, and it is likely to remain in this state for as long as the broader social order remains unsettled and contested. The institutionalisation of a specific field like industrial relations, depends on an acceptance by all parties of the broader socio-economic order and the balance of power it stabilises in society; what is suggested by the idea of 'constitutionalisation'. The 'constitutionalisation of the working class' – as well as the broader constitutionalisation of society – proves to be a more contradictory and precarious process than imagined.

Acknowledgement

I would like to dedicate this chapter to my friend and colleague, and NEHAWU official, Moloantoa Molaba, with whom I conducted much of the research into the 2007 public sector strike. His untimely death is a great loss to the labour movement and the broader movement for transformation in our country.

Notes

- 1 For accounts of some of this violence, see Baskin (1991), Moodie (1994) & Von Holdt (2003 and 2010), as well as 'Special focus on violence in the workplace', *South African Labour Bulletin* 14(3)
- 2 Much of the qualitative analysis presented here is drawn from an earlier and longer article published in *Transformation* 72/73 (Von Holdt 2010).
- 3 Here I roughly aggregate the responses to each question across the group of four affiliates; the significant outlier is POPCRU, which has a below average response to the two middle questions, and a higher than average response to the last question, possibly a sign of weak organisation.

- 4 At the time the author was an adviser to the Surgical Division Transformation Project at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. See also Hassen (2007a, 2007b), Pardesi (2007) and Von Holdt (2007).
- 5 This chapter does not claim to assess the effectiveness of the public service strike as industrial action, but rather to investigate the strike violence which accompanied it.
- 6 Twelve interviews were held with worker activists, including some shop stewards, across Gauteng. Because of the sensitive nature of the interviews, interviewees were reassured that confidentiality would be respected. Four of the interviews were with women. Their gender is indicated in the text, because much of what they say contradicts gender stereotypes about the relation between women and violence.
- 7 'Laws were made to be broken.'
- 8 A pejorative term for strike-breakers
- 9 Different makes of rat poison
- 10 'The educated ones are starting again.'
- 11 'rats', that is, strike-breakers

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Interviews

Fikile Majola, General Secretary of NEHAWU, December 2010

Worker activists, anonymous interviews (see note 6 of this chapter)

10 *COSATU and internal migrant workers: old fault lines, new dilemmas*

Nomkhosi Xulu

There is undoubtedly a high degree of continuity in the ... ideological foundations of apartheid [especially with regards to] the African reserves and the African migrant labour. (Wolpe 1972: 289)

The above extract from Wolpe's seminal paper reminds us that rural-urban connections have deep historical roots in the political economy of South Africa. But most importantly, rural-urban migration, or internal migration, remains a critical feature of the everyday lives of large numbers of South Africans today (Hart & Sitas 2004). Kok et al (2003) also concur that current rural-urban migration patterns are a continuation of patterns that predate the advent of democracy in South Africa. Mamdani (1996) has argued that the reason for this continuity is that the institutional colonial legacy still remains more or less intact to this day. This chapter discusses the social characteristics of internal migrants who are members of COSATU and examines whether or not these workers occupy positions or play marginal roles within the federation.

The context for discussion in this chapter is that the continued existence of some of the old apartheid fault lines, particularly between rural and urban areas, continue into the present, even if in different forms and under different circumstances. Thus 26 years after the abolition of influx control in 1986, a substantial number of African people still oscillate between the rural and the urban areas for work-related reasons. As before, the vast majority of these are poor people who are driven by desperate economic conditions of underdevelopment and poverty in the former bantustan areas. The rural areas were seen as labour reserves for the white capitalist world, which had a huge demand for cheap, unskilled and docile labour. Today, some of the

broad outlines of these fault lines between underdeveloped rural areas and a developed urban economy still exist, even though the foundations of the cheap labour system have crumbled. In addition, new dilemmas have erupted, which serve to reinforce the old trends. The rural areas remain underdeveloped, with limited prospects for economic development that would result in local job opportunities. As a result, the rural areas continue to be characterised by high rates of poverty and unemployment. Unlike in the past, when migrants were predominantly males with little or no formal education, today migration includes men and women, many of whom have formal educational qualifications of one form or another. An additional dilemma is that the capacity of the economy to absorb millions who move from rural to urban areas is severely limited. Thus, many migrants who arrive in urban areas experience the same poverty and unemployment that they escape in their rural villages.

The rural and the urban areas in South Africa were primarily designed and shaped by colonialism and continued through the apartheid era, clearly marking out the differences and forging the boundaries between the two. 'Rural' and 'urban' were always seen with the lenses of one being black and underdeveloped and the other being white and developed. However, linkages, interactions, continuities, discontinuities and complexities have always been and continue to be the features of the rural and the urban areas of South Africa.

For the purposes of this study, a migrant worker is one who moves from a small, rural town or village to a bigger town or city, or to a mine, to find work. In the past, a typical migrant worker was a black male over the age of 18 years from the homelands, coming to 'white South Africa' to look for employment. Migrant workers were treated as foreigners in the urban areas and mining areas and, hence, their movement was tightly controlled. These were people who were dispossessed of the land, and who could not do the jobs they liked, because the system of job reservation forced black people into cheap unskilled labour. In addition, these migrant workers had to carry passes wherever they went, as long as they were in urban areas or the mines, to prove that they were authorised to be in those areas.

Historical overview: the migrant labour and the labour movement

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey sought to explore the issue of migrancy with a specific focus on the position and role of migrant workers in the labour movement, particularly COSATU and its affiliates. The survey questionnaire provided a basic definition of a migrant worker and asked workers to define themselves in terms thereof. Of course, it was not feasible within the constraints of the survey to engage with the dynamic processes of change in the way people identify and define themselves. For example, there are people who left the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape many years ago, to look for jobs in places such as Johannesburg or Cape Town. Many of them have been working and living there for so long that they do not define or identify themselves as migrants. Yet, these people may still have strong relations with their families and relatives in their places of origin.

While the study of Pule and Matlosa (2000) understood the migratory and semi-peasant nature of the workforce in Lesotho as something that would undermine trade unionism and workers' bargaining power with employers, in South Africa, the opposite took place. Migrant workers became the backbone of trade union organisation in South Africa, particularly during their formative years in the 1970s and the 1980s (Mamdani 1996; Pityana & Orkin 1992; Sitas 1988, 1996, 2004; Von Holdt 2002; Webster 1985). The role they played was comprehensive in the sense that they fought against negative socio-economic conditions that affected them both at the workplace as well as in their residential areas in townships, hostels and rural areas. Multi-ethnic groupings and diverse identities were able to find a common identity in the trade union movement.

Unlike Minnaar (1993), Mamdani (1996) argued that the unions were able to successfully fight attempts by the apartheid government to create divisions between the migrant labourers and the resident labourers. Mamdani went on to argue that the migrant workers were a critical social force in shaping the election of 1994, because they straddled the urban and the rural areas. The reach of democratic mobilisation by trade unions, into the hostels as well as the bantustans, was crucial for the ANC, which otherwise would have become estranged from such communities. In addition, Adler (1992) wrote on the essential role that was played by the trade union movement in fighting for the

workers, which included hostel dwellers migrant workers as well as township residents. In his case study, Adler specifies two main issues that trade unions fought hard against, that is, discrimination against migrant workers from the rural areas as well as discrimination against women.

The abolition of influx controls in South Africa in 1986 set in motion changes that culminated in the national democratic elections in 1994. After 1994, black people could reside in urban and suburban areas where they could get better education and jobs. But these changes were not easily accessible to migrant workers, who, at that time, constituted a marginal stratum in urban centres. When the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey was conducted, 22 years had passed since the abolition of influx control and it was 15 years after the achievement of democracy. Yet the conditions of the majority of migrant workers at the workplace had not improved and their position within trade unions appeared ambiguous, because, although they were represented in leadership positions on the shopfloor and were politically active, their issues remained marginal.

Migrant workers in this case can safely be said to belong to the category of South Africans that Sitas (2004) has found to have remained 'stuck' in conditions similar to those of the apartheid era. He argued that, in his research, the people who felt that they were 'stuck' painted a picture of the process that they had been going through, and it comprised three phases. The first phase they experienced was one of 'goodwill':

Their initial 'goodwill' was defined by their effort in 'making things work'; to do 'their bit for the new democracy'; to participate in decision making as was made possible by the new Labour Relations Act; to 'bring the working class' into the new forums and partnerships. This, by all accounts, was not easy. They found themselves incapable of trusting management. Instead of consultation and participation, experts and consultants were brought in to change the nature of work. They were being called to help legitimise job losses, intensification of work and low (below inflation rates) wage increases. (Sitas 2004: 837)

The second phase quickly overtook the first, as crisis set in at the workplace. The workers felt their job security was 'assaulted', 'decimated', 'restructured' as their workplaces experienced dramatic levels of 'downsizing' as the economy declined, feeling the competing rhythms of a global economy. The third phase

was a period of rebuilding 'from the ruins' (Sitas 2004). It can be argued that the third phase is ongoing.

Migrant workers in COSATU

Notwithstanding the crucial role that migrant workers played in the formation of trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s, the rural-urban fault lines referred to above also existed within the trade unions. Migrant workers were, generally, less educated than their urban counterparts and this meant that they were in unskilled positions in the labour market (Webster 1985; Von Holdt 2002). Social interaction between migrant and other workers was often limited by the fact that they lived in single-sex hostels whose residents were looked down upon by township dwellers. Unionisation was never successful in bridging these fault lines. Indeed, as soon as negotiation processes with management became institutionalised, migrant union members were displaced from leadership positions in unions, because the argument was that shop stewards had to be fluent in English, the language used in union-management interactions. Even in unions whose membership was predominantly migrant, there was always a subtle differentiation between the majority of unskilled members and a minority of better educated members, often drawn from clerical and semi-skilled and skilled positions. The latter category dominated in terms of leadership positions.

What is the situation with regard to migrant union members today? The discussion that follows tries to answer this question and draw out the implications of the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey.

The institutionalised migrant labour system may be gone, but many workers still lead the lives of migrants. Many of these workers are members of the trade union movement. As can be seen in Table 10.1 below, a significant number (30 per cent) of the COSATU members surveyed for the 2008 COSATU Worker's Survey are internal migrants. The ability to organise and represent migrant workers over the decades is one of the great successes of the South African labour movement, of which the federation is part. But it is important to keep asking the questions: What position do migrants occupy and what role do they play in the unions today? Do union activities incorporate the specific concerns and problems confronting migrants?

Table 10.1 *Are you a migrant?*

	N	%
Yes	187	29.7
No	442	70.3
Total	629	100.0

The survey (see Table 10.2) shows dominance of migrant workers in construction (73 per cent) and mining and quarrying (55 per cent), a finding which is consistent with the historical pattern of the migrant labour system in South Africa. The wholesale and retail trade sector employs the least number of migrant workers (16 per cent). Of course, this figure should be treated with caution as it may also be a function of union reach in that sector. For example, large numbers of workers in this sector are casuals, a category that unions find extremely hard to organise. So if these casuals included many migrants, the survey would not be able to reflect that, as it only covered unionised COSATU members.

Table 10.2 *Migrant workers by sector*

Sector	%
Community, social and personal services	24.3
Construction	72.7
Financial intermediation, insurance, real estate and business service	23.1
Manufacturing	29.1
Mining and Quarrying	55.0
Transport, storage and communication	38.6
Wholesale and retail trade	16.0

In terms of organisation, the trade union with the largest proportion of migrant workers is the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) (59 per cent of membership), followed by South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) (41 per cent of membership), South African Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU) (41 per cent of membership) and Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) (40 per cent of membership) (see Table 10.3). NUM's high migrant worker membership is due to the fact that their scope includes predominantly migrant sectors, namely, construction, mining and quarrying. It is noteworthy to observe that DENOSA, which

organises nurses, has a high representation of migrant workers, while other predominantly professional and white-collar workers' unions such as South Africa Society of Banking Officials (SASBO), South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) have fewer migrant workers. The reason is probably that the nursing labour market has historically involved a degree of migration by nurses away from their home area. The expansion of the private hospital sector, regarded by many as better paying than the state sector, has caused this trend to intensify, as thousands of nurses move to regions with private hospitals, especially the large towns and cities.

Table 10.3 *Migrant workers as a proportion of union membership*

Union	Yes, a migrant (%)
CEPPWAWU	29.9
CWU	21.4
DENOSA	40.0
FAWU	35.7
NEHAWU	24.2
NUM	58.8
NUMSA	27.5
POPCRU	26.7
SACCAWU	16.0
SACTWU	27.1
SADTU	18.9
SAMWU	41.4
SASBO	23.1
SATAWU	40.8

A figure worth noting in the above table is the one for the SAMWU, which shows a high proportion of migrant membership (41.4 per cent). Historically the municipalities, particularly the large ones, relied on thousands of migrant workers from the rural areas. What is not clear from the above figure is whether municipalities today still prefer migrant workers, or whether migrant networks and other informal processes of recruitment are responsible for the continuation of the trend.

Age and gender differences of migrant workers

Migrant members of COSATU are drawn from all age groups or categories (Table 10.4). However, the survey indicates that most migrants (72 per cent) are between the ages of 26 and 45 years. Overall, there were many times more male migrant members (74 per cent) than female (26 per cent).

Table 10.4 *Age categories of migrants and non-migrants*

Are you a migrant?	Age (%)					Total
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	
Yes (N. 187)	3.7	36.9	35.3	17.6	6.4	100
No (N. 442)	5.9	31.0	36.9	21.7	4.5	100

The survey (see Table 10.5), however, confirms the general trend of increased female migration in South Africa, especially within the younger age categories (Posel 2006). Within the different age categories, a greater proportion (79 per cent) of women between 26 and 45 years are migrant workers. The survey shows that fewer women (15 per cent) within the older categories are migrant workers, while a significant proportion of men (27 per cent) within the same category are migrant workers.

Table 10.5 *Migrant worker by age and gender*

Gender	Age (%)					Total
	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	
Women (N. 48)	6.3	45.8	33.3	8.3	6.3	100
Men (N. 138)	2.9	34.1	36.2	20.3	6.5	100

Educational qualifications of migrant workers

In general, migrants tend to be drawn from the ranks of the least educated workers, that is, those with a Standard 3–5 (Grade 5–7), or lower, qualification. The survey shows that, while all the migrants in the survey had formal education, most of their qualifications were within the lower educational qualification brackets. For example, three quarters of COSATU members who had a Standard 2/Grade 4 or lower qualification were migrant workers (Table 10.6).

Table 10.6 *Proportion of migrants within each educational qualification level*

Highest educational level	Migrant workers (%)
No formal education	0
Std 2/Grade 4 or lower	75.0
Std 3–5/Grades 5–7	61.1
Std 6–8/Grades 8–10	36.1
Std 8–10/Grades 11–12	31.8
Technical diploma	26.1
University degree	17.7
Other	19.5

On the other hand, migrants made up only 18 per cent of the COSATU members who had university degrees. The implications of this for the role of migrant members in the trade unions are far reaching. In his study of trade unionism at Highveld Steel, Von Holdt (2002) highlights the significance of education in union leadership within the workplace during the early 1980s. He shows that, as the union grew and got recognition in the company, it got involved in 'complex procedures and negotiations' which favoured those with higher levels of education. In Von Holdt's study, the leadership of the shop steward committees at Highveld Steel came to be dominated by township dwellers, who were considered more 'literate' than their migrant counterparts.

In the era of democracy and globalisation, trade unions and their leadership are required to engage and make public submissions, on behalf of workers, on workplace restructuring, macro-economic issues and global economic and political issues, and how all these factors impact on the workers. The increased complexity of issues that unions engage with currently also means that union leadership needs to be educated and well-informed. This, to a large extent, continues to influence the way in which people are elected into leadership positions within COSATU. In this regard, migrant union membership is complex, as many migrant workers enjoy good representation by their shop stewards on the shopfloor, but it is not clear if these shop stewards who are themselves migrants are able to rise within the ranks beyond the shopfloor. The fact that migrant workers are not satisfied with levels of service delivery could be an indication that their representatives do not sit in the higher forums where policy issues are debated and decided on.

Occupational categories of migrant

Nearly half of all unskilled workers organised by COSATU (45 per cent) are migrants, while 36 per cent of all COSATU members in semi-skilled jobs are migrants. This is partly a function of their low education levels. The proportion of migrant members in the skilled category (31 per cent) is significantly lower. However, as noted above, there is a high number of professional and white-collar members who are migrants, something which then translates into a significant representation of migrant workers in higher occupational levels. For example, 35 per cent of all clerical members of COSATU are migrants and the figure for professional members is a respectable 22 per cent. These figures indicate a change in the profile of migrant workers (Table 10.7).

Table 10.7 *Migrants as a proportion of COSATU members in each occupational category (also by gender)*

Occupational category as defined by company	All migrants (%)	Gender (%)	
		Men	Women
Unskilled	44.7	56.0	23.1
Semi-skilled	35.6	35.1	37.5
Skilled	31.0	35.5	21.4
Supervisor	19.1	30.0	0.0
Clerical	34.6	44.8	18.2
Professional	22.0	25.9	19.1
Other	11.8	0	18.2

The COSATU Workers' Survey results clearly show that workers who occupy unskilled and semi-skilled positions, doing mainly manual labour, tend to be migrant workers. The decline of migrant workers as a proportion of the workforce and union membership is related to a broader trend in the labour market, namely, the decrease in numbers in the unskilled category of workers and the steady increase in numbers in the skilled and semi-skilled categories. The latter categories are dominated by the 18–45 years age group, which now dominates membership.

It can be safely predicted that migrant workers will continue to drop as a proportion of COSATU's membership. Many who migrate to the cities are young people from rural areas, without a Grade 12 certificate and with none

of the skills required by the labour market. This immediately pushes them into jobs or forms of employment where COSATU does not have an organisational presence. In a nutshell, these young people are unskilled, inexperienced and poorly educated, and thus have limited chances of getting formal jobs.

Migrant workers' security of tenure in the labour market

Globalisation and economic restructuring have produced vast inequalities in South Africa, particularly with regard to accessing work opportunities in the labour market. This has ensured the continuation of the marginalisation of migrant workers with poor skills and education in the post-apartheid period. Similar to the earlier apartheid period, where their employment was tenuous and intermittent, three quarters of COSATU members who are migrants are employed as temporary workers (on fixed contracts).

Table 10.8 *Migrant workers' security of tenure, including proportions of migrant men and women in each category*

Security of tenure	All migrants (%)	Gender (%)	
		Men	Women
Temporary part time (fixed contract)	54.5	80.0	33.3
Temporary full time (fixed contract)	20.0	28.6	7.1
Permanent part time	30.0	50.0	17.6
Permanent full time	30.2	34.7	22.1

Although women's migration to the cities has dramatically increased in the past few decades, economic opportunities for women are still limited. The survey (see Table 10.8) shows that, while migrant men constitute 35 per cent of all men employed in full-time permanent positions, migrant women constitute only 22 per cent of all women in the same positions. Part of the reason for this is that, compared to their male counterparts, migrant women are worse off in terms of educational and skills levels, resulting in the majority of them ending up in the informal economy as domestic workers, street vendors and even as prostitutes.

Service delivery: migrant workers' responses

The majority of COSATU members were generally satisfied with progress on service delivery (see Chapter 8 in this volume). However, a deeper analysis

of migrant workers' responses to questions on service delivery demonstrates sharply different responses on improvement in government's service delivery in the areas where they live. Table 10.9 below shows responses of COSATU members who are migrant workers on whether service delivery has improved in their areas since 2004.

Table 10.9 *Service delivery: migrant worker responses by service provision area (percentages)*

Service provision area	Migrants (Yes) (%)	Non-migrants (Yes) (%)
A clean and healthy living and working environment	28.3	71.7
Access to better health care	31.5	68.5
Access to clean water	29.9	70.1
Access to education and training	31.2	68.8
Access to electricity	29.2	70.8
Better housing	34.1	65.9
Higher wages	30.3	69.7
HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support	28.8	71.2
Jobs	34.7	65.3

If properly addressed, these services do not only offer hope and possibilities for a better access to work opportunities and livelihood strategies, but also better access to government services which are not easily available in remote rural areas. Access to government housing, water, electricity, health facilities, social welfare services and better equipped schools are some of the factors that influence some migrants to move to urban areas and relocate their family members (see Roux 2009: 16). What is disconcerting about the findings as presented in Table 10.9 is that migrant worker members of COSATU are not as positive about progress made under the new government as their urban comrades. Yet in the day-to-day operations and practices of the trade unions, these unhappy voices and positions are hardly ever expressed. Could it be that migrant union members are scared of raising their dissatisfaction or is it because there are no opportunities to raise them in COSATU structures?

Migrants and rural households

When asked if they support a household in the village of their origin, a large number of migrants (77 per cent) said that they supported a household. This is

borne out by the literature on migrancy, which shows a trend for most migrant workers to continue to support households in their home villages. Research has shown the positive correlation of household asset ownership in a rural household if there is a temporary migrant to the household (Kok & Collinson 2006). Scholars have argued that this is used as some form of socio-economic security by migrant workers for when they are either retrenched, sick or retired (Adler 1992; James 2001; Murray 1981; Posel 2003; Wolpe 1972).

New dilemmas have arisen regarding the role of migrant union members. Migrant union members are among the least educated workers and so are almost always among the first to be retrenched. This is related to the fact that the ability of unions to cater for the specific needs or requirements of migrants is limited, as the dominant assumption is often that everyone lives permanently in town. In a nutshell, and as the discussion in this chapter has shown, union members who are migrants occupy marginal positions at the workplace and, although they are represented by shop stewards from their own ranks, this does not seem to impact positively on their lives, as they continue to express dissatisfaction around most of the areas of service delivery.

Union leadership roles of migrant union members

An interesting finding of the survey is that migrants are well represented in leadership positions of COSATU unions at the shopfloor. A healthy 29 per cent of migrant members, compared to 25 per cent of their non-migrant comrades, were shop stewards at their workplaces. What is puzzling is that the high representation of migrant members among shop stewards does not necessarily translate into a focus by the federation on migrant worker issues. Also unclear is whether the migrant worker shop stewards go on to become provincial and national leaders of their unions and the federation. But what is clear is that migrant COSATU members express greater dissatisfaction than their non-migrant counterparts.

Migrant union members and politics

More puzzling is the role played by migrant union members in the politics of the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance. Not only were migrant workers more forthcoming about their political opinions (for example, only 11 per cent of migrants refused to answer the question on which party they planned to

vote for in the forthcoming elections in 2009, compared with 29 per cent of their non-migrant comrades); furthermore, more than two thirds of migrant workers (71 per cent) indicated they would vote for the ANC, while only just over half of the non-migrants (51 per cent) gave a similar indication.

The findings also show that migrant union members display greater political loyalty and commitment. Asked if they were members of the political party that they intended to vote for, only 36 per cent of non-migrants said they were members of the party while 49 per cent of migrants said the same. Again, when asked if they were signed-up or paid-up members of the party, a larger percentage of migrants were paid-up members of their party than their non-migrant counterparts.

Conclusion

From the four COSATU membership surveys that have been conducted since 1994, the one under discussion in this chapter (the 2008 survey) has become the most important to date, particularly because of the shifts it showed, such as the significant decline in the support for the ANC among COSATU members. Furthermore, this latest round of the survey is significant because it was the first time that questions on rural and urban migration were included. Although these questions were not addressed in depth by this study, it was at least able to shed some light on what are the continuities and changes that are actually taking place within the COSATU membership, as well as the new dilemmas that have emerged for the federation and the trade union movement as a whole.

The issues linked to labour migration cannot be easily and neatly packed into strictly well-defined and easily identifiable categories. It is a process which involves a lot of other complicated and dynamic processes, definitions and redefinitions. Unlike in the apartheid era, today, the definition of a migrant worker is much more flexible, and this chapter has argued that using the 'migrant worker identity' as a way of mapping the rural-urban connections does not give a full meaning of the current rural-urban occurrences.

Learning from past experiences would in no way mean that COSATU is 'becoming prisoner of past traditions'. Instead the federation can look at some of the strategies it used in the past and see how to rework them, to confront the dilemmas and challenges of divisions facing them now. Migrant workers

are significant in the trade union movement; not only because they played an important role in the 1970s to the 1990s, or because they are still the most faithful category of workers in their support for the ANC (which is generally important for the Tripartite Alliance). They are also important for COSATU because they provide a link to the rural areas. That rural-urban balance is needed by COSATU to remain a truly national grassroots organisation of the working class.

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11 *COSATU's attitudes and policies towards external migrants*

Mondli Hlatshwayo

One of the aims of the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey was to explore the relationship between external migrant workers (from outside the borders of the country) and COSATU and its affiliates. Out of 630 workers who participated in the survey, only four workers were migrants from other Southern African countries and none of them were formal leaders in their unions. All these workers support their families in their countries of origin. This number and the findings they generated were too insignificant to sustain a discussion that achieves the objectives of the survey. However, this result of the survey necessitates a closer examination of COSATU's policies and practices towards migrants, especially in the context of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks and the perception among some that external migrants take the jobs of South Africans (see Hlatshwayo 2011). I interpreted the result as an indication that COSATU unions may be failing to reach out to external migrant workers. To establish this, I conducted qualitative interviews with COSATU, its unions and other organisations, including those representing external migrants. The focus here is on external migrants from other African countries. This chapter is based largely on that research and it examines the attitude and policies of COSATU towards external migrants.¹ What makes the subject of this chapter particularly pertinent is that, historically, workers from some of the African countries have worked in South Africa and so have contributed immensely to the development of its economy (Callinicos 1980). Thus, the existence of external migrants and the rising tide of xenophobia are issues that also confront the labour movement.

One of the most visible indicators of post-1994 South Africa's re-admission into the global community of nations was an increase in the number of people

entering the country. Many of these were on visitor's permits for purposes of visiting family and friends, tourism or business. The number of visitors in this category was over 5.5 million in 2005, with a significant proportion thereof being the rest of the African continent. However, there is another category of people who have entered South Africa in large numbers since the beginning of the democratic transition, namely, undocumented immigrants or migrants who enter the country unofficially. Crush (2008) argues that it is virtually impossible to know how many undocumented external migrants reside in South Africa or where they come from. The South African government often cites an estimate of 4 to 8 million external migrants in the country at any one time, but this is probably an exaggeration. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) officially withdrew the 4 to 8 million figure, but the media continues to use it. Statistics South Africa has provided an estimate in the 500 000 to 1 million range. However, it is the response of South African citizens that has captured newspaper headlines in recent years.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the role of external migrant labour in the development of capitalism in South Africa. The discussion proceeds to examining the link between globalisation and the external migrant labour system, and the ways in which COSATU responds to external migrants. This includes an exploration of the evolution of COSATU's policy on external migrants, including attempts to organise those external migrants that are employed in various sectors of the economy. The chapter concludes with a discussion of COSATU's responses to the May 2009 xenophobic attacks and external migrants' views on COSATU's approach to their struggles and issues.

Migrant labour in Southern Africa: an historical perspective

The history of migrant labour in Southern Africa is intricately tied to the uneven development of the capitalist mode of production at the onset of colonisation. Because capitalist production started around agricultural and mining concerns, it is these two sectors, especially the latter, that played a dominant role in the evolution of migrant labour within the region. Large-scale labour migrancy in Southern Africa dates back to the 1850s and 1860s, when large numbers of men migrated to work in sugar plantations in Natal, where British colonial capitalism was taking shape. The opening up of diamond mines in Kimberley in 1870 resulted in large numbers of workers from all over Southern Africa flocking to the new mines, which paid

better than the plantations. As a result, labour was attracted away from the plantations in Natal. An estimated 50 000 to 80 000 migrant workers came to work on the diamond mines.

The further discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1886 necessitated recruitment of large numbers of unskilled labour. The pull factors reflected in the high wages (six times higher than in Southern Mozambique) and the push factors represented by the outbreak of rinderpest in 1896, which decimated the cattle herd in the region, and by declining peasant production, forced many men to join the mines. Believing that the rand belt extended northwards, the British hegemony was extended to Rhodesia in 1890. Failure to discover a gold belt of the magnitude that existed in South Africa, together with the crush of the Johannesburg stock exchange in the early 1900s, resulted in the shift to agriculture in Rhodesia (Kanyenze 2004).

Meanwhile, the fall of the Gaza State in Mozambique to the Portuguese in 1895 meant that in 1897, the Transvaal government entered into an agreement with the Portuguese authorities regarding the sourcing of migrant labour. A recruiting agency in South Africa, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA), was created and given exclusive rights to recruit labour from the region.

Dominic Tweedie, the former editor of the COSATU magazine, *The Shopsteward*, argued that the South African working class comes from a number of countries on the continent. Historically, South Africa and the Witwatersrand have always been a centre that attracts migrants from within and outside South African borders.

I think the background that you have to use as your context is the construction of the South African working class over the last hundred years or so, which is the fact that the South African working class is systematically drawn from the whole of Southern Africa, as far as the equator at least. The construction of the Southern African working class is drawn all over the continent. So the organisation of workers has always had to be about unity of people of different origins. (Interview: D Tweedie)

For Marx, the process of proletarianisation meant that the mass of the population was reduced to dependence on wage labour for income, that is, they had to sell their labour power to an employer for a wage, because they lacked

assets or other sources of income (Marx [1867] 1990). In Southern Africa, the colonial conquest, land grabbing, early commercial agriculture, mining and the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand led to the proletarianisation process, with the Witwatersrand in South Africa being the main pole of attraction.

There is a rich body of scholarship on the mining labour process, migrant labour, and the nature of compounds in southern and South Africa (see Abrahams 1946; Allen 1992; Allen 2003a; Allen 2003b; Callinicos 1980; Cohen 1980; Crush 1992; Gordon 1978; Moodie & Ndatshe 1994). This literature also demonstrates that South Africa – Johannesburg in particular – drew its labour from the reserves as well as other Southern African countries.

Workers' struggles and unionisation in the 1980s transcended xenophobia by creating and reinforcing working-class identity, both in the township and the workplace. Marx referred to this as the progress of the proletariat from being a class 'in itself' (a position in the social structure) to being one 'for itself' (an active and conscious force that can change the world) (Slaughter, n.d.). There is a rich scholarship in South Africa on how class struggle and unionisation transcended tribalism and ethnicity in the mines and factories (Baskin 1991; Buhlungu 2001; Buhlungu & Bezuidenhout 2008; Friedman 1985; Khanya College 2005; Sitas 1983; Webster 1985). According to Dominic Tweedie, two of the current National Office Bearers of COSATU trace their origins back to Swaziland and Mozambique respectively (Interview: D Tweedie).

Uneven development, globalisation and migration

Patrick Bond has argued that Southern Africa is characterised by uneven and combined development. 'The region has developed in this extremely, unfair and unequal way. It is probably the worst region in the world in that regard.' He further stated that, over a century, labour powers of migrants in the region have contributed to building vast infrastructure in South Africa, especially in Johannesburg and Gauteng. For Bond, uneven and combined development is responsible for continuing attraction of ultra-cheap labour in the Southern African region (Interview: P Bond).

In a nutshell, globalisation refers to the unification and integration of the world market under the hegemony of transnational corporations, the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the

World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and developed economies. What is unique about globalisation is the fact that this transfer of wealth from the South to the North is happening in a context of a long-term economic stagnation, when there are fewer economic and employment opportunities in the North. An illustrative case in point is the mass migration from Mexico into the United States of America, induced primarily by the promulgation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its negative impact on peasant subsistence farmers in Mexico. In a context of economic decline in the United States, this migration then creates surplus labour (Khanya College 2004).

Concerning the Southern African region and indeed Africa as a whole, South Africa plays the role of being the centre. The policies of the IMF and the World Bank have led to the collapse of African economies through the process of transfer of wealth from these countries to the North. These days, wealth is also transferred from all economies in the region to South Africa in various ways, such as centralisation of Africa's capital market in Johannesburg, South African state corporations' investments in other African countries and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). During the process of proletarianisation, migrant workers found work in South Africa; now the crisis of globalisation and the decline in employment make it difficult for these workers who are coming from struggling economies in the periphery to find jobs in South Africa. This, then, intensifies the competition for jobs and opportunities at the centre – South Africa (Khanya College 2004).

It is not only migrant labour that is used to solve problems of profitability. Labour broking and casualised labour are used as methods of driving wages downward. In addition, the weakness of the trade union movement has made it possible for capital to drive wages downward by introducing casualised labour and labour broking. According to Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout (2008), when persons face conditions of insecurity they often turn inwards. Some workers become fatalistic, even xenophobic. Therefore, the fact that a large section of the working class is unorganised leads to this downward pressure on wages and tendencies of xenophobia (Hlatshwayo 2009).

How are the unions responding to migration and xenophobia? In the first instance, it is not possible that South African trade unions, and COSATU in particular, can resolve the downward pressure on South African wages exerted by this industrial reserve army, by locking the working class of the region

outside the borders of South Africa. In a globalising world, capital will relocate in search of relatively more exploitable labour. Indeed, viewed from the vantage point of the global economy, the South African working class is itself part of a global industrial reserve army, and can therefore be seen as exerting a downward pressure on working-class wages in the northern hemisphere.

In his study on the 'illegal' migrant workers, Gordon concludes, 'In considering future projections for illegal migration into South Africa, given the patterns of migration described in this study, there is a distinct probability that *illegal* migration will continue and even increase' (Gordon 2005: 76). COSATU and the trade union movement should, therefore, treat migrant labour from other African countries as a reality.

The trade unions in South Africa have not responded adequately to xenophobia, external migrants and other challenges of globalisation, such as informalisation of work, unemployment and retrenchments, because they, too, have been weakened by globalisation.

The problem is that COSATU's organising strategy is still industrial-based and it has not worked on the realities of emerging forms of work. [COSATU] is defining 'employee' in the traditional sense. COSATU will always be faced with the decline of membership. No work has been done on the informal economy, migrant labour, casual and contract workers. (Interview: Anonymous)

Mike Abrahams, the media and research coordinator of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU), argued that merely blaming employers does not help trade unions in addressing the problem. He argued, 'We cannot expect our enemy to do the job for us. If you look at Southern Africa as a region, workers from the region come to South Africa because of economic opportunities. The job of the union is to organise all workers' (Interview: M Abrahams).

COSATU policy on external migrants and xenophobia

In 1994, a research project conducted by Toolo and Bethlehem revealed that unions were concerned about the fact that 'illegal' immigrants were exploited, that is, they earned low wages and worked under bad working conditions. The unions were also concerned about the fact that 'illegal' migrants were

undermining labour standards because they were willing to accept conditions that were below those prescribed by labour legislation. While the unions expressed concerns about the rising xenophobia among South Africans, they also argued that a large number of migrants were undermining government attempts at delivering houses and social service. According to the study, trade unions also felt that first preference should be given to South African citizens (Toofo & Bethlehem 1994).

COSATU's September Commission, which tabled its report in 1997, also called upon trade unions in Southern Africa to work jointly in exchanging ideas and practical suggestions on issues of migration. However, the report revealed a contradiction in COSATU policy. On one hand, COSATU argued for protection of external migrant workers, while on the other, it held positions which undermined the freedom of movement of people and their right to choose a country of work. The report of the commission mirrored this contradiction by calling on the South African government to implement 'voluntary repatriation' and 'fair and proper control of entry of migrant workers into host countries' (COSATU 1997).

As Rykief (2003) points out, such proposals undermine the conventions of the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Committee (SATUCC) on 'freedom of movement of workers' in Southern Africa. At its fifth congress, some of the COSATU unions argued strongly that 'illegal' migrants should be assisted with 'voluntary repatriation' by the government. In addition, there were proposals that the government impose heavy penalties on employers employing immigrant workers.

In its submission to the White Paper on International Migration, COSATU stated its views on migration as well as its attitude toward external migrant workers. It argued against xenophobia and other forms of discrimination of external migrant workers. Consistent with the position taken in the September Commission, the federation called upon the South African Development Community (SADC) countries to agree on a number of migrants that should be allowed access to the South African labour market. It further argued that the South African authorities should impose heavy penalties on those employers who employ 'illegal immigrants' (COSATU 2000).

In 2001, during the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), COSATU issued a statement condemning xenophobia. Further,

COSATU criticised the 'unscrupulous employers that are taking advantage of the situation', the police and home affairs department. What was missing in the statement was a broad strategy for dealing with xenophobia and the physical attacks on migrants (see COSATU 2001). As will be shown later in this chapter, there is still a strong feeling among some in COSATU that employers are taking advantage of the situation. Judging from the policy documents of COSATU before the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, migrants are not viewed as social agents that can also help in changing the balance of forces in favour of workers and the unemployed in the factories and townships, as well as in the region as a whole.

While the COSATU Central Executive Committee statement, made during the xenophobic attacks of May 2008, called for 'affiliates to urgently convene shop stewards council meetings and mass meetings of members at local, regional and provincial levels, and meetings in workplaces and hot spots to argue that the working class must not turn its guns against itself', it continued to operate from a discourse that merely sees external migrants as victims (COSATU 2008). Consistent with the WCAR, employers, the police and home affairs were blamed for xenophobia. But there was no mention of a need to organise migrants as part of a broader struggle against globalisation and the attacks on the poor and the working class.

In September 2009, almost a year and a half after the xenophobic attacks of May 2008, the 10th National Congress of COSATU adopted a resolution on xenophobia and the organising of migrants. As a positive development from previous positions, the resolution argued that the capitalist crisis was the cause of xenophobia. It also noted that COSATU affiliates had lost members and shop stewards who were killed during 2008 attacks. It then called for legalisation of migrants and education of the unions on xenophobia. In addition, the resolutions called for labour laws to cover all migrants. In order to raise consciousness among workers and the South African public about the continent, COSATU proposed that Africa Day be declared as a public holiday (COSATU 2009a).

Patricia Nyman, the gender coordinator of SACCAWU, welcomed the resolution, but emphasised a need for engagement with COSATU members and for political education:

It does open up space to have more in-depth discussion within the membership on what leadership believe and what members believe. It opens a space as an organisation to discuss, organise and mobilise. It will be the task of leadership and unions to educate and *conscientise* members around this issue because members do not share the same view as the leadership. I think the resolutions were very strong in condemning the xenophobic attacks and as a reminder of what should be our role as a trade union. (Interview: P Nyman)

Nyman's views on consultation and education are in line with the argument made by Hyman (1999), a theorist on trade unions. According to Hyman:

Real solidarity cannot be imposed by administrative fiat, or even by majority vote. Its achievement is possible to the extent that unions rediscover the conviction, and persuade both their own members and members of civil society more generally, that they have a mission as a 'sword of justice'. (1999: 11)

COSATU's policy on migrants in the post-2009 Congress period

At the Central Committee in 2011, COSATU reflected on xenophobia and migrants from other African countries:

There are an estimated 3 million Zimbabweans who are equal victims of mismanagement of the economic and political system, armed with better education, sidelining, and regrettably dragging the basic protection of South African workers' rights down. This estimated 3 million join hundreds of thousands of others from Mozambique and the rest of Africa and from Europe and Asia. Many in the SADC region, the African continent and even as far as Europe and Asia, combine in their thousands under the mistaken belief that South Africa is a land of milk and honey. (COSATU 2011: 69)

The statement continues, 'At the same time we need to ensure that we develop systems to ensure that we do not open floodgates. COSATU has worked with many civil society formations to battle against violent attacks on foreign nationals' (2011: 69).

Unlike the Swiss unions that have come to accept migrants and migration as a reality and have started organising them, COSATU sees migrants as a threat to workers' rights (Pereira 2007). The above statements make no call for building unity and organising migrant workers in a struggle against victimisation of all workers, regardless of their country of origin. Gordon (2005) makes an important point that migrants from other parts are going to be a permanent feature of the South African economy in the post-apartheid period. In other words, migrants cannot be wished away.

International solidarity versus national chauvinism: a policy contradiction

COSATU is also a member of the Proudly South African campaign which was formed in 2001. This seeks to promote the buying of local goods and the creation of local jobs (Proudly South African, n.d.). According to Malecki (1999), the Proudly South African campaign undermines international solidarity and the building of working-class consciousness in Southern Africa. What the campaign does is to entrench national chauvinism. He argues:

The National Union of Mineworkers in Rustenburg called for a moratorium on hiring Mozambicans during wage negotiations. Meanwhile, the SACTWU clothing and textile workers union has organised rallies protesting Chinese imports. At the COSATU congress, the bureaucrats raised a furore because some of the caps made for congress delegates had been produced in China. (Malecki 1999).

In defence of the Proudly South African campaign, Honest Sinama argued that there is no link between the campaign and xenophobic discourse. In fact, the campaign is seen as a broader strategy for saving jobs in the vulnerable sectors of the economy (Interview: H Sinama).

The Proudly South African campaign raises the issue of tension between international solidarity and nationalism. 'Workers of all countries unite' is the call at the end of the Communist Manifesto, which expressed one of the most vital conditions for the victory of the working class (Marx & Engels 1848). From its birth, the working-class movement has proclaimed its international class character against the national boundaries which marked the development of the domination of the capitalist class over the proletariat.

Since its inception, the labour movement has always grappled with this difficult question of forging unity across the national borders and territoriality. The recent xenophobic attacks reintroduce the conundrum between national identity and international solidarity.

Can unions transcend nationalist sentiments such as xenophobia? Patrick Bond argues that more recent inspiration for international work and international solidarity came in April 2008 from dockers, who are also members of the South African Transport Workers' Union (SATAWU), and Bishop Rubin Phillip of the Anglican Church; together they prevented three million bullets from being unloaded from a Chinese ship destined for the Mugabe regime in Harare. Several Zimbabwean solidarity and anti-xenophobia programmes took this work forward within the Centre for Civil Society, especially when the Durban inner-city, Chatsworth and Cato Manor experienced attacks on immigrants and refugees in May 2008 (Interview: P Bond).

Organising external migrants

In a context of globalisation, people tend to migrate to areas where they are likely to have access to economic and job opportunities. For example, migrants from the South tend to move to European cities such as Paris, France, where they are likely to work and earn some income. In Southern Africa, capital, employment and other income-generating opportunities are concentrated in South Africa, particularly its big cities, which explains why the country and its cities attract large numbers of external migrants from the rest of the continent (Khanya College 2004). Trade unions are faced with the huge challenge of organising external migrant workers, particularly those who do not have documentation or citizenship documents. Organising external migrants and integrating them into the union structures is potentially one of the most powerful weapons in the struggle against xenophobia, as it strengthens workers' identity and solidarity (Hlatshwayo 2009).

There are international experiences of organising external migrants. According to Kennedy and Tilly (2008), France has an estimated half a million undocumented immigrants (8 per cent of the population), many of them from France's former colonies in Africa. In 2008, the *Sans Papiers* or 'People without Papers' occupied the offices of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), France's largest union federation, to force the union to campaign for

legal residence for them in France. The result was that a number of external migrants were documented and the external migrants managed to put their issue on the agenda of the CGT. The relationship between the CGT and the *Sans Papiers* is not an easy one, but what is positive from the experience is that the CGT is working with migrants as part of a struggle against xenophobia and for human rights (Kennedy & Tilly 2008).

The biggest and most representative Swiss trade union today is Unia. Formed in 2005 through the fusion of a number of trade unions in various sectors of the Swiss economy, Unia has almost 200 000 members employed in the most diverse branches of these sectors, and over 50 per cent of its members are external migrants. Almost 60 per cent of all the construction workers are Unia members, 75 per cent of which are migrants (Unia, n.d.).

Unia argues that organising migrants strengthens the trade union movement, and, especially in the context of globalisation, which is characterised by the fragmentation and weakening of labour, it is critical for the survival of the union movement. As part of a strategy for organising migrant workers, Unia maintains that:

In response, new forms of work and new projects are being tried out. Cooperative work with trade unions in the home countries of migrants, the cross-border trade union work in the form of committees, research and work groups, the European Trade Union Confederation, or the project of an European migrant workers network are some examples. (Unia, n.d.)

Unia is imaginative when it comes to organising migrant workers. It ensures that its publications are also translated in languages that can be understood by migrants. Here, the importance of using one's mother tongue as a way of talking directly to workers is evident. In addition, organisers that speak the language of migrants are also employed to recruit and service these workers. Further, there is also cross-border solidarity with the unions in the home countries of migrants and at the Europe Union level (Pereira 2007).

Despite COSATU Congress resolutions on xenophobia and solidarity in 2000 and recently in 2009, COSATU as a whole has not held in-depth discussions and developed strategy on organising migrants, combating xenophobia and uniting workers. The one notable exception is a one-day workshop organised by the COSATU Western Cape provincial leadership, where international

experiences in organising migrants were discussed. This was an important attempt aimed at creating a dialogue between trade unions and external migrants. A follow-up workshop was held in 2009 (Hlatshwayo 2009). However, the recent attacks on external migrants in De Doorns indicate that COSATU in the Western Cape has a mammoth task pertaining to tackling xenophobia in the area.²

The May 2008 COSATU Central Executive Committee did not discuss the need to organise migrant workers as part of an important response to xenophobia. COSATU's inability to undertake a paradigm shift remains an obstacle toward organising migrant workers. The call for employers to stop taking advantage of migrants and the demand that employers fire the 'illegal ones' are an indication that the federation has not been able to imagine real possibilities of building international solidarity within the South African border that includes external organising migrants (Lehulere 2008).

A number of leaders and organisers in COSATU and its affiliates believe that organising the so-called illegal migrants, or 'people without papers', constitutes undermining the 'rule of law'. The weakness of this approach is that it sees law as something that is cast in stone. This view forgets the fact that, just before the 1994 general elections, the laws of this country did not recognise citizenship of the black majority. The international experience also demonstrates that it is possible to organise external migrants as part of the struggle for legal reforms (Hlatshwayo 2009).

On the other hand, there are some within the federation's affiliates who have tried to organise external migrants. Xolani Nyamezele, SATAWU's Gauteng provincial secretary, gave some insight into attempts by the union's Gauteng region to organise external migrants to help combat xenophobia. He remarked that, 'It was not easy because our members who are South Africans did not like the idea. We did it because we had to organise workers regardless of their country of origin' (Interview: X Nyamezele).

SATAWU's agreement with Freight Hall, a freight company based in Alrode, attempted to bridge the divide as follows:

All employees (South African and non-South African) must be treated equally, i.e. no fixed contracts for non-South Africans.
SATAWU is representing all employees in the company, namely

South Africans and non-South Africans. The bargaining council system must cover all employees. (SATAWU, 2008)

What was the driving force that led to the organising of migrants at Freight Hall? Nyamezele responded aptly, 'We are all oppressed as workers regardless of our countries of origin. Solidarity is part of our political education in SATAWU' (Interview: X Nyamezele). Of course, this caused some friction in the union, because some South African members felt that jobs must be reserved for South African workers.

COSATU international secretary, Bongani Masuku, also stated that the organising of migrants is uneven. A teachers' organisation from Zimbabwe (Progressive Teachers' Union) was dissolved into the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU). He also indicated that SATAWU has also been organising migrant workers (Interview: B Masuku).

SACCAWU is also organising the hospitality sector that tends to have a strong presence of external migrant workers, particularly women from Zimbabwe. During the interviews, the question was posed on whether the union organises these workers. In defence of organising migrants, even those who do not have citizenship documentation, SACCAWU's Western Cape provincial secretary Crosby Booi, argued,

Yes! Of course like presently we have a case where we are assisting one of our members at Ritz Hotel in Sea Point. This comrade has been in the country for more than five years but he struggles to get proper documentation. This is despite the fact that the companies and the union have intervened by engaging the Home Affairs to get this comrade registered as a citizen of South Africa. (Interview: C Booi)

On the other hand, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has adopted a different approach to organising migrants. NUM had to deal with the question of migration because a large number of its membership is comprised of external migrant workers. The mining industry in South Africa is the foundation of South African capitalism, based on cheap black labour and the migrant system. Ryklief (2003) argues that the formation of NUM in 1982 was an important development in confronting the appalling conditions within which migrant workers from South Africa and other Southern African countries worked and lived. In addition, NUM also organises the construction sector which has a substantial number of immigrant workers.

In 1991, NUM called for the dismantling of the migrant labour system, in favour of policies focusing on regional economic development. NUM negotiated that mine workers who had worked in the South African mines for more than 10 years be given permanent resident status. Permanent residence allows people to remain citizens of their own country, but to live in South Africa, with all the rights and responsibilities of a South African citizen (except the right to vote) until they choose to take up citizenship. However, if they were to commit a serious crime, their permanent resident status could be taken away and they could be deported (Ryklief 2003).

In 1995, NUM and the Department of Home Affairs negotiated what was called a 'miners amnesty'. Immigrant miners who worked in the country for more than 10 years and voted in the 1994 elections were to be granted South African citizenship. A number of immigrant workers acquired South African citizenship as a result of these negotiations. NUM also argued that South African workers and workers from other Southern African countries should be treated equally. In 1996, the union also called for the abandonment of the deferred pay system, whereby wages are paid as remittances to migrants when they get back to their country of origin (Ryklief 2003).

On the other hand, a number of immigrants did not want to become South African citizens, because they still had ties with their countries of origins. For example, workers from Mozambique and Malawi have family networks and friends in their countries of origins. Of an estimated 104 000 eligible miners, only 47 000 applied for South African citizenship, primarily from Lesotho (Khanya College 2004).

Glenn Mpufane, the international secretary of NUM, says that the union has always organised external migrants.

Concerning organising, we have organised irrespective of language or country of origin. At one stage NUM had a large membership from the neighbouring countries. If you can study the NUM as a social phenomenon, you see the solidarity that exists between our members. It is not easy. In a sense we managed to deal with issues of factionalism, tribalism in the mines. (Interview: G Mpufane)

In the lead up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup, NUM also tried to organise construction workers from the neighbouring countries. NUM regional coordinator in KwaZulu-Natal, Bhekani Ngcobo, commented:

The construction sector is nomadic. Working with foreign nationals is not a problem. If you go to the workplaces in South Africa, you would see the increase of workers, especially from Mozambique and Zimbabwe. You will see those xenophobic tendencies. People are being called *kwerekwere*. These things have not turned into violence but we need to correct that. We organise everybody including migrants. (Interview: B Ngcobo)

Western Cape provincial secretary of NUM, Xolani Holiday, highlighted the fact that one of the shop stewards at Mega Mix, a company that mixes concrete for construction purposes, defended a migrant worker who was not a member of the union. The worker had been involved in a truck accident and had been asked to pay a R15 000 excess fee to the insurance company. After a successful defence by the NUM shop steward, this worker decided to join the union (Interview: X Holiday).

Are there organising lessons that can be learned from other experiences? Pat Horn, an activist from StreetNet International who was involved in organising workers during the formative years of the South African trade union movement, shared some perspectives on organising external migrants.

All our affiliates are from different countries. The question of favouring citizens of another country is not even on the agenda. We have 36 affiliates in 32 countries. International solidarity is our starting point because we are an international organisation. That framework helps to tackle xenophobia because when you talk of international solidarity you cannot entertain any xenophobic interest. Twenty of our affiliates are in Africa, and in Zimbabwe and Namibia our affiliates are an alliance of informal economy which are part of cross-border trade organisations. (Interview: P Horn)

According to Horn, xenophobia is one of the issues that they had to confront as StreetNet. One of the creative strategies they have used has included exchange visits, where South African members of StreetNet have visited other African countries. This has helped in reinforcing a perspective of international solidarity in the organisation. Hawkers in Zambia and Namibia have formed cross-border organisations that are able to negotiate at the level of the Southern African Customs Union.

Some concrete gains have been made through the use of the law and the mobilisation of street vendors in Durban. According to Horn, street vendors were mobilised regardless of their countries of origin. In 2005, street vendors without green identity documents were given trading permits by the city because of mass mobilisation and the use of the law (Interview: P Horn). When asked what she thought about COSATU, xenophobia and the organising of migrants, Horn stated that COSATU's statements on xenophobia had been used in educating hawkers as part of a broader strategy of creating awareness and tackling xenophobia. She also argued:

I think xenophobia is similar to the race issue. When we were organising here, people were against Indians and we had to build non-racial organisations. I think COSATU has made it a point that at public level they give a clear message. Of course they did. But however they did not do enough ... That is why global examples need to be brought in. I like the French one because it precisely focused on workers without papers. (Interview: P Horn)

COSATU's responses to the May 2008 attacks on external migrants

Xenophobia is one of the more pronounced phenomena of post-apartheid South Africa. However, the violent attacks on external migrants in May 2008 were unprecedented. About 100 000 external migrants were displaced by the attacks. More than 60 lives were lost as a result of the attacks (Desai 2009; Hlatshwayo 2008). For a detailed account of COSATU's response to the May 2008 attacks on external migrants see Hlatshwayo (2009).

For purposes of analysis, the responses are categorised as: the provision of humanitarian aid to victims of xenophobia; popular education and agitation against xenophobia; pre-emptive measures; forming coalitions; interventions at National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC); engaging the state; and organising migrants.

The provision of humanitarian assistance to external migrants

In an effort to demonstrate concrete and practical solidarity, a number of organisations and individuals provided humanitarian aid to external migrants

who were under attack during the May 2008 wave of xenophobia. This aid ranged from offering shelter to the provision of other basic needs, such as clothing and food. COSATU in the Western Cape worked with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and other civil society formations to provide aid to victims of xenophobia. In Gauteng, COSATU also provided aid in the form of clothes and blankets. Members of the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), who also work for the Germiston municipality, organised shelter for the migrants under attack. Steve Faulkner, SAMWU's international secretary and one of the leaders of the Coalition Against Xenophobia, stated that SAMWU members accommodated migrants in a community hall in Germiston (Interview: S Faulkner).

Aid continued even after the May 2008 attacks. One of the leaders of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), Christine Olivier, was disturbed by the fact that the Central Methodist Church had been taken to court for providing accommodation to about 3 500 migrants from Zimbabwe. According to Olivier, during the '67 minutes' campaign on Mandela Day, NUMSA donated clothes and blankets to the inmates at the church. All regions participated in this NUMSA campaign (Interview: C Olivier).

According to Momberg (2009) of the *Sunday Independent*, COSATU Gauteng officials swapped their placards and protest boots for brooms and gloves to clean the Central Methodist Church and its surrounds in the Johannesburg inner city.³ While COSATU regions and affiliates took the initiative and provided some humanitarian aid to external migrants, the challenge was that the head office was not able to coordinate and mobilise aid on a national scale. This is probably an important lesson for the COSATU leadership. On a positive note, NUMSA sent its regional educator in Ekurhuleni, Mlungisi Rapolile, to a course on handling humanitarian disasters. The aim was to enable the union in the region to have humanitarian skills in case another attack happens (see Hlatshwayo 2009).

Popular education and agitation against the attacks on external migrants

COSATU and its affiliates also used their own media and communication to agitate against the xenophobic attacks. This was an attempt to educate the working class about problems of xenophobia, as the attacks were led by working-class communities in the townships. The *NUMSA Bulletin*, which

is used by NUMSA as a space for reflection, debate and education, published articles in a special issue in August 2008 that focused on xenophobia. These educational articles demonstrated how pogroms and xenophobia undermine the ideals of African unity and solidarity on the African continent. In addition, the union committed itself to providing more education on xenophobia to its members.

A few days before their 10th National Congress, COSATU officials were interviewed about their approach to dealing with xenophobia (Hlatshwayo 2009). COSATU Education Secretary, Crystal Dicks, stated that the previous congress of COSATU in 2006 did not develop a plan on educating its members on xenophobia. But she pointed out that a number of unions had sponsored resolutions on xenophobia at the forthcoming tenth congress and that the federation would use these to develop education programmes on xenophobia for the following three years and beyond (Interview: C Dicks).

Preventing xenophobic attacks on external migrants

Representatives of NUM stated that there were no attacks of migrants on the mines. This had to do with the fact that, historically, NUM has had a sizeable number of migrants from neighbouring countries within its ranks. When the 2008 attacks broke out, the union addressed meetings in the mines, something that helped prevent xenophobic attacks there. The Eastern Cape had witnessed a spate of attacks on Somali migrants who are involved in trading in the coastal areas. However, in 2008, COSATU and other civil society organisations in the region held meetings which helped in preventing further attacks (Hlatshwayo 2009).

COSATU and coalitions against xenophobia

The Coalition Against Xenophobia (CAX) was formed in 2008 in Johannesburg during the xenophobic attacks. It was led by the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), a social movement, and was also comprised of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as Khanya College, and organisations of migrants, including the migrants who resided at the Central Methodist Church. The trade union movement only had one consistent representation in the coalition, Steven Faulkner, the international secretary of SAMWU. He was mandated by SAMWU to be a part of the coalition and its campaigns. Among other

things, this coalition led a march against xenophobia in May 2008, just after the xenophobic attacks. Attended by about 5 000 people, the march was the most pronounced public demonstration against the attacks. Organisations of migrants from different countries were given a platform to express their objections to the xenophobic attacks (Hlatshwayo 2009).

Soon after the May xenophobic attacks, CAX initiated what was called a 'Shut Down Lindela' campaign. The coalition argued that the Lindela Repatriation Centre near Krugersdorp represented all that is wrong with the government's immigration policies. According to the coalition, these policies are premised on the detection, detention and deportation of suspected external migrants with no official papers. Lindela had gained notoriety for playing this role and had been condemned by a range of human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch and the South African Human Rights Commission. COSATU was also not part of this campaign (Hlatshwayo, 2009).

COSATU's Bongani Masuku pointed out that, on 17 May 2008, COSATU organised a march against xenophobia, to which all civil society structures were invited (Interview: B Masuku). This march does not seem to have received much publicity (Hlatshwayo 2009).

The question of the lack of cohesion of the progressive movement dates back to the tale of two marches at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Sandton in 2002. The APE, which was one of the leading organisations in the march, and CAX, have had differences with COSATU over their attitude to the ANC, government, the Alliance and methods of struggle (Buhlungu 2005).

According to Jara and Peberdy (2009), the Western Cape Emergency Civil Society Task Team on Xenophobia and Violence was established on the initiative of the TAC and the AIDS Law Project. It was formed through a meeting of over 20 civil society organisations, held 'to discuss a strategy for pre-empting what has happened in Gauteng from spreading to this province'. The meeting established a task team made up of trade unions, faith-based organisations, legal and human rights organisations, humanitarian agencies and refugee organisations. COSATU became an important member of this task team, but did not use its numbers to mobilise its members and the communities.

Perhaps COSATU's inability to see migrants as social agents, and its relationship with the ruling ANC, contributed to its lack of mass mobilisation against the

attacks on external migrants (Hlatshwayo 2009). However, Steve Faulkner still believes that collaboration between social movements is a possibility and that COSATU has managed to develop a better approach to xenophobia. The challenge, according to him, is a need for both sides to find a common ground (Interview: S Faulkner).

COSATU's interventions at the NEDLAC level

As part of social dialogue, COSATU participates in NEDLAC, a national forum made up of government, business, labour and communities. Jane Barrett of SATAWU participates in the development chamber of NEDLAC as a representative of COSATU and labour. She introduced a discussion at the chamber which led to the formulation of a declaration and a plan of action against xenophobia. Barrett had this to say about the NEDLAC process:

I sit on the development chamber of NEDLAC. It is a chamber that also has representatives from communities. All the chambers meet once in a month. The meeting of the development chamber met in May last when the attacks were happening. On behalf of labour I raised the issue. (Interview: J Barrett)

The starting point of the declaration was the recognition of the South African Constitution as a document that protects and respects human rights. It also notes that migration is not only an African phenomenon, but it also affects the whole world. It further argues that external migrants, according to the Constitution of the Republic, have rights and responsibilities, and goes on to condemn xenophobia, racism, tribalism, sexism and intolerance. The social partners then committed themselves to combating xenophobia and racism in accordance with the final Declaration of the WCAR, held in Durban in 2001. Further, the social partners committed themselves to educating the public about problems of xenophobia (NEDLAC 2009).

Subsequently, a workshop whose objective was to create a platform that enables in-depth engagement between the NEDLAC social partners and the government on the broader aspects within which to view migration, and to find long-term solutions that seek to prevent the recurrence of the xenophobic attacks, was organised on 12 September 2008. The workshop examined regional integration, migration laws and methods of engaging xenophobia at the level of NEDLAC (Interview: J Barrett).

Engaging the state on xenophobia

When evaluating COSATU's attitude toward the government's response to xenophobia, the internal struggles in the ANC between a faction led by President Jacob Zuma, who was supported by COSATU, on one hand, and the then President Thabo Mbeki, on the other, need to be taken into account. Concerning the xenophobic attacks, Mbeki was seen as a denialist who did not care about people on the ground. On the other hand, COSATU saw Jacob Zuma as a person who was willing to give people a hearing and who was also concerned about the attacks on migrants (Hlatshwayo 2009).

As part of the preparations for the 10th National Congress, COSATU convened an International Solidarity Conference in June 2009. Among other things, the conference raised concerns about the snail's pace at which state authorities and the judicial system were handling cases of xenophobia. The conference argued that, despite 1 600 arrests, only a small number of convictions had taken place in relation to theft and damage to property. More importantly, no one had been charged with murder, assault and rape, despite the prevalence of such cases and damning evidence contained in photographic and audio-visual materials (COSATU 2009b).

Under the Zuma government, the Home Affairs Department introduced a 90-day visa waiver for Zimbabweans planning to live in South Africa for less than three months while they seek jobs.⁴ Wandile Ntsangani, the COSATU East London local secretary, saw this as a positive move for the migrants from Zimbabwe:

The government is handling the issue properly and if there is something that is happening it does inform us as civil society ...
The Home Affairs Minister has pronounced that they should be issued with permits. We are also on board and towing the line.
(Interview: W Ntsangani)

De Doorns, labour brokers and migrants

In November 2009, xenophobic attacks on migrants in the Hex River Village of De Doorns in the Western Cape led to the displacement of 3000 migrants of Zimbabwean origin. Some local residents went on a rampage, tearing down the shacks of Zimbabwean migrants and accusing them of 'stealing their jobs'.⁵

The De Doorns residents, most of them farm workers, forced Zimbabwean families to pack up their belongings and seek refuge in a community hall in the Hex River Valley town, which is about two hours from Cape Town. As residents, armed with sticks and stones, raced through the Ekuphumleni informal settlement tearing down makeshift homes, police fired rubber bullets and used a stun grenade to disperse them.⁶

The 'De Doorns' investigation, by researcher Jean Pierre Misago of the University of the Witwatersrand's Forced Migration Studies Programme, was published in November 2009. One of the key findings from the study was that labour brokers, who supply seasonal labour to farms in the area, were behind the conflict. Some of these labour brokers were part of the local leadership. They used their influence to incite local residents, according to the report. The report also responded to allegations that migrants were 'stealing' jobs from South Africans. Referring to locals' complaints that Zimbabweans were 'stealing jobs', Agri Wes-Cape, an organisation of farmers, stated that 'there were so many jobs at harvest time that farmers even had to recruit workers from other towns' (*Mail and Guardian Online* 17 December 2009).⁷ The farmers and the Zimbabweans disputed the notion that Zimbabweans provided cheap labour which displaced South African workers. In fact, all workers earned a seasonal wage of R60 a day (*Mail and Guardian Online* 17 December 2009).

Responding to the xenophobic attacks in De Doorns, COSATU in the Western Cape argued that 'employment in the country should be a matter of human rights rather than an issue of nationality' (cited in Rafiq 2009: 1).⁸ The union stated that people have a right to work, regardless of country of origin. Mike Louw of COSATU in the Western Cape also stated that the union is aware that the argument that everyone has a right to work in the country, regardless of their country of origin, requires further debate and education, because there are people who believe that only South Africans have a right to work in South Africa.⁹

Perhaps the crisis in De Doorns, and the role of labour brokers in that, is symptomatic of COSATU's inability to organise workers working under precarious conditions. Instead of organising and forging unity among workers who work for labour brokers – regardless of the workers' countries of origin – COSATU has been calling for government to ban labour brokers, according

to COSATU's Central Committee of 2011 (COSATU 2011). This demand may sound radical, but it does not address the fact that workers under labour brokers and all other precarious workers need to be organised, so that they can also access their rights. Organising these workers can also transcend xenophobia and build class solidarity among all workers.

External migrants assess COSATU's responses to xenophobia

This chapter would be incomplete without the voices of external migrants themselves. In interviews, representatives of external migrants' organisations evaluated COSATU's responses to xenophobia. Kenneth Tafira, the former coordinator of CAX, a Zimbabwean migrant and a master's student at the University of the Witwatersrand, was critical of the role played by COSATU in the struggle against xenophobia:

COSATU has done nothing to unionise migrant workers and that is fundamental. If migrant workers are organised this issue of them accepting lower wages won't be there. I understand South Africans are grieving about migrant workers accepting lower wages but if they were unionised, they would be on a common platform of fighting. The capitalist would not take advantage of that cheap labour. COSATU will say that it does not organise them because they are undocumented, therefore let it fight for them to get documented. The nationalist agenda of COSATU, like their Proudly South African campaign, remains an obstacle to the organisation of migrants. (Interview: K Tafira)

In the same vein, Ahmed Dawlo, the director of the Somali Association of South Africa, stated that the statement by the COSATU general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, that there are many Zimbabweans working in the South African hotels, can be regarded as part of the xenophobic discourse. It is consistent with an argument that migrants are taking the jobs of South Africans, according to Dawlo. He also indicated that the absence of COSATU in the anti-xenophobia march which was organised by CAX was also disturbing. In addition, the fact that COSATU represents a huge number of the working people makes it a powerful voice. He further said, 'COSATU has to come out with a very strong message against xenophobia and the loss of innocent lives of migrants' (Interview: A Dawlo).

The migrants' organisations are also looking forward to building a solidarity relationship with COSATU. Marc Gbaffou of the African Diaspora Forum, an umbrella body of African migrants' organisations in Gauteng, indicated that his organisation was part of the CAX march on 24 May 2009. They have been working with CAX and are hoping to also work with COSATU in stepping up the campaign against xenophobia (Interview: M Gbaffou).

Concerning the working relationship between migrant organisations and COSATU in the Western Cape, Barry Wuganaale of the Ogoni Solidarity Forum, had this to say:

From observations I do not know if I have become too friendly with them. Their leadership and the staff have welcomed the organisation that I represent ... This has been very encouraging. From my observation they had never slammed their doors. So many times they have helped informal traders and migrant workers. It is not easy for someone to go to a federation because they are supposed to go to a structure. But I have seen them [migrants] going to the COSATU Provincial Office for taking up their problems. (Interview: B Wugunaale)

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a critical evaluation of COSATU's policy on migration, external migrant workers and xenophobia. Despite the recent congress resolution which shows that, while there are some people within the leadership of COSATU who are prepared to engage the question of xenophobia and migrant workers, there is still a need for COSATU to deepen its discussion and debate on the subject. This discussion needs to examine sources of xenophobia and migration, lessons from other countries with experiences in organising migrant workers and tackling xenophobia, grassroots educational programmes on xenophobia and the development of a plan for organising migrants as part of an anti-xenophobia strategy.

While the research has shown that some individuals within the unions are starting to defend migrants in the workplace, this needs to be extended to all the unions and the townships. COSATU needs to also examine ways of making links with other civil society formations, particularly in the communities where the attacks have been taking place. The chapter has shown

that some COSATU unions and provinces did provide assistance to victims of xenophobia, but that coordination at the national level is also required.

In an interview, COSATU's Western Cape educator, Mike Louw, captured well what needs to be done:

We want to work towards encouraging people to accepting the fact that refugees should join unions. At the same time, we have to work with our unions to break down the misconception they have [about migrants]. So that is an ongoing issue. We raise these issues in our organisers' forums we have with the unions. We have got to recruit and organise the migrants. (Interview: M Louw).

Notes

- 1 Most of the data for this chapter is sourced from the research report, *COSATU's responses to xenophobia*, which the author did for the Gauteng City Observatory and the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Sociological Research in 2009. The research was funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies.
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- 3 Momberg E (2009) SA gets its hands dirty for Mandela Day. *Sunday Independent* 19 July 2009. Accessed October 2009, <http://www.sundayindependent.co.za/?fArticleId=5089423>
- 4 Ndabeni K (2009) 90-day SA visa waiver for Zimbabweans. *The Herald* 29 September 2009. Accessed October 2009, <http://www.theherald.co.za/article.aspx?id=477760>
- 5 South African Press Association (SAPA) (2009) Labour brokers fingered in De Doorns xenophobia report. *Mail and Gaurdian Online* 17 December 2009. Accessed January 2011, <http://mg.co.za/article/2009-12-17-labour-brokers-fingered-in-de-doorns-xenophobia-report>
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- Christine Olivier, Second Deputy President, NUMSA, 22 September 2009
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- Dominic Tweedie, former editor of *The Shopsteward* magazine, COSATU, 8 September 2009
- Glenn Mpufane, International Secretary, NUM, 18 September 2009
- Honest Sinama, SATAWU Eastern Cape, 28 August 2009
- Jane Barret, researcher, SATAWU, 29 July 2009
- Kenneth Tafira, former Coordinator, CAX, 28 July 2009
- Marc Gbaffou, Chairperson, Africa Diaspora Forum, 29 July 2009
- Mike Abrahams, Media Officer, SACCAWU, 5 September 2009
- Mike Louw, Western Cape Educator/Organiser, COSATU, 24 August 2009
- Pat Horn, Office Bearer, StreetNet International, 20 August 2009
- Patricia Nyman, Gender Coordinator, SACCAWU, 1 October 2009
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- Steve Faulkner, SAMWU and CAX, 30 July 2009
- Wandile Ntsangani, COSATU East London local, 29 August 2009
- Xolani Holiday, Western Cape Provincial Secretary, NUM, 30 September 2009
- Xolani Nyamezele, Provincial Secretary, SATAWU Gauteng, 1 October 2009

12 *The trade union movement and the Tripartite Alliance: a tangled history*

Sakhela Buhlungu and Stephen Ellis

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey was conducted at a time of extraordinary activity in the Tripartite Alliance between COSATU, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). The fourth democratic elections were held a mere fifteen months after the ANC's historic 52nd National Conference, held at Polokwane in December 2007. It was at this conference that Jacob Zuma had been elected as the president of the ANC in preference to the incumbent, Thabo Mbeki. Zuma's election was, in effect, the culmination of a popular uprising within the ANC and was the prelude to the recall of Thabo Mbeki as State President in October 2008 and Jacob Zuma's inauguration into the position in May 2009. There is general agreement that the leadership of COSATU was crucial in organising support for Zuma in the months before Polokwane, mobilising the wider Tripartite Alliance on his behalf. Reviewing events at the federation's 10th Congress, held some four months after Zuma took the helm, the federation's leadership gloated:

We will not speak of the political investment we have made since we stood up against the encroaching dictatorship and Zanufication of the ANC in the late 1990's and until the triumph of 2007 in Polokwane, where our ideological foes met their Waterloo. When the historians write honestly about the contributions the workers movement made in this period we are certain they will speak in glowing terms about COSATU. (COSATU 2009: 65)

The consequences of those momentous events will doubtless be felt for years to come. Their effects will be felt in both the field of ideology and political alliances within the ANC, not least since pro-Zuma mobilisation brought into existence new constituencies, and brought to the fore new personalities, previously unknown to most South Africans. Zuma's election marked a victory for the left current within the ANC and members and leaders of COSATU

and the SACP who had been angered by President Mbeki's explicit rejection of socialism, such as when, during a policy conference in September 2002, he had described the ANC as 'not a movement whose mission is to fight for the victory of socialism'.¹ More generally, Thabo Mbeki had earned the wrath of the ANC left by his particular brand of neo-liberal policy and by what SACP and COSATU leaders and intellectuals call the '1996 Class Project', a reference to the ANC's political shift in favour of a liberal macro-economic policy in the form of the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme in the mid-1990s. The ANC's rejection of Thabo Mbeki as its standard-bearer, and his replacement by Jacob Zuma, therefore represented a victory of the left over the neo-liberal element that had been brought into existence and led by Mbeki. More specifically, it also changed the balance of forces within the Tripartite Alliance, which is a delicate matter at the best of times. According to COSATU itself, President Mbeki's first term in office, beginning in 1999, had already brought the Alliance to 'the brink of collapse' by 2003 (COSATU 2009).

The 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey provided a good indication of the growing intensity of these conflicts, with only 56 per cent of COSATU members saying that they intended to vote for the ANC in the elections to be held the following year. By contrast, in the previous three COSATU surveys (1994, 1998 and 2004), that figure had always stood at over 70 per cent. The most convincing explanation is that at the time of the 2008 survey, substantial numbers of COSATU members were unsure of the direction in which the ANC was heading and were perhaps reticent about stating their voting intentions at all. In the event, the launch of a splinter movement, the Congress of the People (COPE), in December 2008, did not result in large numbers of South Africans switching their allegiance, as COPE secured only a small number of votes during the 2009 parliamentary elections.

However, by October 2009, there were clear signs that senior figures in the ANC were fighting to curtail the growing influence of the left that followed its mobilisation to bring Jacob Zuma to power. *The Sowetan* newspaper reported on 15 October that ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe had suggested that the SACP, COSATU and the South African National Civics Organisation should give the ANC time and space to fulfil its election promises.² On the face of it, this was a rather remarkable stance for Mantashe to take, since he is also the chairperson of the SACP and a former general secretary of the COSATU-

affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). It neatly encapsulated an element that has been present in the ANC for at least half its century-old existence: the presence within the party not merely of various political strands, tendencies or factions, but of organisations that have their own autonomous existence. When, in May 2009, the general secretary of the SACP, Blade Nzimande, accepted a ministerial post in Jacob Zuma's government, he actually did so in contravention of the SACP's own constitution, which forbids its principal office-holders from taking other positions.

A tangled history

Both the ANC and the SACP take great pride in their long history. Although many of COSATU's affiliated unions can also point to long traditions, the federation's history is much shorter, as it was founded only in 1985. The ANC, having been founded in 1912, can look back on a century of struggle, initially on behalf of South Africa's black population, and later as a liberation movement open to South Africans of all backgrounds and races. The SACP was founded in 1953, but is the direct successor of South Africa's first communist party, the Communist Party of South Africa, established in 1921. Although the ANC, during its first three decades, was often distant from South Africa's communist party, their shared concerns and occasional collaborations have left a rich legacy. A sign of just how deeply entrenched some of the entanglements and tensions are is that the first major breakaway from the ANC took place as early as 1958–1959, when a substantial dissident group left to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Among the reasons for the split cited by the group was the considerable influence that communists exerted over the nationalist movement.

For purposes of understanding today's tangled relations, it is useful to trace the history of the Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, the SACP and trade unions back to the 1940s and the circumstances of the Second World War. The small Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) enjoyed relative freedom after the Soviet Union had joined Great Britain in opposing Germany in 1941, putting South Africa's communists on the same side as the government. This was a time of rapid industrialisation in South Africa, which gave scope both for the Communist Party to recruit among the ranks of new industrial workers and for the ANC to develop a mass following among the swelling numbers of black people living in urban areas. The CPSA and the ANC both took an active role

in the widespread strike movement that sprang up shortly after the war's end in 1946. The victory of the National Party in 1948 and its implementation of apartheid threw the ANC and the CPSA together in their opposition to a government that was more extreme than any of its predecessors in matters of racial ideology and in its opposition to communism. The ANC and the SACP were thrown together in an alliance that has been unbroken ever since that period. Their mutual dependence was strengthened still more by the banning of the ANC in 1960 and the subsequent commitment of both organisations to an armed struggle by means of their joint armed wing, Umkhonto WeSizwe, established in 1961 (Ellis & Sechaba 1992).

The complex nature of the relationship can be illustrated best by examining four aspects of the Tripartite Alliance – overlapping leadership, the leadership of the Alliance, the role of the Alliance in policy-making, and the Alliance and electoral politics. Below we turn to a discussion of each of these issues.

Overlapping leadership: one, two or three caps?

A distinctive feature of the Tripartite Alliance is the phenomenon of overlapping membership and leadership of the constituent organisations, something that goes back to the 1950s, following the reconstitution of the SACP in 1953 and the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1955. The most common scenario is that of a member of COSATU also holding membership of the ANC or the SACP. Then there are those cases where the same person is a member of all three organisations at the same time. But the most complex manifestation of this entanglement is at the leadership level where a person is a leader of two or all three of the organisations. In the past, a classic example of the former was Moses Kotane, who was general secretary of the SACP, as well as a member of the national executive committee of the ANC. Speaking in 1968 about how he managed to reconcile these two leadership roles, Kotane argued:

The fact that I am a Communist has never changed or interfered with my representation on behalf of the ANC. When I have been charged with a mission by the ANC National Executive, I have protected and promoted the interests of the ANC and have never changed my mandate. Likewise when I have been charged with a mission by the Communist Party I have stuck to the terms of my

mandate and defended the interests of the Party. In the formulation of policy I never think of two organisations. I look for a correct political stand and formulation for the organisation concerned. (cited in Bunting 1998: 128)

There have been many others in a similar position to Kotane, particularly since the unbanning of liberation movements in 1990. The current secretary general of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe, is also the chairperson of the SACP. Mantashe has faced a fair share of criticism, particularly by leaders of the ANC Youth League, who believe that he brings his SACP bias into his ANC work. With regard to those who played leading roles in all three organisations, there are numerous examples, such as those of SACTU leaders, Stephen Dlamini, John Nkadimeng and Mark Shope. As Ellis and Sechaba have argued with reference to the exile years, this often caused considerable confusion.

So many prominent members of the ANC in exile over the past three decades were also members of the Party that, at times, it became impossible to know on whose behalf they were speaking. They could choose to speak wearing either their Party hat or their ANC hat, depending on circumstances. The same was true of the other organisation which was officially part of the grand anti-apartheid triple alliance, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Since the late 1960s almost every Party member, and almost every SACTU member, has also been a member of the ANC. (Ellis & Sechaba 1992: 6)

Today, many of the leadership of COSATU and its affiliates, including the federation's general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, are prominent members and/or leaders of all three Alliance partners.

The implications of these complex relationships are manifold and far reaching. The most important of these is that the management of the relationship is often about negotiation among the different leaders who belong to the same organisations, and about the balance of power between different political currents and networks in the Alliance. In the early 1990s, some observers of the labour movement cautioned against the wearing of 'two hats' by trade union leaders (Copelyn 1991; Zikalala 1991). Many union leaders interviewed by Von Holdt on the COSATU-ANC Alliance also expressed strong reservations about dual leadership roles by unionists (Von Holdt 1991).

Zikalala commented:

Once their [trade unions'] experienced leadership gets involved in party politics, they won't be able to fulfil their tasks. We will find ourselves involved in ANC, SACP, PAC, AZAPO, Inkatha and Nationalist Party politics more than in the trade unions. Employers will be in a better position to exploit workers ... The overlap of leadership will also affect the independence of the trade union. Once a political party makes a mistake, the trade union or federation will be afraid to openly criticise the political party. This is what is already happening. The federation will be compelled 'for unity's sake' to follow an unendorsed line without consulting the workers. (Zikalala 1991: 45)

However, others interviewed by Von Holdt at around the same time and prominent figures in the Alliance, such as Jeremy Cronin, disagreed. Cronin (1991) argued that while there were dangers associated with leaders of unions wearing two hats, there were also real benefits to be derived by the organisations concerned.

We are involved in a complicated transition period, whose outcome is far from clear. In this situation, from a working class perspective, the most critical organisational task is to build a powerful, mass-based, democratic and fighting ANC. In the post-February 2 situation the ANC, understandably and correctly, has been drawing a very wide range of strata and ideological tendencies into its general orbit. We should not allow this important process of growth to undermine the long-standing working class bias of the ANC. In practical terms, this means, amongst other things, that working class leaders need to be present at all levels of the ANC. It would be disastrous in the present situation if, in the name of trade union independence, COSATU were to forbid working class leadership from occupying its rightful place in our political formations. (Cronin 1991: 56)

In recent years, the multiple hats issue has ceased to animate fierce debates, as it did in the 1990s, because the multiple hats position seems to have won the day. Indeed, COSATU is on record as having called on its members and leaders to 'swell the ranks of the ANC' to ensure that it maintains a pro-working-class

bias. In a related development, the SACP has earmarked the unions as its primary recruiting ground because this is in line with what it considers to be its historic mission, that is, organising the working class and acting as a representative of its most class conscious cadres. The net result of all of this is that the three organisations share a large number of the same members and leaders. In this context, the so-called ‘two hats debate’ of the early 1990s has been rendered irrelevant. But, rather than resolving the complexity of the relationship, the overlapping membership and leadership situation has intensified the entanglement.

Leadership of the Alliance

What makes the Alliance even more fraught is the status of the three organisations in the relationship. Is the Alliance a coalition of equals, or are some organisations more equal than others? On the surface, the constituent organisations are independent of one another, each with its own structures, finances, leadership and programmes. Indeed, the constitutions of these bodies do not make any reference to the Alliance, nor do they make provision for how the organisations should go about structuring such relationships. In the case of the original Alliance formed in the 1950s and 1960s, and the one reconstituted in 1991, following the unbanning of the ANC and the SACP, there is no official signed document formalising the relationship. This, therefore, means that the Alliance is an informal and flexible arrangement based on deep historical ties and comradesly solidarities amongst its members and leaders. The overlapping leadership arrangements discussed above also help cement the ties by tapping into notions of comradeship, loyalty and trust built over years of working together in the trenches of the anti-apartheid struggle at home, in prison and in exile.

However, the reality of the dynamics of the Alliance tells a different story. Ellis and Sechaba argue that, during the exile years, the ANC, SACP and Umkhonto WeSizwe ‘effectively merged to the point that it became difficult to define the three separately’ (1992: 6). Furthermore, although the organisations are independent on paper, in practice it is impossible for one of them to take decisions without regard to how the others will be affected and respond. This constitutes a severe constraint on the autonomy of the organisations and places a heavy burden on the shoulders of leaders to constantly negotiate and make trade-offs with their counterparts in allied organisations. Alliance

leaders, therefore, have considerable power to take decisions, or to remove certain issues from the agenda of their organisations, if these are deemed to be controversial for the coalition.

There is no doubt that relations among the Alliance partners are hierarchical, with the ANC being a 'senior' partner and the SACP being the most 'junior'. Of course, the understanding among the parties has always been that the Alliance is 'led by ANC' by virtue of its leadership role in the 'national democratic revolution'. However, the ANC's leadership of the Alliance remains vague and is therefore open to different interpretations and abuse. For example, on several occasions in the post-apartheid period, leaders of the ANC have invoked the concept to bully the other partners when they challenged some decisions that the ruling party took. Addressing the 10th National Congress of the SACP in July 1998, Mbeki chastised the ANC's communist allies for daring to question the wisdom of certain policy directions adopted by the ruling party.

Again an insulting inference is made that, for some reason which, if I may speak frankly, your comrades in the ANC do not understand and resent most intensely, the ANC no longer represents the interests of the masses of the people. Thus it is suggested that the progressive traditions of our movement are represented by forces outside the ANC, this proud leader of our liberation movement having transformed itself into a virtual enemy of the people, which can only be kept on course if its allies position themselves as a vocal left watchdog over the very organisation which is supposed to lead our Alliance. The new tendency within our movement of which we have spoken is also reflected in some of the Discussion Documents which were distributed as you were preparing for this Congress.
(Mbeki 1998)

A similar rebuke was expressed about COSATU's challenge to the ruling party when thousands of workers embarked on mass action, demanding job creation and expressing dissatisfaction with the government's GEAR macro-economic programme. The ANC issued a discussion document that was scathing about COSATU's 'ultra-left' tendencies, which threatened to 'subvert' the national democratic revolution (African National Congress 2001).

The ANC's ascension to power in 1994 has tilted the balance of power even further in favour of the leader of the Tripartite Alliance. This is illustrated

when ANC and government leaders express their impatience with elaborate processes of consultation and horse trading within the Alliance and other consultative platforms. These leaders do not hesitate to assert that the government 'has a duty to govern the country' and, therefore, cannot afford to be pinned down in endless discussions and disagreements, even by the Alliance partners.

Being in power has strengthened the hand of the ANC in other ways, too. As a ruling party, it now has access to resources and state infrastructure that makes it more visible in terms of policy development and implementation. In view of the fact that neither COSATU nor the SACP contest for power in their own names, the ANC is the sole avenue for its Alliance partners to become involved in elected governance structures. Hence, it is in an extremely powerful position to decide who is included on its electoral slates of candidates and who is not.

Thus, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the ANC's Alliance partners are junior partners in the relationship. The SACP is especially vulnerable in this situation, particularly since the unbanning of liberation movements when it lost its 'vanguard' role within the Alliance. At least in exile it was able to wield considerable influence, out of proportion to its actual numerical size, because of its ability to attract 'the best and the brightest to its own ranks' (Ellis & Sechaba 1992: 6). Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the party in the post-apartheid period, as many activists have realised that they can access patronage and power directly as members of the ruling party. SACP membership no longer carries the prestige and influence that it used to in the past.

Despite its clout in terms of mobilising and collective action, COSATU is also stuck in a junior partner role in the Alliance. Part of this is structural, in that a trade union federation does not contest for political power and, therefore, has to rely on the goodwill of its allied political parties. In 1996, a COSATU discussion document bemoaned its marginalisation by the ruling party.

In the pre-election period, the Alliance partners consulted one another on major issues ... Since 1994 there have been very few substantial meetings of the Alliance. Even those that have taken place have been ad hoc, sporadic or crisis meetings. Further, issues agreed at those meetings have largely not been followed through ... The Alliance never sat down to systematically look at the challenges

of the transition and formulate a strategy, and what role our various formations should play in that strategy. (COSATU 1996: 3)

It is more than 15 years since the document was issued and yet the situation remains unchanged. The ANC continues to run the show.

The Alliance and policy-making

Policy-making and implementation have bedevilled the Alliance, from the day the ANC assumed the reins of state power in 1994. As the above statement from COSATU's 1996 discussion paper shows, the federation had high hopes about the possibilities of the parties 'co-determining' policies and their implementation under a democratic dispensation. But the ANC had different ideas about how things should be done, as can be seen in the way it developed, unveiled and implemented GEAR. GEAR was not developed by the Alliance, nor was the ANC and its structures involved. It was developed by economists, consultants and government officials contracted by the ministry of finance, under the leadership of Trevor Manuel. In the acrimony that followed, President Nelson Mandela sought to clarify the ANC and the government's position on how they believed the Alliance fitted in.

There are matters where we will agree. The second category is matters where we disagree among us, but compromise. The third category is where there is no agreement at all, and the government will go on with its policy.³

Clearly then, as far as the ANC was concerned, it was an illusion to believe that there could be some kind of 'co-determination' in policy-making. The government had a duty to govern! Another way of looking at it is that, what the ANC was trying to communicate to its Alliance partners, in no uncertain terms, was that the fact that they were its allies did not give them a special or privileged role in the making of policy. They, like other groups in society, had to lobby the party for their positions, but the party was under no obligation to embrace those positions. For this reason, the mobilisation that was spawned by the introduction of GEAR was not only about the content of the programme, but also about the method that the new government had adopted to develop and implement policy. The political fallout that resulted in Mbeki's fall from power was spearheaded by forces within the Alliance – COSATU, the SACP and some in the ruling party – who rejected both the neo-liberal policy

direction Mbeki was seen to be championing and his unilateral style in policy development and implementation.

Polokwane was a grass-roots revolt by the ANC's mass constituency. As well as targeting failed economic policies they challenged the deepening culture of unaccountable leadership, and marginalisation of the mass movement. It was a major breakthrough, after years when comrades in the ANC, COSATU and the SACP have been fighting against these policies and practices. (COSATU, n.d.[c.2008]: 5)

President Jacob Zuma rose to power on the back of the anti-Mbeki mobilisation and his supporters argued that he was the right person for the job because he was a 'good listener' and he was 'pro-poor' (Southall & Webster 2010). But, since Polokwane, the union federation has had its hands full trying to ensure that Zuma remains true to the spirit of Polokwane. The ink on the Polokwane resolutions was hardly dry, when the new ANC president blundered, calling for labour market flexibility and a two-tier labour market.⁴ COSATU moved quickly and called him to order, keenly aware that the contents of the media interview had exposed a serious weakness about the new post-Polokwane leadership. Since then, there have been growing rumblings within the ranks of the Alliance about Zuma's commitment to a pro-labour project. Responding to the 2010 State of the Nation address by President Jacob Zuma and the budget speech by Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, NUM general secretary Frans Baleni argued that COSATU was not getting the returns it expected from supporting Zuma and that there was 'anger' in union structures:

We should have focused on policy rather than individuals. If we were more focused on policy we would have had better results ... Before the elections we are taken seriously, but after the elections we are not taken seriously any more ... If the budget signals no real change from the past, it deepens the perception that we are [being] taken for a ride ... Real change was promised post-Polokwane. We can't just get promises all the time; we want to see it. Now there is a lot more engagement with the ANC, but you can't just talk. At some point something must be done.⁵

It is too early to predict what the future holds for Zuma's leadership position in the ANC. But the signs are there that there are deep fissures in the Alliance about policy-making, and the federation's objections are a good barometer to

measure the extent to which the Alliance is reading (or failing to read) from the same hymn book on policy issues.

The Alliance and electoral politics

In 1993–94, the Tripartite Alliance faced a challenge it had never faced in the history of its existence – it had to prepare for and contest democratic elections. The prospect of fighting an election confronted the constituent organisations of the Alliance with different questions, many of them specific to the circumstances of each organisation. The most fundamental issue facing the ANC was how it could avoid divisions among Alliance partners and contest the elections as a powerful and united force. On top of this, it was also grappling with the implications of its changing identity from a liberation movement into a political party geared to canvassing and winning votes. It worked extremely hard to woo forces that were traditionally not part of the Alliance, such as Bantustan leaders, chiefs, religious and business leaders. But there was no doubt that the Alliance constituted the core of the ANC's electoral strategy.

The SACP was forced to address and answer a question that many were curious about – was the party going to contest the elections in its own name, with its own slate of candidates? At the time, as it still is today, that was an extremely difficult issue to address. For example, in the event that the SACP decided to go it alone, how was it going to untangle many of its members and leaders from the web of overlapping memberships and loyalties? Then, of course, there was the fear of splitting the votes, which might give advantage to the National Party and its surrogate organisations. In the event, the SACP resolved the question by deciding not to contest the elections, but rather to fight under the auspices of the ANC, with its members fielded as ANC candidates. At the time, this appeared to be the only sensible thing to do. But in subsequent elections the party has demonstrated an unwillingness or even fear to resolve the issue in any way, other than maintaining the status quo that was established in the run-up to the 1994 elections.

To the outsider, and indeed, to many insiders of the party, the arrangement does not make a great deal of sense. But attempts by some inside the party to get it to contest elections independently have been soundly defeated and the debate suppressed. It is hard to resist thinking of the SACP as a parasite and the ANC as a host. In that scenario, asking the SACP to go it alone and carve

an independent political existence and identity for itself is tantamount to asking it to commit political suicide. Research has shown that the SACP has a very small support base and, if these supporters were confronted with a choice between it and the ANC, most would vote for the ANC. Over the years, the COSATU Workers' Survey has asked COSATU members what they thought of the Tripartite Alliance. In all four surveys, workers overwhelmingly endorsed the Alliance and rejected any possibility of the SACP or any other incarnation of a workers' party becoming their sole representative in Parliament.

Some in the SACP have argued that the current arrangement of working through the ANC is the best way to exercise the influence of the party, often out of proportion to the party's actual numerical strength. They always cite the number of communists who are cabinet ministers, members of Parliament (under the ANC), members of provincial and local government legislatures and executive councils, etc. While there may be some truth to this, the fact remains that the SACP operates as a junior partner of the ANC that is subject to the whims and discipline of the leadership of the ruling party. To exercise this influence, they have to operate as a lobby group.

At one level, the position of COSATU is different, because it is not a political party and has, of necessity, to exercise its political influence in parliamentary politics through a party that has a presence in Parliament. In this way COSATU has, over the years, been sending some leaders to Parliament on an ANC ticket. Around elections it also suspends most of its normal trade union functions and devotes enormous time and resources to canvassing votes for the ANC. But it has no way of ensuring that agreed positions are actually carried forward into Parliament. Before the 1994 elections, COSATU leadership toyed with the idea of an electoral pact that would bind the ANC to agreed positions (Buhlungu 1992). However, in discussions with the ANC, it was felt that such an approach was too adversarial and was not in keeping with the spirit of comradeship and trust that had sustained the Alliance up to that juncture.

While the departure of the SACP from the ANC and the Alliance would cause minimal harm to the ANC's electoral fortunes, the withdrawal of COSATU would make the ruling party bleed profusely. Of course, the federation would suffer heavy losses too. Thus, the entanglement of the three partners is such that the Alliance has now become a precondition for maintaining the current levels of electoral performance.

The Alliance after Polokwane

Throughout the long period of its alliance with the ANC, the SACP has been formally committed to the strategy of a two-stage revolution. Its orthodox Marxist-Leninist reading of historical development is that the election of South Africa's first majority government in 1994 represented a bourgeois revolution that, in time, will be superseded by a socialist revolution. It is possible to interpret the events of 2007 as a significant moment in this process. For some in COSATU and the SACP, the election of Jacob Zuma at Polokwane represented the victory of the left wing within the ANC over an authoritarian president who, despite his personal history as a communist of long standing and even a former member of the SACP's politburo, had been the mastermind of South Africa's turn to neo-liberalism after 1996. The left, having been instrumental in the overthrow of Thabo Mbeki, has received its reward in terms of government posts. Among the members of President Zuma's cabinet there are indeed, as COSATU itself states, 'countless former unionists who mostly have retained their loyalty to the basic principles taught in the trenches of the school of Marxism' (COSATU 2009: 10). Many of these are also members of the SACP. COSATU remains formally committed not only to the defence of its members' interests in general, but to socialism specifically. During this period and until recently, COSATU has indeed been quite closely aligned to the SACP. The political report presented to the 10th COSATU National Congress in September 2009 described the SACP as 'the vanguard of the South African working class' (COSATU 2009: 5), and declared COSATU's goal of persuading at least half of its members to become 'active ANC and SACP members' (COSATU 2009: 13). The same document described COSATU as 'anchored in the Congress and Comintern tradition ... we retain most of the communist canon including the notions of vanguard party and the dictatorship of the proletariat' (COSATU 2009: 25), stating that there is 'a big overlap between COSATU and SACP membership' (COSATU 2009: 159).

This advance of COSATU, SACP and the left, generally, is consistent with the SACP's programme of advancing towards a socialist revolution and is grist to the mill of those who fear such an outcome. This fear has created new constituencies and given new prominence to such existing organisations as the ANC Youth League and the MK Military Veterans' Association, both of which have been notable for the immoderate statements made by their leaders.

This has caused some consternation in the South African press about the possibility of a radical campaign to take real control over the ANC by forcing the hand of President Zuma. However, a more sober reaction would be not to attach too much importance to the garish headlines generated by individuals such as Julius Malema, the embattled president of the ANC Youth League⁶ who has risen to prominence more by the offensiveness of his remarks than anything else, or the Veterans' leader who publicly wished the early death of ANC stalwart and former minister Kader Asmal. While both COSATU and SACP members may rejoice at the enhanced influence within the ANC that is the consequence of their support for the candidacy of Jacob Zuma as the leader of the movement and of the country, this victory has left some other ANC members deeply disturbed. After Polokwane, some within the ANC were incensed by COSATU's activism when it named those candidates it preferred for membership of the ANC's governing body (COSATU 2009: 41), taking a more forward position in ANC affairs than was regarded as proper. As ever, the politics of the ANC remain highly complex, and a master of ANC political activity, such as President Zuma undoubtedly is, can be expected not to accompany such a process meekly.

This is more than a struggle between rival factions or tendencies of a sort that occur in all political parties. Nor is it a straightforward discussion within a political alliance as to whether the Tripartite Alliance continues to fulfil key strategic goals. Indeed, 'alliance' is a misnomer, inasmuch as individuals may be members of all three organisations simultaneously. As indicated earlier in this chapter, neither the SACP nor COSATU presents candidates at national elections under its own banner, but as members of the ANC. This creates complex overlaps of strategic goals and factional interests. ANC members have been familiar with this fact for many years. From the inception of what some South African socialists often refer to as a 'class project', in 1996, the ANC leadership implemented, in particular, a macro-economic policy that was unpopular with the SACP and with many COSATU members. President Mbeki often treated both organisations with disdain. Since the Polokwane conference, however, the situation has been reversed. The SACP and its supporters within COSATU have been in the ascendant, to the consternation not only of many people outside the ranks of the ANC, but also to some within it. The latter find themselves outmanoeuvred, since they lack the organisational structure and ideological coherence that are the SACP's greatest assets.

The 2008 Workers' Survey suggests that many COSATU members are satisfied with the political turn represented by the election of Jacob Zuma to the helm of the ANC and that of the state, and with the more left-wing complexion this has brought to internal debates. A total of 60 per cent of those interviewed for the survey thought that the Tripartite Alliance remained the best way of safeguarding workers' interests in Parliament, and 61 per cent wanted the arrangement to continue until the next parliamentary elections in 2014. Significantly, 17 per cent described themselves as signed-up members of the SACP, and 7 per cent as paid-up members. This is a disproportionately high level of membership, as the claimed membership of the communist party – reportedly 73 000 – is less than 4 per cent of the claimed membership of COSATU. According to the journalist Terry Bell, SACP members comprise some 11 per cent of the latest audited ANC membership figures.⁷ SACP members are also very well represented in the leadership structures of South Africa's governing party, occupying strategic positions both inside the cabinet and in senior official structures.

In a sense, the SACP appears very well placed to pursue its strategic goals. Inasmuch as COSATU is also committed to a political programme, it too finds itself in a relatively powerful political position. However, this must be read against the backdrop sketched above in the section that discusses the tangled nature of the Tripartite Alliance.

What sort of socialism?

For much of their history, the ANC, the SACP and their allies in the labour movement (which included COSATU, after its foundation in 1985) were preoccupied by the pervasive force of apartheid and were inevitably perceived, and perceived themselves, through the prism of the Cold War. For more than four decades after the end of the Second World War, South African communists enjoyed the support of a superpower and espoused a political programme strongly influenced by the Soviet style of Marxism-Leninism. The immediate goal was the overthrow of apartheid through a national democratic revolution. As long as the Soviet Union existed, the SACP could be sure that it would, via its relationship with the ANC and the preponderance of its members in the ANC leadership (COSATU 2009: 10–11), be in a position of considerable strength to embark on the next phase of the revolution, the transition to socialism. While the ANC as an organisation was not committed

to a socialist revolution, but generally took a more social democratic line in policy matters, the SACP influence did have the effect of orienting the ANC's work towards South Africa's black urban population in particular, perceived to be the core of the working class.

Perhaps the greatest question facing the SACP, and socialists within the ANC more generally, is the form and content of a socialist government and society after the disappearance of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Both SACP and COSATU documents generally accept some of the inadequacies of the USSR. 'The task for South African socialists is made hard by the fact that there is limited example [sic] of national struggles that fully matured to socialism. Of course there are exception [sic] like China, Cuba and recently Venezuela. However, in reality these experiments are stuck somewhere between capitalism and socialism' (COSATU 2009: 27). The political report presented to the September 2009 COSATU 10th National Congress goes on to enumerate several tasks that face South Africa's socialists. Current blueprints for a transition to socialism need to be rethought. Ecological damage, for example, 'means revisiting the model of development inherited from the 19th and 20th centuries' (COSATU 2009: 27). It recognises that not only did socialist experiences in the USSR and elsewhere not cause the state to wither away, but to become oppressive.

The data from the 2008 COSATU Workers' Survey suggests that, among the challenges facing an ANC government in which the SACP enjoys a prominent role, one challenge concerns the general thrust of its policy. If the Soviet experience reveals the pitfalls of an authoritarian and highly centralised system of government, in which a commitment to industrialisation and a rhetorical celebration of the proletariat results in agrarian neglect and even disaster, then how is South Africa to do things differently? As far as COSATU is concerned, its concentration on urban and industrial activities makes it poorly adapted for a political movement that is concerned about agricultural development, food production and ecological questions. Survey data point to some specific developments in this regard. Almost two-thirds of those interviewed in the survey were in the 36–65 age cohort. Three-quarters fell into the 18–45 age cohort. In other words, a high proportion of COSATU members are in their thirties or early forties. These are people who were teenagers during the climactic years of the anti-apartheid struggle, from 1990 to 1994. COSATU itself acknowledges this in a document presented to its

September 2009 10th National Congress, referring to COSATU members as 'we the leaders of the generation largely responsible for this political climate so pregnant with real possibilities' (COSATU 2009: 11). At the same time, the 2008 Cosatu Workers' Survey reveals a continuing decline in the unskilled and semi-skilled categories of worker in the labour federation.

COSATU, therefore, faces a strategic challenge on at least two counts. The first of these concerns the vision of South Africa's political future, to which it is committed as an organisation that aspires to represent the interests of the working class, and that contains a disproportionate number of members of the SACP. The SACP remains firmly wedded to an orthodox Marxism-Leninism, while acknowledging some of the failings and excesses of the actual experience of the Soviet Union. Whether these acknowledgements are sufficient to avoid the same errors remains open to question. This has obvious implications for South Africa's future style of government, including such matters as freedom of the press and of political organisation. It also has particular implications for ecological matters that the founding fathers, Marx, Engels and Lenin, never had to consider.

Conclusion

The different incarnations of the Tripartite Alliance, from the 1950s to the present, involved a complex set of political relationships between union federations, the ANC and the SACP. The Alliance defies the simple textbook logic of union-party alliances, where there is a one-on-one relationship between a union federation and a political party, whether it is still a liberation movement or is already a ruling party. The Siamese-twin nature of the Tripartite Alliance requires that we ask different kinds of research questions, among which should be questions about power. For example, we should always ask the question: what are the power relations within the Alliance?

In the case of the COSATU-ANC-SACP Alliance, there is constant fluidity, which means that the balance of power is forever changing. For example, the ANC's grassroots revolt that led to the leadership change at Polokwane in 2007 tilted the balance of power in favour of left and socialist forces within the Alliance. The discussion in this chapter reflects that shift. What we have not discussed at length in this chapter is the fact that, since the beginning

of 2010, cracks have emerged within the hegemonic pro-Zuma group in the Alliance. In addition to the statement by the NUM general secretary quoted earlier, expressing reservations about having supported an individual instead of a policy position, several other instances of friction have emerged. Three examples of this friction are worth highlighting at this point. The first concerns the realisation by some in the Alliance – particularly COSATU – that the ills of greed, self-enrichment and corruption continue within the ranks of the post-Polokwane, pro-Zuma block. COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi has been at the forefront of those critical of ANC leaders presiding over what he calls a ‘predatory state’ and is on record for making calls for ‘life-style audits’ of leading politicians in the ANC Youth League and the ANC itself. A COSATU statement in June 2010 referred to ‘representatives of a tendency within the ANC leadership who are hell-bent on their agenda of self-enrichment and crass materialism’ (COSATU 2010). In a bizarre response to Vavi’s strident criticism, the National Working Committee of the ANC took a decision to institute disciplinary steps against him, which in itself is a classic illustration of the entanglement of the relationship. But the union federation was quick to point to the absurdity of the decision, both in terms of its intent as well as its structural impossibility:

Why is this tendency charging those who are blowing the whistle on corruption but not those who are guilty of corruption? The decision is attempting to stifle public debate on this critical issue. This decision is completely non-implementable and will never be implemented. No leader of COSATU can or will ever be disciplined by another organisation for doing the federation’s work on behalf of its two million members. (COSATU 2010)

Sanity soon prevailed and the threat of disciplinary action against Vavi was quietly dropped. Meantime, COSATU has continued its crusade against corruption, culminating in the formation of Corruption Watch, a watchdog group, at the beginning of 2012.

The second area of friction is COSATU’s dissatisfaction with progress on the reorientation of economic policy, such that it is in step with the ‘pro-poor’ resolutions of the 2007 Polokwane conference of the ANC. Harsh words have been exchanged on this, with some in COSATU even hinting at feeling betrayed by the Zuma leadership:

We are in a crisis, and we must say this absolutely, a crisis of integrity. We will not agree ever, ever again that the workers must be used as a voting cattle ... [Cosatu did not want] to be the dog who gets bones thrown to [it] while sitting outside after we have caught the animals that the owner is enjoying inside the house ... We are angry that the Treasury remains infected by the highly organised but conservative bureaucrats who have been driving neo-liberal and conservative policies for the past 16 years.⁸

The strong words were triggered by the 2010 budget speech by Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, the first since the election of Zuma in May 2009. COSATU leaders took a dim view of Gordhan's argument that his was a pro-poor budget. 'There is no Zuma who is going to confuse us and say that this budget is about the interests of the working class when it is not ... We represent the interests of the working class,' argued Irvin Jim, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, while other leaders accused Zuma of 'hoodwinking' them.⁹

Disagreements on economic policy centre on various issues, which the federation feels very strongly about, including the government's wage subsidy policy, calls for a macro-economic policy that promotes a new growth path and industrial policy, rejection of labour broking, and a demand to eliminate apartheid political economy fault lines. It would appear that, since Zuma took over in 2009, little progress has been made in addressing these issues, as they recur at the beginning of every year when a new government budget is unveiled.

The third area of friction is the politics of factionalism and leadership succession in the ANC, with the next conference set for December 2012 in Mangaung, Free State province. Opposing factions have emerged within each of the three allied organisations, with one group calling for the re-election of Zuma and his fellow leading officials, while the other group wants to see Zuma and some of the leaders replaced. Significantly, this has led to a souring of relations among some of the leading figures in the Alliance. Two of these deserve a mention. One is a major fallout between Zwelinzima Vavi and Blade Nzimande, general secretary of the SACP, with the former favouring the removal of Zuma, while the latter strongly supports the re-election of the ANC president. Both men played a decisive role in the election of Zuma in Polokwane and the ejection of Mbeki from the leadership of the party and

country. The other relationship that has suffered is that between Vavi and the president of COSATU, Sdumo Dlamini, who wants to see Zuma re-elected in 2012. The division has also positioned the different affiliated unions in favour of Zuma or against him. This tension has created a rather awkward position for the federation, as it can no longer pronounce with one voice on the ANC and the Alliance. Such is the bad blood that, at the 2011 Central Committee meeting of COSATU, virtually all the draft resolutions on political issues were shelved and referred to a lower structure, the Central Executive Committee, for further discussion, to avoid an ugly showdown between the two factions.

Although the above examples illustrate the dilemmas of the Tripartite Alliance since the Polokwane ANC conference and, importantly, since we conducted the COSATU Workers' Survey in 2008, it is by no means clear what the future holds. Some observers and scholars have attempted to predict the future of the Alliance, but we would argue that it is extremely difficult to fathom the rapidly changing positions in the Alliance, particularly because of the entanglement we have discussed in this chapter. However, it is possible to make some concluding remarks identifying the processes and issues that will shape the relationship in future. First, there is no doubt that economic policy-making and implementation will continue to be the thorniest issue for the Alliance and any perceived or real shift by the ruling ANC in a neo-liberal direction is bound to agitate the unions and place the SACP in an awkward, if not embarrassing, position. On the other hand, a shift in a more social democratic direction, which would result in visible improvements to the economy, job creation and the reduction of inequality, could raise the credibility of the ruling party and give the Alliance a new lease on life.

Second, the twin issues of leadership contestation and factionalism pose a threat, not only to the constituent organisations, but to the Alliance itself. The irony of Alliance politics today is that, while the leadership contestation by the Zuma camp in the build-up to Polokwane was intended to remove an unaccountable faction and unify the party, the methods Zuma and his supporters used have served to entrench factionalism and introduce a divisive approach to leadership contests. Factionalism has now become endemic in all three Alliance organisations, something that has introduced strains on the unity of the coalition. Third, the generational change that has been taking place among the members and leaders of the three organisations will also introduce new ideas about unity, loyalty and political tradition, which are

different from those that served to build and cement the Alliance. In this regard, it will also become increasingly difficult to have shared notions of what contribution to the struggle means and to find leaders who command support across the three organisations.

Fourth, the membership strength of the unions and COSATU as a whole will be a major determinant of what happens to the Alliance in the future. A weak COSATU can be ignored or bypassed and it will be convenient for its detractors inside the Alliance to accuse COSATU of being a labour aristocracy. A strong COSATU, on the other hand, will have clout and will be able to call the other parties to order when deemed necessary. That is why it was so psychologically and politically important for COSATU at its recent Central Committee to publicly brag that its membership continues to grow and has now reached the two million mark. Finally, it is not in the interest of the Alliance to be seen as a coalition of the corrupt, because that will tarnish all and erode the electoral support of the ANC. Thus, lack of action against corruption and corrupt leaders will eventually weaken the Alliance and discredit its leaders.

The post-Polokwane period has seen an enormous amount of political turbulence within the Tripartite Alliance of COSATU, the SACP and the ANC, making the situation too fluid to allow for prediction. What is clear, though, is that the five factors we have raised in the above conclusion could serve to intensify the political turbulence, thereby causing the entangled relationship to come unstuck. However, if the issues take a positive turn, they could serve to reduce the turbulence and strengthen the Alliance.

Notes

- 1 Majova Z, ANC set to show who's boss in the alliance, *The Sowetan*, 15 October 2009.
- 2 Majova Z, ANC set to show who's boss in the alliance, *The Sowetan*, 15 October 2009.
- 3 Mandela ponders some home truths, *Sunday Times*, 25 May 1997.
- 4 Omarjee H, COSATU whips Zuma into line, *Business Day*, 29 February 2008.
- 5 Frans Baleni cited in M Rossouw & M Letsoalo, Zuma and COSATU: the end of the affair, *Mail & Guardian*, 19 February 2010.
- 6 In 2011 Malema was suspended from the ANC for five years for ill-discipline. In 2012, this was followed by expulsion for further offences. Malema's position in the ANC Youth League and its mother body is extremely uncertain, but he is appealing against all the sentences.

- 7 Bell T, Debate needed on COSATU's SACP agenda, *Business Report*, 2 October 2009.
- 8 Vavi cited in C Du Plessis, Stop using us, Vavi tells ANC, *Independent Online (IOL)*, 1 April 2010. Accessed February 2011, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/stop-using-us-vavi-tells-anc-1.479159>
- 9 Irvin Jim cited in S Ngalwa S & M Monare, Zuma tricked us! – COSATU, *Independent Online (IOL)*, 28 February 2010. Accessed February 2012, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/zuma-tricked-us-cosatu-1.474755>

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Appendix

Taking democracy seriously: COSATU Worker's Survey data set 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008

General comments

This data set follows the structure of the questionnaire used in 1994, 1998, 2004 and 2008. However, for the 1998, 2004 and 2008 legs of the longitudinal study, the wording of certain questions was changed slightly and a few new questions were added. Note that, unless otherwise stated, the figures in this data set reflect the actual numbers of respondents for each question. The total sample for the three legs of the survey were 643 (1994), 639 (1998), 655 (2004) and 630 (2008). Where the totals in the tables fall short of these totals, it means either some respondents did not provide information or the response was invalid because of more than the required number of responses.

For easy reference, the numbering of questions and tables in this data set follows the numbering of questions in the 2008 version of the survey questionnaire. (Note that, except for Questions 15 and 87, open-ended and administration-type questions have been left out).

2. Name of COSATU union (2004 and 2008 only)

	2004	2008
CEPPWAWU	34	67
CWU	30	28
DENOSA	–	5
FAWU	48	29
NEHAWU	44	62
NUM	55	51
NUMSA	90	69
POPCRU	88	45
SAAPAWU	1	–
SACCAWU	40	50
SACTWU	80	59
SADTU	46	74
SAMWU	49	29
SASBO	10	13
SATAWU	20	49



COSATU'S CONTESTED LEGACY

	2004	2008
Other	15	-
Non-members	7	-

5. Name of COSATU region

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Gauteng	199	223	239	248
North West	13	-	43	21
KZN	116	123	103	113
E. Cape	206	166	129	133
W. Cape	109	127	141	115

Section A: Biographical information

7. Gender

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Male	411	448	430	393
Female	212	191	225	232

8. Are you a shop steward? (1998, 2004 and 2008)

	1998	2004	2008
Yes	153	171	160
No	486	481	447

11. Mother tongue (home language)

	1994	1998	2004	2008
IsiZulu	155	164	150	165
SeSotho	78	41	52	42
IsiXhosa	220	188	203	174
IsiNdebele	-	4	7	2
SePedi	-	41	44	48
SeTswana	13	24	39	36
XiTsonga	-	9	15	13
IsiSwati	-	7	3	6



	1994	1998	2004	2008
TshiVenda	–	1	6	14
English	65	64	54	57
Afrikaans	97	89	80	70
Other	13	7	2	1

12. *What is your nationality? (2008 only)*

	2008
South Africa	603
Mozambique	1
Lesotho	2
Swaziland	1
Asian	2
British	2
Not stated/refused to answer	19

13. *Highest educational level*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
No formal education	13	16	3	2
Grade 4 or lower	26	22	14	4
Grade 5–7	97	66	41	18
Grade 8–10	283	246	181	97
Grade 10–12	199	238	247	275
Technical diploma	18	31	83	111
University degree	0	14	45	79
Other post-school qualification	7	6	41	41

14. *Security of tenure (2004 and 2008 only)*

	2004	2008
Fixed term contract (temporary) part time	10	11
Fixed term contract (temporary) full time	30	35
Permanent contract part time	11	30
Permanent contract full time	604	544

15. *Who pays your wages (2008 only)*

	2008
Company/workplace	601
Third party	3
Labour broker	3

16. *What is your occupational category as defined by the company?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Unskilled	190	118	81	38
Semi-skilled	193	223	169	101
Skilled	135	192	275	240
Supervisor	26	31	61	47
Clerical	64	48	55	52
Professional	–	–	–	127
Other	32	21	13	17

18. *What is your age (category)?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
18–25	19	36	37	33
26–35	244	233	198	206
36–45	219	226	259	229
46–55	135	123	130	129
56–64	26	21	29	32
65+	–	–	2	–

21. *Are you a migrant worker (that is, did you move to the town or city from a rural town or village to find work)? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes	187
No	442

22. *If yes, do you support a household in your town or village of origin? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes	152
No	45

*Section B: Conception of trade union democracy**23. Do you have shop stewards in your workplace?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	637	623	627	606
No	6	11	16	10
Do not know	0	5	10	4

24. If yes, how did they become shop stewards?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Elected by workers	540	587	574	569
Appointed by union officials	86	17	15	15
Appointed by management	6	5	4	7
Other	6	2	3	1
Do not know	0	22	31	20

25. If elected, how often are elections for shop stewards held? (1998, 2004 and 2008 only)

	1998	2004	2008
More than once a year	8	17	18
Once a year	182	155	137
Once in two years	163	129	107
Once in three years	173	179	246
More than three years ago	15	56	44
Cannot remember/do not know	4	83	44

26. When did you last participate in electing your shop steward?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Never	52	49	55	39
Within the last year	388	27	287	313
1–2 years ago	122	128	96	136
More than 2 years ago	78	321	131	47
Cannot remember/do not know	0	81	52	20

27. *If you elected shop stewards, how did you elect them?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Show of hands	315	270	295	279
Secret ballot	276	321	294	279
Don't know	-	-	-	15

28. *When you elect a shop steward, that person ...*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
can represent your interests as s/he sees fit	167	190	113	118
can only do what the membership tells them to do	463	314	337	287
has discretion within a broad mandate	Not asked	127	176	185

29. *When you elect a shop steward ...*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
s/he must consult you every time s/he acts on behalf of workers	491	378	396	331
s/he must consult you from time to time on important issues	149	252	229	249
s/he does not have to consult you because s/he is elected to represent your interests	0	6	8	10

30. *When the shop steward acts on your behalf (2004 and 2008 only) ...*

	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
they must report back to workers every time	83	78.2
they must report back to workers only on important issues	17	20.0
they do not have to report back	-	0.6
not applicable	-	1.1

31. *If a shop steward does not do what the workers want, should the workers have a right to remove her/him?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	601	593	610	578
No	32	30	25	25
Do not know	0	16	13	9

32. *In your workplace, has a shop steward ever been removed by the workers?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	194	227	176	214
No	439	373	425	346
Do not know	0	33	43	49

33. *If yes, what was the main reason for the shop stewards being removed? (Only one answer.) (2004 and 2008 only)*

	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
Not doing their job properly	75	63.1
Too close to management	27	24.6
Different politics	7	4.6
Too close to union officials	2	–
Other (specify)	5	7.5

Note: In 2004, the question was: If yes, what were the reasons for the shop stewards being removed? (Indicate more than one, if necessary.)

34. *Have any shop stewards in your workplace been promoted into managerial positions? (2004 and 2008 only)*

	2004	2008
Yes	238	317
No	353	233
Do not know	52	59

35. *It is acceptable for shop stewards to be promoted into management. (2004 and 2008 only)*

	2004	2008
Strongly agree	179	199
Agree	208	192
Neutral	70	64
Disagree	90	72
Strongly disagree	98	83

36. *How often do you attend union meetings?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Never	90	59	51	47
Once a week	219	257	174	138
Once a month	277	225	291	296
Once a year	38	44	52	41
Twice a year	–	–	–	25
Do not know/cannot remember	26	37	60	60

37. *Have workers in this workplace been involved in any industrial action since 1994/1999/2004? (1998, 2004 and 2008 surveys)*

	1998	2004	2008
Yes	420	389	421
No	182	258	166

38. *If yes, please specify (more than one response possible). (2008 only)*

	2008
Workplace strike (supported by the union)	387
Workplace strike (not supported by the union)	24
None of the above	11
Do not know	3

39. *Did your union receive any support in that industrial action from any of the following (if applicable)? (1998, 2004 and 2008)*

	1998		2004		2008
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Community organisations (specify)	56	44	80	20	24
Other unions (specify)	60	40	69	31	144
Political parties (specify)	62	38	83	18	15
Other bodies (specify)	77	23	95	5	104

Note: More than one response possible. In 2008, the question was not formulated in a 'Yes/No' format

40. *Unions should have active links with community organisations/civil society groupings/ social movements. (2004 and 2008 only)*

	2004	2008
Strongly agree	392	361
Agree	180	162
Neutral	36	56
Disagree	28	35
Strongly disagree	16	10

41. *If you agree or strongly agree, specify which grouping(s) unions should have links to. (2004 and 2008)*

	Community-based organisations		Social movements		Political parties		Civil society	
	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008
Should have active links with	27	101	14	16	17	38	46	54
Did not mention	73	-	84	-	83	-	54	-

42. *How should women participate as candidates in union elections? (2008 only)*

	2008
Open elections	528
Quotas	58
Re-arranging electoral lists	14
None of the above	6
Women should not stand for union elections	16

43. *Do you have any of the following bodies for participation or communication with management in your workplace? (More than one response possible.) (1998, 2004, 2008)*

	1998 (%)		2004 (%)		2008 (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Workplace forum	40	52	39	61	11.7	-
Health and safety committee	n/a	n/a	70	30	26.2	-
Green areas/quality circles	n/a	n/a	27	73	1.1	-



Formal work teams (endorsed by management)	n/a	n/a	26	75	2.6	-
Other (specify)	n/a	n/a	10	90	48.0	-
None of the above	n/a	n/a			10.6	-

44. *Do you think these bodies give workers any influence over management's decision-making power? (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Very much	32	194
Somewhat	22	134
Neutral/do not know	20	60
A little	16	86
Not at all	10	84

45. *Have you participated in community protest action since 2004? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes	277
No	338
Do not know	7

46. *In relation to strikes, which of the statements do you agree with? (Provide only one answer.)*

	2008
There are times when it becomes necessary to use violence against non-striking workers	70
Violence is not acceptable, but non-striking workers should be taught a lesson in non-violent ways	184
Non-striking workers should be engaged with politically to convince them to join the strike	232
Non-striking workers should be left alone to go to work if they so decide	131

Section C: Union involvement in policy-making

47. *Workers cannot rely on political parties to protect their interests.*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Agree/ strongly agree	322	318	346	369



Neutral	77	52	63	40
Disagree/strongly disagree	238	183	228	213

48. *Workers will always need trade unions to protect their interests.*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Agree/ strongly agree	616	594	620	573
Neutral	6	26	17	22
Disagree/strongly disagree	19	19	17	28

49. *Elected political institutions (Parliament, provincial government, local government) are the best places (forums) to pursue worker interests.*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Agree/strongly agree	379	365	425	394
Neutral	90	92	61	80
Disagree/strongly disagree	482	182	167	153

Note: In 1994 and 1999 surveys, the statement read: Parliament is the best forum to pursue worker interests.

51. *Which of the following elected political institutions best serves worker interests? (Provide only one answer.) (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
National Parliament	122	105
Provincial Parliament	33	28
Local government	83	70
National and local government	54	41
National and provincial government	41	42
All of equal importance	262	232
None	117	101

52. *Are you involved in local government or community-based development initiatives (for example, ward committees)? (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Yes, as elected councillor	14	9
Yes, as union delegate	49	21
Yes, as community member	208	175
No	381	46

53. *Local government service delivery in my area is satisfactory and effective.*
(2004 and 2008)

	2004	2008
Strongly agree	92	69
Agree	171	136
Neutral	107	77
Disagree	167	192
Strongly disagree	117	150

54. *Do you think that women are reliable leaders or political decision-makers? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes	506
No	116
Do not know	1

55. *Women should be elected to leadership positions. (2008 only)*

	2008
Strongly agree	376
Agree	181
Neutral/do not know	21
Disagree	24
Strongly disagree	23

56. *Do you know what National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) is?*

	1994 (NMC)	1998	2004	2008
Yes	148	57	137	184
No	482	598	500	443

Note: In 1994, the question read: Do you know what National Manpower Commission (NMC) is?

57. *If yes, briefly describe it. (2004 only)*

NEDLAC	Percentage
Government, business and labour are members	28
Could not remember or had only heard of it	21
Deals with economic, business and labour issues	19



Represents worker interests	12
Business and labour are members	6
Government and labour are members	5
Settles labour disputes and gives permission to strike	3
Organisation for business	3
Union represents workers in it	2
Government organisation	2
Business and government are members	1
Total	100

58. *Have you ever been at a union meeting when there has been a report back on NEDLAC? (NMC in 1994)*

	1994 (NMC)	1998	2004	2008
Yes	84	186	133	80
No	553	427	478	107

59. *Do you think that NEDLAC is an important body through which COSATU can influence policy which is of direct importance to workers? (1998, 2004 and 2008)*

	1998	2004	2008
Yes	231	255	166
No	26	68	9
Do not know	325	285	11

60. *Do you know what the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	150	521	581	492
No	461	112	72	135

61. *If yes, then briefly describe it. (2004 only)*

RDP	Percentage
Helps previously disadvantaged or poor people	25
Provision of housing	24
Development and reconstruction	19
Provision of services, infrastructure and job creation	19



Could not remember or did not know	5
Job creation, skills development	4
Government policy	2
Ineffective, no longer implemented	1
Political party	1
Economic policy	1
TOTAL	100

62. Do you think that the government is achieving the goals of the RDP? (2004 and 2008)

	2004	2008
Yes	418	300
No	146	159
Do not know	80	33

63. Do you know what the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy is? (1998, 2004 and 2008)

	1998	2004	2008
Yes	231	208	156
No	321	427	472

64. If yes, briefly describe it. (2004 only)

GEAR	Percentage
Privatisation and job loss	28
Government's economic policy	14
Could not explain	9
Ineffective or bad for the poor	8
Privatisation	7
Job creation	6
Growth, improvement of economy	6
Job loss	5
Growth, employment and redistribution	5
Black empowerment and redistribution	4
Increases standard of living and services	3
Imposed by local or international elites	2
An organisation	2

65. *GEAR is achieving its goals of growth, employment and redistribution.*
(1998, 2004 and 2008)

	1998	2004	2008
Strongly agree	258	33	16
Agree	57	61	48
Neutral	84	263	25
Disagree	77	69	30
Strongly disagree	74	51	43

Section D: Workers' conception of political democracy

66. *Do you think that COSATU and its affiliates should send representatives (like they did in 1994) to National Parliament? (1998, 2004 and 2008)*

	1998	2004	2008
Yes	430	571	456
No	84	57	123
Do not know	124	23	46

Note: The question in 1998 read: Do you think COSATU decision to send representatives to National Parliament was the correct one?

67. *Do you think that COSATU and its affiliates should send representatives to Provincial Parliament? (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Yes	562	488
No	64	89
Do not know	25	49

68. *Do you think that COSATU and its affiliates should send representatives to local government? (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Yes	561	493
No	64	82
Do not know	24	48

69. Do you think that if COSATU representatives on elected political institutions do not do what workers want, they should be recalled/removed? (2004 and 2008)

	2004	2008
Yes, in the next election	368	352
Yes, through mass action	194	205
Not necessary	79	63

70. When you vote for a political party in an election:

	1994	1998	2004	2008
It must consult with its supporters on all issues	437	460	494	458
It must consult with its supporters only on important issues affecting them	180	159	123	134
It does not have to consult its supporters because it has been elected to represent their interests	19	17	35	29

71. When a party makes decisions in Parliament that affect its supporters, it must report back to the people who voted for it:

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Every time	437	416	488	465
Only on major issues	193	201	157	154
They do not have to report back	6	9	6	7

72. If the majority of people who vote for a party in an election are workers, then that party:

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Must represent only the interests of workers	32	54	40	85
Must represent the interests of all supporters, including those who aren't workers	399	392	378	360
Must represent the interests of all South Africans even if worker interests have to be sacrificed	206	191	233	178

73. *When you decide to vote for a particular party, which is the most important factor behind your decision?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
The leadership	87	73	217	82
The policies	498	160	212	222
Because the union advises you to	n/a	387	17	9
Because friends and family advise you to	n/a	n/a	1	
Because the community supports it	n/a	n/a	1	
Past performance	n/a	n/a	108	163
Loyal to a political tradition	n/a	n/a	63	131
None of the above	44	19	4	
Combination of the above	n/a	387	n/a	
Other				12

Note: In 1994, 1998 and 2004, workers were asked to rank their responses from 1 to 8. In 2008, workers were asked to give only one answer.

74. *Would you prefer to be represented by members in Parliament elected through a ... (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Party list (present system)	251	200
Constituency (local area – that is, someone from your area)	218	220
Mixed system (such as is the case with local government)	137	118
Don't know	43	83

Note: In 2008, workers were asked to give only one answer.

Section E: Perspectives on the 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2008 elections

75. *Do you think the party you intend voting for has worker interests at heart?*

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	585	509	492	473
No	45	36	86	71
Do not know	13	70	70	79

76. COSATU has entered into an alliance with the ANC and SACP to contest the 1994/1999/2004/2009 elections. What do you think of this arrangement?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
It is the best way of serving workers interests in Parliament	527	446	427	384
Worker interests in Parliament should be represented by the SACP alone	13	22	23	22
COSATU should not be aligned with any political party	97	85	114	130
Another party could better serve worker interests (not asked in 1994)	n/a	6	14	12
Workers should form their own political party (not asked in 1994)	n/a	22	39	19
Do not know (not asked in 1994)	n/a	55	34	55

77. Do you think that this alliance should continue and contest the election after 1994/1999/2004/2009?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
Yes	489	407	417	390
No, COSATU should not be aligned to any political party (1998, 2004 and 2008)	n/a	19	98	123
No, COSATU would be better off forming its own party	90	62	42	26
I think that COSATU should maintain its alliance with the SACP only (1998, 2004 and 2008)	n/a	27	26	11
I think COSATU should maintain its alliance with the ANC only (1998, 2004 and 2008)	n/a	41	25	14
Do not know (1998, 2004 and 2008)	n/a	76	42	59
Should form an alliance with another party or parties (1994 only)	5	n/a	n/a	n/a

78. Which party are you going to vote for in the forthcoming national elections?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
ANC	481	474	472	357



	1994	1998	2004	2008
AZAPO	6	1	1	2
Democratic Alliance/Party	6	3	6	20
Inkatha Freedom Party	0	6	8	2
New National Party	31	25	8	n/a
PAC	5	4	5	2
UDM	n/a	19	3	5
Independent Democrats	n/a	n/a	3	6
Do not intend to vote	12	68	30	40
Other	6	5	8	44
Would not say	96	104	104	144

79. Which party are you going to vote for in the forthcoming (1995/2000/2005/2010) provincial elections?

	1994	1998	2004	2008
ANC	469	468	468	353
AZAPO	0	1	1	4
Democratic Alliance/Party	6	7	6	21
Inkatha Freedom Party	6	7	9	4
New National Party	31	22	8	n/a
PAC	5	4	6	3
UDM	n/a	24	3	5
Independent Democrats	n/a	n/a	5	6
Do not intend to vote	19	70	30	39
Other	6	4	8	42
Would not say	96	26	99	149

80. Are you a member of the political party you are going to vote for in the 2009 national elections? (2008 only)

	2008
Yes, signed-up member	245
Yes, paid-up member	84
No	250

81. *Have you attended a branch meeting of your political party in the last year? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes	273
No	337

82. *Are you a member of the SACP? (2008 only)*

	2008
Yes, signed-up member	104
Yes, paid-up member	40
No	472

Section F: Political programmes and workers' expectations of the system delivering

83. *Have any of the following services been provided or improved since the 1994/1998/2004 elections in your area? (Workers were asked to answer YES or NO to each item. The percentages presented in this table are for the YES answers.)*

	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
Better housing	91	59	61	57
Higher wages	72	45	37	29
Access to land	81	60	58	43
Access to clean water	82	87	87	84
Access to electricity	72	88	87	82
Access to a telephone	79	83	82	67
Better public transport (not covered in 1994 survey)	n/a	63	61	57
Enough nutritional food	77	62	54	46
Access to better health care	87	71	58	56
Access to education and training	90	68	68	64
A clean and healthy working and living environment	86	71	63	63
Jobs (not covered in 1994 or 1998 surveys)	n/a	n/a	17	29
Provision of HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support (not covered in 1994 or 1998 surveys)	n/a	n/a	49	64

Note: The question in 1994 read: Once a new government is in power, will they be able to improve your life in the next five years through provision of the following?

84. *In which of the following areas would you like to see improvements after elections? (2004 and 2008)*

	Highest figure indicates most important improvement desired	
	2004	2008
Better housing	154	89
Higher wages	106	162
Access to land	27	22
Access to clean water	27	6
Access to electricity	9	5
Access to a telephone	6	8
Better public transport	7	4
Enough nutritional food	16	89
Access to better health care	30	24
Access to education and training	38	39
A clean and healthy working and living environment	14	16
Jobs	203	120
Provision of HIV/AIDS treatment, education and support	83	75
Other (specify)	–	5

Note: In 2004, workers were asked to rank their responses in order of importance from 1–14. In 2008, workers were asked to choose only one answer.

85. *If the government elected in the next elections fails to deliver most of these benefits, will workers ...*

	1994 (%)	1998 (%)	2004 (%)	2008 (%)
Put pressure on unionists in Parliament	66	89	86	23.5
Vote for another party in the next election	40	68	43	20.4
Form an alternative party that will provide these benefits to workers	39	65	39	6.1
Participate in ongoing mass action to force the government to deliver on its promises	70	75	71	39.1
Do nothing	4	20	7	3.9

Note: In 1994, 1998 and 2004, workers were given the option to give more than one answer. In 2008, workers were asked to choose only one answer.

86. *What should the primary goal of black economic empowerment be? (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Promote greater black ownership of companies	130	96
Promote small business	69	81
Increase the number of black managers	29	48
Empower workers through skill development	336	316
Greater state control of the economy	64	46
Other	16	26

87. *Which leader in South Africa represents worker interests best? (Only responses of 5 and above are listed in this table.) (2004 and 2008)*

	2004	2008
Nelson Mandela	127	20
Zwelinzima Vavi	100	176
Blade Nzimande	62	23
Thabo Mbeki	47	15
Willie Madisha	38	17
Membathisi Mdladlana	35	–
Mbazima Shilowa	31	9
Cyril Ramaphosa	16	9
Shop steward	–	8
Tony Leon	7	–
Gwede Mantashe	–	7
Kgalema Motlanthe	–	7
Gedleyihlekisa Zuma	5	84
Helen Zille	–	5
Pratricia de Lille	5	–
Jay Naidoo	5	–
Would not say	99	–
COSATU	5	–

Note: In 2008, the question read: Which leader represents worker interests best?

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