Youth and trade unions

Case study in a post-conflict country as Colombia

Author: Marcia Munoz
Supervisor: Anders Høg Hansen
ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explain how interpretations and perception of unions differ depending on the age of the audience as well as identifying what kind of development ideas and visions are detectable in union communication and practices. The paper also examines to which extent unions tries to rejuvenate themselves and how they relate with gender issues. The case of the Colombian central union organization, CUT, is used as an example of a trade union.

Within the framework of theories related to intergenerational value changes, rejuvenation and gender discourse two different analysis are made. The first one being a textual analysis of the unions communication and the second one being a qualitative survey analysis of perceptions of unions by youth. These two analyses are made separately to subsequently proceed to merge the two and discuss how they interact with each other.

The results of this research show that the perceptions of unions among youth is more negative in comparison to the perception of an older generation even though the respondents did feel represented by the unions work and shared many of the development-related issues mentioned by the unions communication. Intergenerational value change is a theory applied in this research that could be an answer to youth low affiliation to unions because of their hierarchical structures but was however an explanation notable when it comes to differences in value priorities, where the priorities between the target groups were not radically different.

Key words: trade unions, youth, Colombia, intergenerational value changes

Words: 12 274
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................2

Table of contents.................................................................................................................................3

1. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................................................................4
   1.1 Purpose and research question.....................................................................................................5
   1.2 Disposition....................................................................................................................................5

2. TRADE UNIONS IN A COLOMBIAN CONTEXT.................................................................6
   2.1 Trade unions and social development.......................................................................................6
   2.2 Young members and rejuvenation of trade unions.................................................................7
   2.3 Trade unions in a Colombian context.......................................................................................8
   2.4 Youth and trade unions in Colombia.........................................................................................9

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.................................................................................................11
   3.1 Communication for Development............................................................................................11
   3.2 Rejuvenation and political participation..................................................................................11
   3.3 Gender in development discourse............................................................................................14

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.......................................................................................15
   4.1 Textual Analysis.........................................................................................................................15
   4.2 Qualitative Survey Research.....................................................................................................17
   4.3 Sample of respondents...............................................................................................................17

5. ANALYSIS......................................................................................................................................18
   5.1 How development, rejuvenation and gender is apparent in unions com...............................18
   5.2 Perception of unions according to Colombian youth.............................................................22
   5.3 Perception of unions according to an older generation in Colombia.....................................26

6. DISCUSSION.................................................................................................................................31
   6.1 Intergenerational comparison of perceptions towards unions.................................................31
   6.2 Relating with rejuvenation and gender.....................................................................................34

7. CONCLUSION.................................................................................................................................35

8. LITTERATURE REVIEW.................................................................................................................37

APPENDIX I........................................................................................................................................40

APPENDIX II......................................................................................................................................42
1. INTRODUCTION

Colombia has the last 50 years experienced a history of an internal armed conflict affecting the whole country economically, culturally and socially. Armed conflicts and other types of calamities intensify youth’s vulnerability, especially within the labor market. In addition to this situation, Colombia is a country that has many times been named as the most dangerous country in the world for workers seeking to exercise their freedom to form unions.

Trade Unions main goal is to work for good working conditions and to forward the employees interests and needs. Historically, worker movements have played a crucial role in making workplaces safer and to develop social welfare. Good working conditions is an important requirement for sustainable development also in the future which makes union organizations a possible “tool” to increase social development. However, the scale of unionizations globally is decreasing and especially among youth. Trade union organizations find difficulties in reaching a younger generation and among other things do their traditional structure does not encourage youth to join. How can unions continue to be a development promoter if they do not have the support of a younger and future generation?

Colombia is in the range of the countries with the lowest rate of unionization of the world. Violence, anti-union legislation and reforms of labor law have led to a weakening of union organizations which in 2012 only have a combined organizational rate of 870 000 unionized people in Colombia which is less than 5% of the economically active population. Hence, also youth participation is very weak among union organizations in Colombia whose affiliation of young people in many cases is reduced to 4% of the unions members or is completely null.

Rejuvenation of society and societal structures is part of generation changes were young people can be understood as group that forms new values and who, through active participation in social life changes societies. Sinnott and Lyons (2003) identify age as an indicator of generational mobilization or demobilization and argue that different generations acquire habits of political participation or non-participation early in life and carry those habits forward into later life. In this investigation theories related to rejuvenation, inspired by Inglehart (1997) are being used as framework. Inglehart argues that value priorities in advanced industrial societies will tend to shift away from materialist concerns about economic and physical security toward greater emphasis on postmaterialist values such as freedom, self-expression, and the quality of life. According to him, this could explain the generational changes in political participation.
since younger generations have become more inclined to participate in issue politics and new social movements rather than hierarchical organizations. Could this be the case of Colombia and the low youth involvement in trade union organizations?

Another interesting approach is how Colombian trade unions include a gender approach in their communication and how they, pushing for development, engage, communicate and practice with gender issues. According to Smyth (2007) development organizations have transformed their gender approach from being a disturbing side-issue to now use it and misuse it to an extent that the word has lost its meaning. How do Colombian trade unions relate to this issue and how to they include a gender perspective in their work?

1.1 Purpose and research question

The aim of this research is to investigate how development-related issues are being communicated by union organizations in order to engage a younger generation using the case of the largest central trade union in Colombia, CUT Colombia. As well as identifying differences in union engagement and perceptions of unions and development-related priorities comparing Colombian youth to an older generation of Colombians.

- What kind of development ideas and visions are detectable in union communication and practices? How/to which extent does unions try to rejuvenate themselves? And how are genders represented in their communication?
- How does youth interpret the development visions of the unions? Do the interpretations and perception of unions differ depending on the age of the audience?

The methods used in this investigation will both be textual analysis in order to discuss the unions development-related communication as well as qualitative surveys with relevant target groups for the research. The data collection of this research is mostly gathered through and during a field trip to Colombia in April 2018.

1.2 Disposition

The study starts by explaining the existing research and literature about the area and context of study being trade unions, Colombia and rejuvenation among trade unions in a Colombian context. Following a theoretical background focusing on development, rejuvenation and gender. The third section will outline the choice of method used for this study, including the methodological framework and sample of respondents. The analysis that follows, is divided by
first include the textual analysis and later the results from the qualitative surveys. Both of the analysis will be merged in a following and finally a conclusion and reference list.

2. TRADE UNIONS IN A COLOMBIAN CONTEXT

Before presenting the theoretical and methodological frameworks used to carry out this study it is important to begin with a brief historical and contextual background of unions development work and youth involvement in a Colombian context.

2.1 Trade unions and social development

In the recent decades, globalization has changed the global labor market. The labor force has become more mobile and industrialization has accelerated in several developing countries. An increased trade favors economic growth in the world, but there are also major challenges. The economic gaps have increased within countries and many people still live in deep poverty. In order to reduce the world's injustices, an inclusive and long-term sustainability is needed, economic growth as well as full and productive employment with decent working conditions for all (Union to Union, 2015).

Good working conditions is an important requirement for sustainable development and has now also gained a central role in the UN's Global Development Goal, the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda consist of 17 goals, many of which have direct contact points with work conditions. But also, a vision of worthy work for all through education and lifelong learning; in addition to being able to offer youth working possibilities, and equal conditions for men and women. Goal 8 in the 2030 Agenda, good work and economic growth, raise questions about living wages, reasonable working conditions, safe working environment, social security networks and equal pay for equal work and establishes that stronger efforts are needed to end slave and child labor. Goal 8 also addresses major highly current issues such as migrant workers situation, especially for women in informal economy (United Nations, 2017).

Historically, worker movements have played a crucial role in making workplaces safer and to develop social welfare. Brugiavini et al. (2001) see unions as the pioneers to the modern welfare state. They write on p. 163 that unions developed mutual insurance as part of associational self-help to compensate for the lack of private insurance or public social protection. At the same time, they mobilised [...] for the expansion of social rights. Increasingly, many of the protective functions that unions provided [...] came to be taken over by the state (Donado & Wälde, 2012). A by now well accepted argument was made by Freeman and Medoff (1984): by providing a collective voice, unions provide information which otherwise would not be available.
Malcomson (1983) argues that unions increase efficiency as they improve the allocation of risk bearing between firms and workers. Acemoglu et al. (2001) argue that unions induce training and provide insurance (Donado & Wälde, 2012). Hence, there are many examples of workers movements increasing safety and general development for their workers and for society.

The basis for all union work is organization. With more knowledgeable, active and committed members, trade unions have greater opportunities to negotiate successfully, make good collective agreements and succeed in influencing. To negotiate collective agreements with employers is a human right and one of the strongest tools for creating better working conditions, both for a country and in the world (Union to Union, 2018). But in many countries, it is difficult to use your right of organization, and knowledge is needed to be a good negotiator. To create a sustainable society, with wages and other working conditions which works to live, the unions need to work to influence other actors, like governments and multinational companies (Union to Union, 2018).

Strengthening trade unions also means giving support so that they can achieve one increased internal capacity. It may be to help build systems for administration of membership registers, improved strategic planning, increased transparency and internal democracy so that the trade unions represent all its members (Union to Union, 2018).

2.2 Young members and rejuvenation of trade unions

Increased problems to recruit union members and changing composition of its potential and actual membership pose major challenges to today’s union movements in for example Europe and elsewhere. Over the last two decades, trade unions have been facing major difficulties in recruiting members. Since the 1980s, union density declined in all but a few European countries (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 2000).

Explanations for ‘de-unionization’ such as the decline in union membership and density, as well as cross-national variations in ‘union strength’ have been manifold, stressing structural, cyclical, and institutional factors (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 1999; Wallerstein and Western, 2000). Long-term socio-economic changes make collective organization more difficult: deindustrialization and the growth of private services; white-collar, atypical, and part-time employment; changes in normative orientation from collectivism towards individualism (Bernhard Ebbinghaus, 2002).
The ageing of union membership is not merely the result of demographic shifts; it also results from the failure to mobilize young people. Today’s low mobilization will thus have consequences for decades to come, especially since the well-organized associates will soon retire. The low membership among young workers should cause concern about the future membership development. For many of these young people, unions seem to be rather old-fashioned movements that are certainly less attractive than ‘new’ social movements (Bernhard Ebbinghaus, 2002). Since current young affiliates are relatively small, union officials may not see the immediate effect of recruitment efforts, though this reinforces the problem of low representation (Bernhard Ebbinghaus, 2002). Moreover, the majority of union members, congress delegates, and union officials seem to be older than ‘40-something’. In countries where youth unemployment, atypical work, and low levels of training are problems, young people will be less willing to commit themselves to long-term membership (Bernhard Ebbinghaus, 2002).

2.3 Trade Unions in a Colombian context
The recognition of trade unions in Colombia is marked by a tendency to invade civil and political liberties (Rosado Duque, 2005). At the beginning of the 20th century the country began to grow economically, encouraging growth of capital, exports and industrialization. At the time, small worker organizations with ideological foundations starts to form across the country (Urrutia, 1978). The word "Union" appears for the first time in Law 83 of 1931, after the trade union movement faced a stage of stigmatization and in the 40s Colombia experienced the expansion of syndicalism (Rosado Duque, 2005). Two main organizations dominated the union landscape by then: the CTC, of liberal affiliation, and the UTC of conservatism affiliation (Ostau de Lafont, 2012).

Past the fifties, characterized by military dictatorships, partisan violence and the beginning of the armed conflict, independent trade unionism started to create which would later be the start of the creation of the CUT. The Unified Workers Central Organization, CUT was funded as a unity project in 1986 and is today the largest union central organization in Colombia, both by quantity of members and affiliated associations. The CUT was created in a context marked by the distrust of workers towards the two main trade union central organizations by that time, named CTC and UTC which were accused of being pro-government and employers in a polarized time in the country.

The trade unionism in Colombia is not encouraging argues Cortés et al (2015). According to the National Trade Union School (2014), in December 2012 there were around 870 000
unionized people in Colombia which is less than 5% of the economically active population. This percentage is much lower than what is registered in other countries with strong presence of neoliberalism, like Chile, with the 12% unionization (Soto & Gaete, 2013). The decreasing affiliation of Unions in Colombia and elsewhere could be seen as a hindrance for Unions to continue being a possible development “tool” in society as they have been historically.

Despite the low affiliation, union organizations are still the most representative associations and the type of social movement most controlled by the Colombian State and stigmatized by the citizens. In addition, at least 1,800 trade unionists have been killed since 1991; according to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 80% of trade unionists that die violently in the world are Colombians (Rosado Duque, 2005). That reality, in addition to the current working conditions, tending to accentuate young people, generates difficulties to guarantee the growth of unions and their generational renewal (Cortés et al.,2015).

In Colombia, 50% of the unions are grouped into three trade union centers: the Central Union of Workers CUT (being the largest one, concentrating 65% of all unionized workers), the CGT General Confederation of Workers, and the Confederation of Workers of Colombia, CTC. However, Colombia is in the range of the countries with the lowest rate of unionization of the world. While the international trend is pointing to a decrease in the rate of unionization, Colombia that has seen this indicator being reduced from levels nearby 20% in the 70's, has always maintained a level well below the levels of the neighboring countries (Castaño, 2012). The violence against the union has fallen in recent years, but Colombia is still one of the most dangerous countries in the world for trade unions.

Historically trade unions have actively participated in spaces of agreement, but always with a high portion of distrust which does not allow real advances. Guirnazo et al. (2009) argue that the Unions own persistent perceptions of their real participation and bargaining possibilities is low and mostly done for the protocol.

2.4 Youth and trade Unions in Colombia

Armed conflicts and other types of crises intensify youth’s vulnerability. Young people are often the first to be laid off and most unlikely to find work. They may become idle and frustrated and resort to subsistence work in the informal economy. Furthermore, crises lead to a breakdown of social support systems and guidance. Education and training programs are sometimes disrupted for long periods. Moreover, family and community networks may have weakened. The accumulation of these factors risks pushing young people into the vicious circle
of poverty and social exclusion and makes them vulnerable for recruitment into armed forces and gangs (Achio & Specht, 2003). Yet youth frequently appear as important social actors in crises. They are among the most visible members of society, often at the front of social movements. By disapproving injustices and demanding changes, they can be key representatives of society in crises response. Also, they are potentially the strongest workforce. At the same time, if left unattended, they can become more radical and disruptive (ILO, 2003).

Conflict response must therefore deal with youths in different roles, as victims, as a potentially destabilizing element in society and as a potentially important contributing group to reconstruction. Their energy and ability to mobilize themselves and other sections of society should be channeled towards recovery and peace building. Youth must be integrated into the reconstruction, peace building and long-term development post-conflict society (ILO, 2003).

Colombia has the last 50 years experienced a history of an internal armed conflict causing the whole country an economic, cultural and social damage. After almost four years of negotiations between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forced of Colombia (FARC), a peace agreement has been concluded. Colombia is today entering a post-conflict period with many social and structural challenges crucial to the success of the process: as for example how to ensure youth enter the labor market and secure a good social and economic development in Colombia in the future. Colombian trade unionism faces a series of elements that hinder their work and even more its expansion. A change in generations is not perceived in the unions which could be a natural path to an organizational modernization and opportunity to develop the unions in the new social context.

Between the 1950s and 1980s, Colombian trade unionism experienced a process of growth and consolidation. In particular, youth was present in the bases and in the union leadership, with a high degree of commitment and social solidarity, collective action strategies and different levels of unity (Lopez Cortés et al., 2015). However, since 1990 the outlook has changed radically. While in 1984, 10 out of every 100 workers in Colombia belonged to a union, in 1990 the number was reduced to 8 (Rios, 1992), and currently it barely reaches 5. Likewise, youth participation is no longer massive in unionism, whose affiliation of young people reaches maximum 30% and in many cases, it is reduced to 4% of the unions total member base or is completely null (Rios, 1992).
3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND
This section will start by explaining key concepts and theoretical background focusing on development, rejuvenation and gender. This investigation focuses on unions as development movements and analyze the way they communicate and how their communication is perceived by youth in Colombia and hence relevant of interest to the field of Communication for Development. The unions have a great importance and contributions historically to the development of societies concentrating on labor rights and good working conditions. Unions are not only organizations but rather seen as classical institutions that have been part of a society for a long time working and pushing for changes in society and people resulting in societal development within many different areas. The unions historical significance is clear, however, their contemporary significance may be contextual and vary depending on different situation and backgrounds. Following comes key concepts of relevance to unions contemporary significance used as theoretical framework in this investigation.

3.1 Communication for Development
In order to understand how development-related issues are being communicated by unions it is important to understand the concept of development. Development can be defined as "...the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement" (Pieterse, 2010: 3). These interventions and improvement varies depending on e.g. culture, relations of power, historical context and class. The definition, or idea, of development has varied over time. Depending on time and theory there are different dimensions of development. Historical and political contexts matter, as well as representation and the cultural preferences.

*Development* is commonly identified by theorists and policy makers with material progress and improved living standards and is generally regarded a desirable object. The matters of debate have rather been how these goals are best achieved, who should be the primary beneficiaries and what stands in the way of development (Schech & Haggis, 2000). The definition of development can be seen as closely related to the broader definition of modernization, as a process of economic and social change (Schech & Haggis, 2000). In this investigation the aim is to identify what kind of development ideas and visions are detectable in union communication and practices.

3.2 Rejuvenation and political participation
Participation is not a static concept but has been periodic and changing with developments in social theory and research. The varying practices of civic engagement have also affected the
ways in which participation has been understood and conceptualized (Forbrig, 2005). Political theory offers various classifications of the forms of citizen participation in solving social problems (Verba, Nie & Kim 1978 and Bottomore 1993). The concept of the modes of democratic participation (Kaase 1990) is highly relevant to the study of youth involvement in politics.

The new developments in the concept of participation from the perspective of political theory are strongly related to the understanding of values and behaviors central among youth. Political science most often takes youth as an age group, a unit like others or at best the least experienced unit and portraits young people as the ones who are most likely to see politics as boring and irrelevant to their lives (White, Bruce & Ritchie 2000). It is the youngest age group among entitled voters who are the least likely to vote in elections (Sinnott & Lyons 2003). Youth is the age unit predisposed to alternative political participation (Dalton 1988; Kaase 1990). Another understanding of the specificity of youth, widespread with political science researchers, is that of generation. According to Ingleheart (1997), the young generation is showing the way to the value change toward post-materialism in advanced societies. Likewise, Putnam (2000) explains the deterioration in civic participation and social capital as a generation change. Sinnott and Lyons (2003) identify age as an indicator of generational mobilization or demobilization and argue that different generations acquire habits of political participation or non-participation early in life and carry those habits forward into later life. This bonds in with Mannheim’s concept of generations (Mannheim 1952). Young people are influenced by the important historic events which took place during their formative years – the period when they became politically aware.

Unlike the standard concepts of youth participation as a passive process of development and integration into societal structures, youth researchers in communist eastern Europe in the 1980s connected it to the concept of “juventisation” (Forbrig, 2005). Mahler (1983) and Mitev (1982) presented an explanation of youth as an active and devoted group and described participation as a two-way process: interaction rather than integration, a development of both young people and society. From this perspective young people were seen as the group who formed new values and who, through their active participation in social life, changed and “rejuvenated” society hence, the effect of youth participation was societal innovation (Forbrig, 2005). Norris (2002) argues that political participation has undergone a significant transformation – from involvement interest groups to new social movements, from conventional repertoires to protest politics, and from state orientation to a multiplicity of target agencies, both profit and private.
Modern developments in democracy theory link the rise of new patterns of political participation to post-materialism, civil society, and democratic governance and the changing dimensions of political participation to a cultural shift in society (Kovacheva, 2005). Inglehart (1997) argues that social trends in post-industrial society have brought about the replacement of the old materialist values, associated with security and authority, by post-materialist values associated with higher concern for the environment, human rights, gender equality, individual autonomy and self-expression. Inglehart (1997) argues that while voter turnout has declined together with support for the old-type hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations, younger generations have become more inclined to participate in issue politics, new social movements, transnational advocacy networks and other “elite-challenging forms of political participation” (Inglehart, 1997: 296).

Inglehart argues that value priorities in advanced industrial societies will tend to shift away from materialist concerns about economic and physical security toward greater emphasis on freedom, self-expression, and the quality of life – postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1971). Further he argues that the growth of postmaterialist values appears to have contributed to a decline of social class voting, and to the rise of new social movements, particularly environmentalist movements and parties. Changing value significances may be reshaping the nature of political cleavages and the political sense of left and right, giving rise to a new politics axis (Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). This new axis cuts cross the traditional left-right map, characterized by radical reform parties and movements at one pole and right authoritarian parties and movements at the other. Inglehart (1990) argue that weakening party loyalties and low voter turnout partly reflects the established parties’ failure to offer meaningful choices about the new politics issues. Earlier researchers (Böltken and Jagodzinki 1985; van Deth 1983) have argued that differences between the basic values of the old and the young were merely due to life-cycle effects, rather than intergenerational change.

Although generational replacement is likely to push post materialism upward, Inglehart argues that economic forces can affect value change since intergenerational value differences reflect a societies rate of economic growth and hence security. War, domestic upheaval and ethnic conflicts can also have a major impact on feelings of security, but because they tend to be situation-specific (and are less readily quantified) they are more difficult to analyze empirically (Inglehart & Abramson, 1994). This becomes interesting in the Colombian context since the country the last years have undergone a rapid economic and social growth and is now in
transition towards a peace process after 50 years of internal conflicts which most credibly affects the population’s feelings of security and further value changes.

### 3.3 Gender in development discourse

Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable and peaceful development. The concept of gender and theories about gender equality in development include a broad range of areas. In this research I will however only focus on how gender is used in development organizations discourse in order to apply these theory to my own textual analysis.

If communication is important, silences are important too and a reflection of what is excluded from daily interactions, both verbal and written, among development practitioners and policy makers. Smyth (2007) argue that the last 30 years concerns about “gender issues” have shifted from being seen as “a minor but irritating diversion from the more urgent questions of poverty and globalization, to be a lingua franca in which so many actors appear to be fluent” (pp. 583). She means that the terminology associated with “gender”, though visible everywhere, remains problematic since some terms are almost entirely absent, while others are used loosely and inappropriately with carefully developed and much debated concepts completely lost, so words are left empty of meaning (Smyth, 2007).

The word gender itself is a widely used and often misunderstood term (Momsen 2004) and often used to mean “women”. The transition that seems to have occurred in this case is one that gradually has eroded any meaning from the term gender which makes It appear in the most inappropriate places and manners (Smyth, 2007). Another word often used in gender discourses is “empowerment” which has transformed from the seventeenth-century meaning of delegation and granting license (Pieterse, 2003) to its opposite meaning of self-generated positive change. When the concept of empowerment is used, the importance is often on the idea of processes leading to broader outcomes but Smyth (2007) argues that there are, however, two common problems with the way the term is used. The first one being the term easily becoming too broad and generalized and the second, more common, problem occurs especially within development agencies as attempting to “operationalize” the term and shift focus from empowerment as process to empowerment as a product. Feminist analysts have criticized this focus on outcomes and as Mosedale (2005a: 244) highlights “empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a product. There is no final goal. One does not arrive at a stage of being empowered in some absolute sense. People are empowered, or disempowered, relative to others or, importantly, relative to themselves at a previous time”. According to Smyth (2007) there is still a resounding
silence around words such as feminism and feminist. Even though feminist-inspired work can take place even if such explicit language as feminist, feminists and feminism are absent in the discourse of development organizations.

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This section explains the methods being used in this study in order to draw conclusions based on the theoretical framework and existing research presented above. Two different methods are being used in this study in order to answer the two research questions, the first one related to how development issues are being present in unions communication and the second one related to understanding the perception of unions by Colombians comparing a young target group to an older target group to identify differences.

4.1 Textual analysis

The first part to be explored in this investigation is the unions own material in to analyze how development related issues are represented in the material. The aim is to find an answer to the first question: What kind of development ideas and visions are detectable in union communication and practices? How/to which extent does unions try to rejuvenate themselves? And how are genders represented in their communication?

The methodology used at this part is textual analysis, a way of gathering and analyzing information in academic research. McKee explains (2001) that when we apply textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text, as a simplistic definition. In order to understand the role that media play in our lives and precisely how its messages participate in the cultural construction of our view of the world, then we have to understand what meanings audiences are making of media, for example television programs, films, newspapers, magazines and radio programs – in short, of texts (McKee, 2001).

As applying the method of textual analysis it is important to acknowledge that there is no single correct interpretation of a text, but several feasible interpretations of the same text by different groups and contexts. When we apply textual analysis to a television program, or a magazine, or a song, we are not trying to find the ‘correct’ interpretation of it – because: there is no such thing as a single, ‘correct’ interpretation of any text. There are large numbers of possible interpretations, some of which will be more likely than others in particular circumstances (Morley, 1980). McKeen (2001) emphasizes the importance and understanding of context as
trying to make sense of a text and explains that in order to understand how a text might be interpreted the first question that needs to be asked is, interpreted by whom and in what context since that is what ties down the interpretations of a text. If you put a text into a completely different context, where it is interpreted alongside different texts, then it will likely be interpreted in a completely different way (McKeen, 2001).

Textual analysis is only one way of approaching media texts to try to understand their meaning. There are other methods that are more standardized, quantitative (using numbers rather than words) and replicable (able to produce the exactly the same results every time) such as for example content analysis. However, there are many advantages to the less ‘scientific’ approach of textual analysis such as it is responsive to nuanced and complex way in which interpretations of a text can be produced.

In this study I have chosen to limit my samples to two different medias, the first one being the Unions own created newspaper where I have limited myself to the news released so far year 2018 since I believe it reflects an actualized part of the unions’ main contemporary areas of work. In addition to that I have also chosen to analyze a video produced by the union summarizing the last 30 years¹ since I believe it will give a good overview of the organizations historical areas of interest. Both medias will be analyzed using the following theoretical framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text and issue date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs of rejuvenation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P6d1Oi9ZaE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P6d1Oi9ZaE)
4.2 Qualitative Survey Research

In order to answer the second research question of this study: *How does youth interpret the development visions of the unions? Do the interpretations and perception of unions differ depending on the age of the audience?* the method of qualitative survey is being used.

The word survey refers to the study of a population through observation of its members and in modern times, most surveys use a sample of members to measure population characteristics. Groves et al (2004, p.4) defines surveys as a “systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members”. This reflects that in general methodology the word survey only covers quantitative studies that primarily aim at describing numerical distributions of variables in the population where statistical representativeness of the sample, data quality and precision of estimates (confidence limits), are the main issues (Jansen, 2010). However, there is also a qualitative way of defining and investigating variation in population that does not aim at establishing frequencies, means or other parameters but at determining the diversity of some topic of interest within a given population. This type of survey does not count the number of people with the same characteristic (value of variable) but it establishes the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values) within that population. In other words: a survey is a qualitative survey if it does not count the frequencies of categories (/values), but searches for the empirical diversity in the properties of members.

There is a distinction between open (or inductive) and pre-structured (or deductive) qualitative surveys (Stenius and Cunnington, 1972). In the open or inductive survey, relevant topics, dimensions (aspects of objects, variables) and categories (values at dimensions) are identified through interpretation of raw data (e.g. interview transcripts). In the pre-structured survey, some main topics, dimensions and categories are defined beforehand and the identification of these matters in the research units is guided by a structured protocol for questioning or observation. In this qualitative survey a pre-structured method is being used since the diversity to be studied is defined beforehand and the aim of descriptive analysis is only to see which of the predefined characteristics exist empirically in the population under study (Janssen, 2010).

4.3 Sample of respondents

The surveys were carried out in a shorter field study to Colombia in April 2018. For the period of the field study my first intention was to carry out focus group interviews, but considering the time limitations and unfortunate miscommunication with participants
concerning time planning, a qualitative survey was the method I considered most suitable. Since the research focuses on comparing different audience perception of unions and their communication of development related issues the sample of respondents will be divided by youth being under 35 years old and the rest will be mentioned as an older generation.

The “snowball selection” is the technique used in this study in order to find respondents. This is a technique where the units of analysis we find can help us find other units that in turn help us find additional new units and so on (Esaiasson 2012: 188). Due to the limitation of networks and time, I considered this method to be the most suitable to use in order to carry out this research. The disadvantages of using a snowball selection is that the sample is influenced by only including respondents from certain subset of the population which limits the possibilities to generalize the findings (Ibid.) The intention with this research is however not to achieve a representative sample to generalize the results but to detect possible differences between these groups.

5. ANALYSIS

The analysis is structured in specific way since it first starts with the analysis of the unions’ material using the textual analysis method and continues with the second part being the qualitative survey analysis collected in Colombia.

5.1 How development, rejuvenation and gender is apparent in unions’ communication

The material chosen to analyze are the Colombian Central Trade Unions newsletter issued so far year 2018 to emphasize the unions most contemporary work highlighting recent news and current topics of priority. A YouTube video celebrating CUTs last 30 years is also being used in the analysis in order to acquire a more historical perspective of the unions work and the way they communicate it themselves.

Following the analyze based on the theoretical framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development issues</th>
<th>Themes detected: Artificial intelligence and technology, economic growth and natural resources, gender equality, poverty reduction, peace building, democratization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1 https://cut.org.co/informativo-cut-119/
| Signs of rejuvenation | The theme of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2018 was *Healthy and safe generation - improve the safety and health of young workers* referring to youth being more exposed to accident and work-related diseases since they, because of a great unemployment rate, are forced to accept “the first offer of work that is presented to them, without weighing if the working conditions entail risks for their health and safety” (pp. 6).

On page 7 it is communicated that “*In the current perspective of the neoliberal globalization that has exposed the workers to the expropriation of their labor and social rights, the implications of the new industrial revolution 4.0 of the artificial intelligence technologies that will eliminate millions of employments, will force workers to put the fight for a workday still much lower than the classic 8 hours.*” It is apparent that the union organization are aware of technical changes affecting the labor market and uses this to advocate for shorter workdays and hence be appealing to a younger generation, more post-materialists according to theories of Inglehart (1997). |
| Gender approach | The national board of the organization have elected a national electoral committee based on 10 persons (5 permanent members and 5 substitutes). Eight of the ten elected to the committee are men (pp. 2) which does not show a gender equality perspective on the elected members.

In this issue the upcoming presidential elections in May 2018 are being mentioned and the three main parties present their candidates for presidency. All three parties present one man and one women as leaders, however, all president candidates are men while all vice president’s candidates are women (pp. 10-12). |
| Development issues | Themes detected:

Sustainable peace process, reconciliation, well-functioning health care system, good working conditions as generators to social development |
| Signs of rejuvenation | On page 5 the recently elected president of the union writes about his future plans of action: “The creation of quality formal employment, in addition to being a priority objective, will be the result of a development strategy that aims to boost the capabilities of people and the productive system. The first line of efforts will be focused on young people and women, the most excluded from the labor market and with lower salaries.” Here the foremost front figure of the union states the importance of youth and women in the labor market for a productive society. |
| Gender approach | On page 7 the union inform how the members can vote on representatives to the national board, departmental sub directorates and delegates to the 5th congress of CUT and in the regulations of list inscription there is one requisite stating that “each list must contain the postulation of a woman and a young person in its first three lines, in accordance with the unique paragraph of article 33 of the statutes” (pp.7) showing that the union in a formal way has institutionalized the inclusion of women and youth in elections. |

---

Informativo CUT Nacional 117
Issued 24/2 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development issues</th>
<th>Themes detected: Sustainable peace, development of own productive forces, right to health, education and good working conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs of rejuvenation</td>
<td>On page 2 the president of the Union expresses that “the CUT urges our members to participate actively in all the activities of mobilization and struggle that the different social, political and union sectors carry out this year in opposition to the economic and social policy of the current government.” This call may be appealing you youth according to Inglehart’s theory meaning that younger generations have become more inclined to participate in issue politics, new social movements, transnational advocacy networks and other “elite-challenging forms of political participation” (Inglehart, 1997: 296).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender approach</td>
<td>This issue is themed after the 8th of March, the International Women’s Day and in an article, it is written that “the processes of resistance and political action of the female workers have encouraged the debates between the different expressions of socialist and suffragist feminism. When we commemorate March 8th, we recognize the historical struggles of resistance that women have advanced through our emancipation. Struggles articulated to the demands of work and revolutionary movements that, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, revealed strategic alienation both in the exploitation of work in the oppressive system, and the oppression of patriarchy in the reproductive system” (pp. 3). According to Smyth (2007) there is still a resounding silence around words such as feminism and feminist in the discourse of development organizations. However, it is apparent in this example that the union do mention the word and is also evident in the perspectives of a patriarchal society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 years in CUT Colombia
Youtube, published 23/11 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development issues</th>
<th>Themes detected: Peace, sovereignty and democracy, labors rights, against plundering of natural resources, for peace and against violence, health care and education access for all, democratization, human rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs of rejuvenation</td>
<td>In the video they express that “the CUT has been the voice against the plundering of natural resources” (2:10min) and that “the CUT work for the national sovereignty and the democracy and fight against the violations against union and human rights” (3:27-3:35min) which might be appealing to a younger generation according to Inglehart (1997) who argues that social trends in post-industrial society have brought about the replacement of the old materialist values, associated with security and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 https://cut.org.co/informativo-cut-nacional-117/
2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8P6d1O9ZaE
authority, by post-materialist values associated with higher concern for the environment and human rights.

Young members are seen in the end of the video as they express their feelings of being part of the union: “I am a cane cutter, I am also CUT and I am proud to be a trade unionist” (5:29min), “I am proud to be part of CUT and to exercise the function the trade unions” (5:38min), “I am also CUT and I am proud to be part of the central unit of workers and I want to congratulate the CUT in these 30 years of life, unity and fight” (5:52min).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the video they state that “There has been 30 years in which men and women have built with labor, dedication and delivery a central union organization independent of the policies of governments and employers with a tireless defense of labor and union rights” (0:55-1:07min) recognizing the role of women during the past 30 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are part of the video representing the workers of different sectors, however the video did not show a single woman in a leader position during these 30 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The newspaper targets both members of the union and potential members since they are easily accessible on their website and are also communicated through social media. There are some common development-related topics being mentioned often both in the newspaper and in the video related, not surprisingly, to the peace process, democratization and access to health care and education. Other development-related issues communicated through these media such as political participation, protection of natural resources, poverty reduction, economic growth and technology advances.

When it comes to rejuvenation signs in the unions communication, youth are at least being mentioned and make part of their work but mostly in the position of a vulnerable group, both when it comes to unemployment and security issues related to the labor market.

When it comes to the unions communication from a gender approach it is visible that gender equality is at least being mentioned in all the issues of the newspaper. Also here it is notable that women’s position in the labor market is mostly connected to vulnerability and struggle concerning unemployment and informal labor. However, gender equality is something present and expressed as a goal for the future of the country. In the video communicating the unions 30 years of work women were mostly part as workers and member but not a single one was seen in a leader position or giving a speech in comparison to the many men taking these parts.
5.2 Perception of unions according to Colombian youth

In this section the perception of unions according to Colombians youth will be analyzed based on the information obtained from a qualitative survey made in Colombia in April 2018.

In the qualitative survey did 44 people participated, 22 of these under 35 years old and will in this investigation be part of the target group youth. Among the youth participants were 36% men and 64% women, in between the ages of 22-35. Among the participants do 12 of them live in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, and the rest in other smaller cities across the country (such as Neiva, Pereira, Saravena, Barranquilla etc). The unionization among the participants counts up to 54% unionized and 46% that are not part of a union.

Among the female participant, the level of unionization is 50% and among the male participants the level is 63%. Reasons mentioned by those who are members of a union are for example: the importance of the collective strength to defend labor rights and because of political and ideological reasons.

Two participants also mention the importance of renewing the unions: “I am a union member and I am part of the board of directors of my union because I am convinced that the working class and trade unions must renew itself to enlarge the labor movement” (participant #9, 2018). Reasons mentioned to why the participants have not joined a union are for example that unions do not represent their interests, they feel pressured by their workplaces not to join or simply do not know how to join.

To the right, a word cloud\(^1\) based on the participants answers to the question of mentioning three words they relate to unions and their work. It is very apparent that the word Rights is something that the participants finds as a representative word for the work of unions since 13 respondents mentioned this word. Also the words Fight and Organization were often mentioned by the respondents.

In order to understand how the membership of unionization is first communicated to a younger generation it was of interest of this study to analyze from which situations or from whom the

---

\(^1\) Based on quality surveys, created at [https://www.wordclouds.com/](https://www.wordclouds.com/)
respondants did first hear about the unions and their work. Among the 22 participants of this study did almost a third answer that they first heard about unions through a family member, almost 24 percent heard about unions in a situation related to their school environment, 19 percent from the unions own communication and the rest mentioned from situations at their workplace or related to their political party.

The understanding of perceptions of unions depending on different target groups was a key part of the qualitative surveys made on the colombian youth. If comparing their own perception to the work of unions to the perception of their closest families, from which almost 30% of the youths first got information about the unions there is a visible difference. The perception of unions among youths themselves is a little more positive than the perceptions they believe their closest family have.

The perception of unions work among the participants is mostly to an intermediate level with a slight tendency of moving towards a very positive perception. Following some comments from the respondents related to their perceptions:

“Generally speaking my perception of unions work is positive but there are many things work on when it comes to the inclusions of some groups such as youth, women, afrodescendents and LGBT-community” (Participant #2)

“They must work to improve their image and in a better way to reach workers, especially young people” (Participant #7)

The perception of their closest families related to the work of the unions was comparably less positive and more neutral. Some respondents mention that stigmatization is widespread within the family and that being a trade unionist is seen as bad by some members of the family (participant #2). The reasons mentioned for the mostly negative perceptions are rebelists, and a
way of not working without having any consequences, carelessness of their own homes (participants #15, #7).

When the participants were asked about their beliefs concerning the overall perceptions of unions among Colombian youth the answers had tendencies towards a more negative perception. Only two respondents believed the perception was at all positive. Following are some comments related to this question:

“Most of the working youth in Colombia have a negative perception of trade union organizations, which is influenced by the media and in any case permeated by widespread apathy around issues related to organization and citizen participation. In turn, this perception is fed back by the lack of interest that the trade union movement implements in the working youth and its specific problems.” (Participant #3)

“There is apathy and that is why it should be renewed with young people in order to reach people who still doubt the workers movement in a different way.” (Participant #13)

“Due to the lack of information and the manipulation of the little existent, it is believed that the union seeks to finish businesses and promote leisure” (Participant #20)

The respondents were asked what channels they would use in order to get in contact with a union. Among the participants did 77 percent answer internet (mentioning social media, webpage and email) 14 percent mention personal contact through political party or relative and 9 percent do not know how to get in contact with unions.
To the question whether the participants believe the unions represent their interests and needs in their employment situation, the majority answered they did feel represented by the unions. Actually half of the youth participants answered that they think unions totally represent them in their current employment situation.

“The unions work to guarantee the most fair working conditions in all cases and for this reason they completely reflect my interests” (Participant #18)

“Thanks to the union organization to which I belong, my working conditions have improved reflecting the fulfillment of most of the proposed objectives. It is a union that affiliates a large number of young people interested in solving their problems, an aspect that is not found in most Colombian unions” (Participant #13)

There were also reasons explained to why youth in this survey did not feel represented by unions such as unions not trying to update their visions and plans, not being organizations participatory enough or because of their difficulties in their function of being an effective communication bridge between the worker and the organization (Participants #7, #3 and #2).

One of the key research questions in this thesis is to analyse how development-related issues are articulated in the unions communication and hence it is of interest to compare this to the respondents own opinions. To the right there is a word
cloud\(^1\) presenting the main areas of development, mentioned by the respondents, related to the Colombian labor market. There are several words of relevance to this target group, however, there are especially four words that are being mentioned the most among the respondents being “Economy”, “Technology”, “Education” and “Rights”. Also “Agroindustry”, “Participation” and “Contract conditions” are oft-recurring among this group.

In the last part of the survey the respondents were given the possibility to freely reflect about how they see unions relate to social change and development in general. Below are some examples of answers:

“There is very little vision, relationship and contribution by unions related to social development, many are isolated and union organizations have been permeated with vices and practices such as corruption and bureaucracy. They have stayed in the past when it comes to motivating unionization.” (Participant #8)

“Trade unions are fundamental for the redistribution of wealth in the countries and therefore are essential to reduce the inequality gaps through the exercise of social dialogue. However, this is the vision of only a percentage of the trade union movement in Colombia, as there are several ideological positions that divide trade unionism in practice, a problem that is reflected in the low rate of unionization in Colombia.” (Participant #13)

“Unions are organized for labor rights and hence their struggles are fundamental for social changes” (Participant #17)

“Trade unions collaborate in strengthening the alternative political movement” (Participant #2)

It is visible that many of the respondents do believe unions relate to social change in a positive way however it is also apparent in the respondents answers that they face struggles, caused by internal structures, external communication and by the notion of unions not actualizing themselves.

5.3 Perception of unions according to an older generation in Colombia

In this section the perception of unions according to a Colombian older generation will be analyzed based on the information obtained from a qualitative survey made in Colombia in April 2018.

---

\(^1\) Based on quality surveys, created at [https://www.wordclouds.com/](https://www.wordclouds.com/)
In the qualitative survey did 44 people participate, half of them were under 35 and half of them between 36-62 years old which will be the target group analyzed in the second part of the analysis. The majority (77 percent) of the respondents within this target group are men, living in a smaller city called Florencia Caquetá situated south of the capital city Bogotá and are part of a union. Because of the method used to find respondents, the snow-ball effects, the sample of respondents and the answers given within this target group will be affected by the grand majority being the above mentioned, which should not be generalized to the Colombian population. Among the respondents do 9 of them live in the city of Florencia, 2 of them in Bogotá and Neiva and the rest in various different cities such as Medellin, Sopo and Pamplona among others.

The unionization among the respondents is very high, 82 percent of them make part of a trade union. Among the female participant, the level of unionization is 60% and among the male participants the level is 88%. Reasons mentioned by those who are members of a union are for example: for stabilization in the labor market, defense of workers rights and better guaranties. The reason mentioned by the minority not being unionized is because they work independently and hence do not have a contract.

To the left a word cloud created based on the respondent’s answers concerning what words they mostly relate to the work of unions. The word Rights is the most mentioned by the respondents following by the word Fight and Solidarity as well as the words Collectivity, Support, Defense and Organization.

It is of interest to know from who or in which situation the respondents first heard about unions and their work to identify how and through which channels of communication our respondents first got in contact with unions. Within this target group almost a third part of them first heard about unions through a family member or a close friend. 23 percent first got in contact with unions through the unions own communication and another 23 percent through their workplace and 19 percent in a school related environment.

---

1Based on quality surveys, created at [https://www.wordclouds.com/](https://www.wordclouds.com/)
When comparing the perception of the work of unions from the respondents and the perceptions of unions their closest family have there is possibly to see some similarities. Even though the right chart, showing the perceptions of their closest family according to the respondents themselves, visualize a slightly more negative perception than the left chart, both charts tend to be mostly towards the very positive perspective of the work of the unions.

When it comes to the respondent’s own perception of the unions and their work do most of the respondents have a positive to a very positive perception. The reasons mentioned are that the unions search for improvements of their working conditions as well as improving the whole company where they work, defend their rights as workers and because of their historical contributions to better working conditions. However, they also mentioned their feelings of a diminishing unionization due to political conditions hindering unions to work.

“Existing labor policies hinder the existence of unions which have diminished both the unionization, the action of the existing unions and the political identity of the workers.” (Participant #24)

The perception of their closest family is, even if a bit less positive than their own, still tending to very positive. Participant #42 comments that his family “is aware of how the state has been giving all kinds of benefits, especially to multinationals at the expense of health and the rights of workers who support and contribute to the struggle”. However, some also mention that their families do not really understand the work of the unions or do not believe in it, rather believe that the unions try to end companies (participants #43, #28 and #23).
To the left there is a chart showing the results of the respondent’s answers as they were asked about the general perception of unions among Colombian youth today, according to their own believing. According to the target group the Colombian youth do not really have a clear perception or interest when it comes to unions and their work. In the comments made by the respondents related to this question any of them have the belief that Colombian youth have a big lack of interest and understanding of the work made by unions. Following are some examples:

“They do not worry about knowing how it is that we have achieved the little we at least have in concerning labor law” (Participant #36)

“They do not care about the type of contract they have, they see us as an endangered species” (Participant #28)

“For me there are two fundamental factors: Lack of pedagogy and lack of interest on the part of young people in rights issues because they require research and reading where there is great disinterest.” (Participant #33)

“Nothing, at this time they do not think about their future” (Participant #35)

However, there are also comments made by female participants mentioning young people as aware of the different problems existing in the country and having the capacity to analyze and criticize (participant #38) and that young people today are restless and more proactive and critical (participant #44).
When the respondents were asked through what communication channel they would contact unions or find more information about their work did 64% answer through internet (mentioning social media, webpage and email), 18% replied they would contact the unions through personal contacts, 14% would use their phone to call them and and 4% did not know how to contact the unions.

In this survey it is visible that the majority of the respondents do feel represented by the unions work in their current employment situation. Almost three fourth of the respondents answered they think unions do or even totally do reflect their interests and needs and only 3 respondents out of 22 did not feel at all represented by the unions. The reasons mentioned by those not feeling represented at all were mostly because they currently were not members of a union organization and hence did not feel connected to or represented by them. By the participants feeling totally represented gave reasons such as the unions actually succeeding in improving their working conditions significantly related to salary and workers’ rights.

To the right, there is a word cloud¹ presenting the respondents own answers to what development-area they find the most relevant for themselves related to the labor market. The word “Education” was by far the most mentioned word by the participants, following by “Agriculture”. The words “Self-recognition”, “Participation”, “Services” and “Industry” were also often mentioned.

---

¹ Based on quality surveys, created at https://www.wordclouds.com/
The participants were given the possibility to freely discuss how they see unions relate to social change and development in general. At this part the participants shared different views of the role of unions as development-promoters. Following are some examples:

“They are organizations that advocate for the welfare and stability of the workers that are the basis of a country's economy and hence its development” (Participant #24)

“Unfortunately the unions are on the defensive and we are no able to be prepositive” (Participant #26)

“Bad thanks to labor central organizations that do not represent the unions and therefore do not represent the workers, the centrals are maintained with a destructive bureaucracy and are the worst cancer of Colombian unionism” (Participant #43)

“The contribution is indispensable to improve democracy and social justice” (Participant #29)

The answers given by the participants as they discussed the role played by unions in social development were both positive and negative. However, participants having a pro-union opinion in general in the survey also showed some critical discussions towards unions possibilities of being that tool for development in Colombian society.

6. DISCUSSION

This section will proceed by merging the results of the analysis of the unions development-related communication with the results from the qualitative survey with Colombian youth and target group from an older generation. Here is where the research questions are being answered by discussing how youth interpret the development visions of the unions and deliberating if the interpretations and perception of unions work differ depending on the age of the audience. The following paragraphs will present the main findings of how different audiences engage with unions in this specific case. It is of importance to remember that the findings are based on a specific and limited sample of respondents and that the intention of this research is not to achieve generalization but to find examples of how the perceptions of unions work can vary.

6.1 Intergenerational comparison of perceptions toward unions

Comparing both target groups in the survey, being youth up to 35 years old and an older generation, 36 years and older, it is visible by the surveys that the unionization among the younger respondents is much lower (54%) compared to the older respondents (82%). One
similarity between the groups is that the percentage of females being members of a union is lower in both target groups compared to male participants. However, it is important to remember that the limited sample of respondents in the survey can not be seen as a generalization of the Colombian population, which neither is the intention of this research, rather an example of how different audience perceive the unions work in this specific case. In this survey research it is hence visible that the younger respondents to a lesser extent are members of a union, which aligns with the theory mentioned by Ebbinghaus and Visser (1999) about a decline in union membership and density and a period of “de-unionization”.

The respondents were asked what channels they would use in order to get in contact with a trade union. Here the majority of both target groups answered internet mentioning social media accounts, webpage and email as a communication channel however, this percentage was higher among the younger participants (77% vs. 64%). The second channel both groups would use is personal contact with the union (18% among the young respondents and 14% among the older respondents) and lastly did 4% of older respondents answer they did not know how to contact a union versus 9% among the young participants. This shows that among this sample youth do to a higher extent use internet as communication channel compared to the older participants and that youth to a higher level do not know how to get in contact with unions compared to the other target group.

It is of interest to know from who or in which situation the respondents first heard about unions and their work in order to identify how and through which channels of communication our respondents first got in contact with unions. Both target groups first communication channel was to a great extent from a family member or close friends, this indicates that unions work is to a high degree communicated through word-of-mouth to both generations. Around 20% of the respondents answered the unions own communication somehow and the rest was either in a school environment (for the younger respondents) or a work environment (for the older respondents).

If both targets groups mostly first got in contact with a trade union through the communication of a family member or close friend it is of interest to discuss the perceptions of their closest family in comparison to their own. The overall perceptions of the young respondent’s own view of the unions work is mostly geared to an intermediate level with a slight tendency of moving towards a very positive perception. However the perceptions of their family members is mostly intermediate and not at all towards the positive parts of the chart. If we compare this to the answers from the older respondents it is visible that both their own perceptions and their
families perceptions of unions is much more geared towards the very positive side of the chart. This could be interpreted as an example of a generational difference and could also be seen as a clear example of the effect of word-of-mouth communication; since the older generations family members positive perceptions of unions is reflected to some extent in the older respondents own perceptions and vice versa, even though the younger participants perceptions of unions is a bit more positive than their families.

The respondents answers about their own beliefs about the general perception of unions among Colombian youth today is very indecisive from both parts however, the youth participants geared more towards the negative part and the older geared toward the positive. Interesting here is the comments given by the both targets groups since the older participants mostly expressed the intermediate perception of unions among youth due to a lack of interest both for their (youths) own future and the unions historical achievements, while the younger respondents mostly expressed the reason being the unions failure of attracting a younger member and the medias role in misinterpreting the unions missions.

When the participants were asked if they felt represented and thought the unions work reflected their needs in their current employment situation did both target groups overall answer they positively that they did feel represented by the unions work. The respondents were asked to name the development-areas most relevant for them related to the Colombian labor market and here the respondents from both target groups mentioned “education” as an important area, as well as “agriculture” and “participation”. Other areas mentioned by both groups but with more emphasis by the younger participants was “technology”, “health” and “stability”. “Woman” or “equality” was mentioned by both groups however the word “youth” was only mentioned by the younger respondents. If we compare the respondent’s answers to the findings in the textual analysis made of the unions communication material it is apparent that many of these words are also being communicated by the unions, for example their work for: education access for all, sustainable peace which could be connected to the respondents longing for stability, right to health and good working conditions, artificial intelligence and technology development, gender equality and democracy which could be connected to participation. Even though there are some visible differences between the target groups when it comes to prioritized areas of development the value-based priorities and generational replacement mentioned by Inglehart (1997) was not too highlighted in this sample of respondents as it could have been expected. Inglehart (1997) means that security (both economical growth and the lack of conflicts) lead to intergenerational value differences replacing materialist concerns about economical and physical security toward
greater emphasis on post materialist values such as freedom, self-expression and quality of life.

One reason to the notable difference between the targets groups might be the situation of internal armed conflict Colombia has experienced the last 50 years that has affected the respondent’s experiences of security (or lack of security) in similar ways since neither of them have yet experienced a different political or social environment than based on an internal armed conflict.

The answers given by the participants as they discussed the role played by unions in social development were both positive and negative. It is visible that many of the respondents do believe unions relate to social change in a positive way however it is also apparent in the respondents answers that they face struggles, caused by internal structures, external communication and by the notion of unions not actualizing themselves. Interestingly did participants having a pro-union opinion in general in the survey also show some critical reflections towards unions possibilities of being that tool for development in Colombian society caused by the above-mentioned reasons.

6.2 Relating with rejuvenation and gender

What would be the answer, by using the findings of the textual analysis and qualitative survey, to the research question: How/to which extent does unions try to rejuvenate themselves?

According to this research do unions communicate development-related issues relevant for a younger audience, they do include youth in electorate structures to some level and youth do feel that their interest, in their current employment situation, are represented by the unions work. However, the level of unionization is lower among the young participants and their perceptions of unions are not as positive compared to the perceptions of the older generation. Reasons for this shown in the analysis are that youth do not feel unions relate, to a satisfactory level with young workers, because of how media portrait unions, because of the perceptions of their closest families and because of the old-fashioned organization structures.

When it comes to the unions communication from a gender approach it is noticeable that gender equality is at least being mentioned in all the issues of the newspaper. However, this does not necessarily have to be a progressive sign since according to Smyth (2007) the word “gender”, though visible everywhere, remains problematic since some terms are almost entirely absent, while others are used loosely and inappropriately with carefully developed and much debated concepts completely lost, so words are left empty of meaning. In the unions communication it is notable that women’s position in the labor market is mostly related to vulnerability and
struggle concerning unemployment and informal labor. However, gender equality is something present and expressed as a goal for the future of the country and the word feminism is mentioned at least once. In the video communicating the unions 30 years of work women were mostly part as workers and members but not even one was seen in a leader position or giving a speech in comparison to the many men seen taking these parts. This partly shows that Colombia still maintain structures with a strong patriarchal culture but also that unions do try to progress in this matter.

7. CONCLUSION

In this investigation theories about intergenerational value differences are applied in a Colombian context with the aim to analyze how and to what extent union organizations try to rejuvenate themselves and identify differences in the perceptions towards unions depending on generational changes. This study also investigates how unions communicate development-related issues and how genders are represented in their communication.

Unions have historically had an important role in advocating for social development from a working condition perspective, which has enabled many improvements for workers around the world. However, this research explains that the level of unionization in Colombia, and elsewhere, is decreasing with special focus on youth affiliation. This pattern of de-unionization is something experienced by many union organizations around the world and also in Colombia where the levels of affiliation has reached as low as 5% of the economically active population. The unions historical importance is clear, however their contemporary possibilities to continue being a possible development advocator are facing struggles if the new generation of workers do not engage and involve with the matter.

The methods used in this research were first a textual analysis of different medias communicated by the union used as an example in this study, CUT Colombia, with the aim to detect what development related issues were detectable, to what extent the union rejuvenate themselves and how genders are represented apparent in their communication. The second part of the research includes a quality survey comparative analysis completed during a field trip to Colombia, including two different target groups – youth and people older than 35 years old.

According to this investigation some differences between the two target groups were notable in the surveys, mostly concerning the perceptions of the respondents and their closest families. Among the youth respondents the perceptions of unions were slightly geared towards the negative side of the spectrum however, their closest families had an even more negative
Among the older participants, both they and their families had a slightly more positive perception. This becomes interesting in relation to the answers given by both groups explaining that they first heard about unions through a family member, since it raises questions about correlation between perceptions and how unions work is transmitted by word-of-mouth. Inglehart (1997) means that the differences in political participation and involvement can be explained by an intergenerational value differences were materialist values are being replaced by post materialist values all based on the level of security felt my the different generations. This was however not fully notable in this research based in the sample of respondents that participated in the qualitative survey. One reason for this might be that Colombia is a country that has experienced an internal armed conflict during the last 50 years. In November 2016 a peace agreement was finally signed between the Colombian government and the FARC, the major guerilla group in the country meaning that neither of the generations have experienced another state of environment and hence security. This is something interesting to continue analyze and especially after the transition towards peace that will hopefully develop in the country in the coming years.
8. REFERENCING


Alejandro Donado and Klaus Wälde (2012) HOW TRADE UNIONS INCREASE WELFARE. Royal Economic Society. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford


Bottomore, Tom (1993), Political Sociology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


David Andres Diez GOmez (2009). Aprender en el camino... Por un rostro joven del sindicalismo colombiano - jovenes y participacion en la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia (CUT). Escuela Nacional Sindical


Esaiasson, Peter; Gilljam, Mikael; Oscarsson, Henrik; Wängnerud, Lena (2012). Metodpraktikkan: Konsten att studera Samhälle, Individ och Marknad, fjärde upplagan. Norstedts Juridik A


Guarnizo, Carlos, Jaramillo Maria Clara, Mercado Enrique (2009) Evaluación y seguimiento a la Comisión Permanente de Concertación de Políticas Salariales y Laborales: percepciones de sus actores, OIT


ILO (2003) *Youth in crises: from victims to protagonist*, Fact sheet (Geneva)


White, Clarissa, Sara Bruce, and Jane Ritchie (2000), *Young people’s politics: Political interest and engagement amongst 14- to 24-year-olds* (York: York Publishing Services).
APPENDIX I – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Encuesta para tesis sobre sindicalismo entre la juventud colombiana

Muchas gracias por su tiempo. Sus respuestas serán tratadas anónimamente y con el único uso de servir como material de estudio para mi tesis de maestría de Comunicación y Desarrollo de la Universidad de Malmö en Suecia.

Edad: ___________  Sexo: Femenino □  Masculino □ Otro □

Ocupación: ________________________________

Ciudad de residencia: ________________________________

Nombre tres palabras que relacione con las organizaciones sindicales:
1. _________________
2. _________________
3. _________________

Nombre tres palabras que relacione con el mercado laboral colombiano:
1. _________________
2. _________________
3. _________________

¿Esta sindicalizado? Si □  No □

Por favor, motive su respuesta:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

PERCEPCIÓN DE SINDICATOS

1. ¿Cómo o de quién obtuvo por primera vez conocimiento de las organizaciones sindicales?

___________________________________________________________________________

2. ¿Cuál es su percepción general del trabajo de los sindicatos?

Muy positiva □  □  □  □  □  □  Muy negativa

Comentario: ________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

3. ¿Cuál es la percepción general de los sindicatos dentro de su familia más cercana?

Muy positiva □  □  □  □  □  □  Muy negativa

Comentario: ________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

4. ¿Cuál es la percepción general de los sindicatos dentro de sus amigos más cercanos?

Muy positiva □  □  □  □  □  □  Muy negativa
5. ¿Cuál diría usted es la percepción general de los sindicatos en Colombia entre la juventud colombiana?

Muy positiva  □ □ □ □ □  Muy negativa  □ □ □ □ □

Comentario: ____________________________________________________________

6. Si deseara ponerse en contacto con un sindicato para obtener información, ¿Qué medios de comunicación utilizaría?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

DESARROLLO RELACIONADO CON LOS SINDICATOS

1. Según usted, ¿Para qué fin trabajan los sindicatos? Nombre las 5 principales áreas:

   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________

2. ¿Encuentra que están reflejan sus intereses y necesidades en su actual situación laboral?
   Sí, totalmente □ □ □ □ □  No, nada □ □ □ □ □

¿Por qué razón?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. ¿Cómo cree que los sindicatos se relacionan con los cambios sociales y el desarrollo en general? ¿Qué tipo de visiones tienen?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

4. ¿Qué áreas de desarrollo en el mercado laboral considera más relevantes para usted?

   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________
   • __________________________________________________________

¡Muchas gracias por su participación y colaboración!
# APPENDIX II – RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Unionized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Pereira</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogota</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Neiva Huila Colombia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Arauca</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Saravena -arauca</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Barranquilla</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Neiva</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Tuluá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Neiva</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Neiva</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Valledupar</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogota</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá D.C.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bogota</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Pamplona norte de Santander</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Villavocencio</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Neiva</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Puerto Boyaca</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Manizales</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Neiva</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia.Caquetas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Buenaventura</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia Caqueta</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Florencia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Medellin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Mosquera</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Sopo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Florencia Caquetas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>