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**Comparing contextual patterns of workplace struggle in the UK and Republic of Ireland
public transport sectors
London underground and Dublin bus**

Hughes, Emma

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**COMPARING CONTEXTUAL PATTERNS OF
WORKPLACE STRUGGLE IN THE UK AND
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PUBLIC TRANSPORT
SECTORS: LONDON UNDERGROUND AND DUBLIN
BUS**

AUTHOR: EMMA SARA HUGHES

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BANGOR UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISORS: TONY DOBBINS

DORIS MERKL-DAVIES

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COMPARING CONTEXTUAL PATTERNS OF WORKPLACE STRUGGLE IN THE UK AND REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTORS: LONDON UNDERGROUND AND DUBLIN BUS

The aims of this doctoral thesis are to explore patterns of employment relations and workplace struggle in two public transport organizations, and to uncover how they are shaped by multi-dimensional internal and external contextual forces. A qualitative cross-country comparative case study approach was adopted to reveal the dynamics of concrete workplace relations and struggle. Two in-depth transport case studies were conducted, London Underground in the UK and Dublin Bus in the Republic of Ireland. Data collection involved accumulating various archival documents, conducting semi-structured interviews with employees, union officials and managers, and observing employees both at work and in union meetings. A thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse the data, with emphasis placed on the utilization of discourses, including the three employment relations frames of reference, unitarism, pluralism and radicalism, and broader discourses, such as, neoliberalism, new public management and moral discourse.

The key rationale underpinning the thesis is that case studies examining how patterns of employment relations and struggle differ in the UK and the Republic of Ireland are scarce. Comparing employment relations in both countries is a fruitful avenue of research, because of their different historical trajectories. The Republic of Ireland adopted a social partnership model between 1987 and 2009, which was less confrontational than Thatcher's neo-liberal agenda in the UK. However, scholars have argued that the neo-liberalization of the Republic of Ireland's political economy has intensified and converged more towards the UK since the 2008 financial crisis, the subsequent recession and the collapse of social partnership. The study contributes to this debate by examining the extent of this shift in a comparative context of workplace struggles.

The findings indicate that employment relations in London Underground and Dublin Bus have changed in recent years due to various contextual forces. Nevertheless, in broad terms, relations between managers, employees and their union representatives at Dublin Bus are less antagonistic and are characterised by higher levels of trust than at London Underground. The thesis also contributes to the employment relations frames of reference, by empirically fleshing out the 'zones of contention' between the rival frames and arguing that radical pluralism is the

most applicable frame for analysing workplace struggles. Radical pluralism adopts a critical and multi-layered view of the employment relationship. It fully acknowledges deep-rooted structural contradictions, yet also appreciates that in reality, employment relations are not easily categorized as conflict/cooperation, control/consent, or high-trust/low-trust binaries, but instead tend to dovetail with contextual forces to foment combinations of different patterns. By adopting a multi-level methodological approach linking micro-level discourse to broader social, political and economic spheres, in the context of two cross-country comparative case studies, the thesis makes an innovative methodological contribution to employment relations literature.

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Acronyms

ASLEF	the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
NBRU	the National Bus and Rail Workers Union
NTA	the National Transport Authority
REA	Registered Employment Agreement
RMT	the National Union for Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
SEO	Sectoral Employment Order
SIPTU	the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union
TFL	Transport for London
TSSA	the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of study

Strike frequency has declined significantly in many advanced economies since the 1960s and 1970s, but this is by no means an indication that workplace conflict is disappearing (Currie et al., 2017; Edwards, 2003; Hughes and Dundon, 2018; Teague et al., 2015; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Van den Broek and Dundon, 2012). Strikes are arguably the most visible manifestation of conflict and resistance. However, whether workplace conflict translates into strike action, is contingent on numerous multi-layered contextual forces (Edwards, 1986; Fleetwood, 2013). This study compares employment relations struggles in two case study organizations in two different comparative country contexts, namely, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The aim is to uncover the multi-dimensional forces shaping patterns of employment relations and workplace struggle at both sites.

The case study organizations are London Underground and Dublin Bus. After providing a broad overview of employment relations and workplace struggle in both organizations at a country and organisational level in Chapter 4, four specific high-profile workplace disputes are unpicked in Chapters 5 and 6, i.e., two in each organization. At London Underground, both disputes are over London Underground's 'modernization strategy' and involve the National Union for Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). At Dublin Bus, the first dispute is over the competitive tendering of bus services and the second is over pay. The main Irish unions organizing disputes at Dublin Bus are the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) and the National Bus and Rail Workers Union (NBRU).

The employment relationship and frames of reference on labour disputes

Employment relations has been defined as the "study of the rules governing employment" (Clegg, 1979: 1). In essence, employment relations dictate the amount of work being performed in a specific period of time, the task(s) to be completed during that time, who has authority to define or change tasks and how individuals who breach these arrangements are punished (Edwards, 2003).

Particularly important for analysing conflict and resistance in the area of employment relations are three theoretical frames of reference first developed by the employment relations scholar

Alan Fox (Fox, 1966, 1974, 1979), known as, unitarism, pluralism and radicalism. Each rival frame constructs the employment relationship and labour disputes from a different angle. They are regarded as the three main discourses on employment relations. The term ‘discourse’ has been interpreted across the social sciences in various ways. This study views discourses as “way[s] of representing aspects of the world associated with a particular perspective” (Fairclough, 2003: 215).

Unitarism holds that organization members share an ‘identity of interests’ (Kaufman, 2008) and work as part of one ‘team’ or one ‘family’. Trade unions and shop stewards are portrayed as ‘trouble makers’ that stimulate unnecessary conflict (Dundon and Gollan, 2007; Heery, 2015). Pluralists repudiate the unitarist perspective; they argue that the employment relationship constitutes divergent interests and a power imbalance between dominant employers and their employees. Organisational conflict is considered inevitable and healthy (Fox, 1966). Moreover, pluralism postulates that trade unions are legitimate representatives of employee interest and are essential for balancing the employment relationship (Budd and Bhawe, 2008; Heery, 2016). Radicalism criticizes both pluralism and unitarism, by arguing that both perspectives downplay the structural root causes of antagonism and inequality embedded within capitalism as an exploitative accumulation system (Brown, 2000; Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2017; Kaufman and Gall, 2015; Watson, 2012). The radical frame of reference incorporates different variants. Two prominent examples are political Marxists (e.g., Darlington, 2001, 2009b; Gall, 2013; Seifert, 2014, 2015) and radical pluralists (e.g., Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 1990, 2014; Fox, 1974). Both radical-inclined orientations endorse competing perspectives on the nature of power, conflict and interest formation.

The historical background of employment relations in the UK and the Republic of Ireland

To this day, employment relations and conflict in the two case study organizations are partly shaped by the historical legacies of employment relations in the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Ireland. In particular, the debate between the three frames of reference (Fox, 1966, 1974; Heery, 2015, 2016) has substantially impacted on how patterns of employment relations and workplace struggle manifest in both countries over the years.

Thatcherism in the UK

From the end of World War Two, up until the late 1970s, the discourse of pluralism was pragmatically accepted in British society and was promulgated by the state, under pressure from below as workers and their unions pushed for greater industrial rights (Brown, 2000).

Collective bargaining between employers and trade unions played a fundamental role in the employment relations system (Martinez Lucio, 2015a;b; Nowak, 2015; Seifert, 2015). However, during the 1970s employment relations were poor, the UK suffered high levels of inflation, unemployment and income taxes. In 1979, the new Conservative party prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, responded to the economic crisis by moving towards a unitarist model of employment relations inspired by neoliberalism. Her strategy for economic recovery was based on free trade, minimum government intervention, individualism and privatization of public services, including utilities, transport, and telecommunication (Harvey, 2005). She also implemented a range of legal reforms in the form of employment acts to curb trade union power (Craig and Campbell, 2005).

Neoliberalism in the UK at present

The Thatcherite legacy has greatly influenced succeeding British governments by popularizing unitarism, neoliberalism and pressing for free-market principles (Emmott, 2015; Smith, 2009; Smith and Morton, 2001, 2006). Both private and public sector organizations are experiencing repeated restructuring, as managerial strategies increasingly gravitate towards decreasing costs, increasing efficiency and creating a more ‘flexible’ workforce (i.e., changing the number of hours worked, the time of day worked and the level of employment security) (Fleetwood, 2007; Rubery, 2015; Rubery et al., 2016). This also manifests itself in organisational restructuring at London Underground as will be discussed later.

Social partnership in the Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland ‘inherited’ many British employment relations traditions as a result of having been under British occupation up until independence in 1921. Thereafter, some institutional and political differences unfolded between the UK and the Republic of Ireland; for example, in the Republic of Ireland, a more centrist political system emerged with less evidence of the sharp left-right dichotomy that has periodically characterized British politics. This has had implications for employment relations and institutions. Many scholars suggest that the ‘stagflation’ during the 1970s, constituting high levels of inflation, unemployment and slow economic growth, marks a separation in the respective employment relations trajectories of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (Geary, 2008; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Teague and McCartney, 1999).

The Republic of Ireland decided to reform the economy by moving in a different direction to the UK, adopting a more pluralistic model of ‘social partnership’ from 1987 until 2009 (Geary,

2008; Johnston and Regan, 2016; O’Sullivan et al., 2017; Roche et al., 2011; Teague and Donaghey, 2015). This model encompassed successive national-level agreements between union leaders, employers and the government over a wide range of economic and social issues, including, pay, housing policy and migration (Roche, 2009b). Advocates of social partnership refer to its advantages, including economic benefits (Hardiman, 2004), the protection of the Republic of Ireland from the harsher effects of neoliberalism (Teague and Donaghey, 2009), and the ability of pluralist values to enable union participation in decision-making (Geary, 2006).

That said, other observers have been somewhat more sceptical about social partnership, contending that its foundations were built on sand (Begg, 2008), that it enabled the discrete implementation of free-market principles and that neoliberalism has been ideologically hidden (Allen, 2000, 2003; Kitchin et al., 2012; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; O’Hearn, 1998, 2001, 2003; Wallace et al., 2013).

In 2008, the Republic of Ireland was struck hard by the global financial crisis and the failure of its banking system (Roche and Teague, 2014a:b; Roche et al., 2014; Smyth, 2011). The Irish government responded by pursuing a strategy based on austerity measures and public sector cuts, moves which were opposed by unions. Consequently, in late 2009, the pillars of social partnership collapsed (Regan, 2012c; Roche et al., 2011).

Neoliberalism in the Republic of Ireland at present

The neo-liberalization of the Republic of Ireland’s political economy has picked up pace following the collapse of social partnership. Privatization and the combination of outsourcing and competitive tendering of former Irish state owned services are emblematic of the neo-liberal dominance in the Republic of Ireland. One recent example is the Irish National Transport Authority’s (NTA) proposals to tender 10% of bus services currently provided by Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann in 2018. Politicians and employers proffering this form of restructuring rely on neo-liberal tropes of ‘efficiency’, ‘value for money’ and ‘cost effectiveness’ (Tong and Willett, 2005).

Discourses and rhetoric

There is a good deal of research in the fields of employment relations (e.g., Bamber et al., 2009; Colling, 1995), employee reporting (e.g., Craig and Amernic, 2004; Mäkelä, 2012; Williams and Adams, 2013) and organisational change (Erkama and Vaara, 2010; Vaara and Tienari,

2008) confirming that organisational restructuring, privatization and changes to working practices, are (de)legitimated by utilizing discourses and rhetoric. Discourse and rhetoric dovetail because of their ability to persuade audiences to accept particular assumptions and assertions. Discourses are “different ways of representing aspects of the world” (Fairclough, 2003: 124). They embed a particular set of values, beliefs and justifications and can be activated in text(s) through language. Similarly, rhetoric is defined by Aristotle (1954: 24) as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion”. Rhetoric involves using argument and persuasion to ultimately further the interests of a particular social group (Brown, 1998). The concept of discourses, notably dominant discourses, plays a fundamental role in this process.

In light of this, this thesis collects qualitative data from various sources, including press releases, interview transcripts and ethnography notes, to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do comparative contextual factors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ2: How is trade union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

Data and methodology

The study adopts a comparative cross-country case study approach (Gerring, 2017; Ragin and Becker, 1992; Yin, 2009) focusing on London Underground in the UK and Dublin Bus in the Republic of Ireland. Yin (2009: 18) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context.” A comparative approach enables researchers to uncover cross-cutting patterns between the cases, and pin-point similarities and differences (Kessler and Bach, 2014). In order to better exploit the depth of analysis offered by a case study research design, I decided to focus on two case studies (Gerring, 2017). A broad critical realist philosophy is employed (Bhaskar, 1989, 2014). Realists affirm that entities can exist independently of people’s knowledge, understandings and perceptions of them (Edwards et al., 2014). They conduct a causal analysis, exploring the forces underpinning events, behaviours and perceptions.

The data includes a range of archival materials related to both cases (e.g., press releases and newsletters), transcripts from interviews with key social actors (e.g., employees, union officials, union representatives, managers) and notes from direct observation of union members at work and in union meetings (e.g., observing a Tube driver on shift). A semi-structured interview framework was chosen because of its flexibility. The original wording and order of interview questions were altered to probe for further details and drill into “human thought, meaning and experience” (Smith and Elger, 2014: 123) related to both cases. Ethnography offered a window to observe individual interactions and behaviour in a context-specific setting (Burawoy, 1979, 2013; Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Gouldner, 1954).

Data is analysed by adhering to the protocols of thematic analysis, but emphasis is placed on the use of discourses. The multi-level approach applied assumes that discourse significantly shapes the production and re-production of social reality. Studying different discourses constitutes a vital line of research because of their material implications. Dominant discourses can become so entrenched that individuals accept material practices and actions that may suppress their interests (Fleming and Spicer, 2007). Mobilizing discourses is an ideological process. Ideologies are “representations of aspects of the world which contribute to maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003: 9).

Contribution to knowledge

The study contributes to critical interdisciplinary scholarship by enriching the extant literature in three different terrains, namely (1) employment relations frames of reference relating to workplace struggles, (2) the (de)legitimation of organisational restructuring, and (3) organisational communication with employees.

The study draws on and contributes to employment relations frames of reference on workplace struggles. Fox’s (1966, 1974) frames of reference have been widely debated, but few scholars have attempted to empirically ‘test’ the assumptions made by rival frames in a present-day setting (Budd and Bhawe 2008). The study informs the debate by unpicking employment relations and workplace struggle at two cross-country case study organizations. The ‘zones of contention’ between the rival frames of reference are uncovered (Heery, 2015, 2016) and the most applicable frame for analysing workplace disputes is revealed.

Admittedly, some studies analyse the (de)legitimization of organisational change in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, yet tend to take a narrow approach by focusing either on the

legitimization of organisational change by employers (Bamber et al., 2009; Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Du Gay, 2003) or the (de)legitimization of organisational change in a single case study, i.e., one particular organisation (Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Symon, 2005). What is more, the extent to which the processes of (de)legitimization vary between country contexts is underexplored. The study advances this thread of literature by fleshing out the discursive struggle between managers, governments, and trade unions during disputes over organisational restructuring in two comparative country case contexts. Comparing the Republic of Ireland and the UK offers a fruitful avenue of research connecting with existing debate in the literature over whether the 1970s marks a separation in the employment relations systems of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, or whether in reality, both systems reflect unitarism, neoliberalism and an anti-union approach (McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Smyth, 2011; Teague and Donaghey, 2009).

The study will also enhance research on corporate communication with employees (e.g., Craig and Amernic, 2004; Mäkelä, 2012; Williams and Adams, 2013). Strikes, or threats of strike action, are perceived as legitimacy threats in public sector organizations because of their potential disruptive capacity (Batstone et al., 1978; Darlington, 2012; Merkl-Davies and Brennan, 2017). During public controversies of this ilk, organizations release corporate communications, specifically targeting employees in general and their representatives, trade unions in particular, and the media. For example, during workplace conflict, organizations utilize communication vehicles, such as employee newsletters and press releases, to persuade employees not to strike. However, scholars in the field of corporate communication with employees have largely ignored corporate communication during struggles between organizations and their unions. In addition, cross-country comparisons of employee reporting during labour disputes have been neglected.

Structure of thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and begins by outlining the literature review strategy adopted. The three frames of reference characterizing the employment relationship and the employment relations trends in both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are then explained. This is followed by a discussion on the use of discourse and rhetoric during workplace struggles and organisational restructuring. Chapter 3 introduces the research design, cases and methodology. The rationale for choosing cases in the UK and the Republic of Ireland is first established and the specific organizations chosen are

justified. The research philosophy and data collection processes are then introduced. This is followed by a discussion on the data collected and methodologies employed. The cross-country comparative case study evidence from the analysis is presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 focuses on the first research question at country and workplace level. Chapter 5 and 6 address the second research question by unpicking four workplace disputes, two at London Underground and two at Dublin Bus, respectively. In Chapter 7, the thesis concludes by summarizing the findings and comparing them against prior knowledge in the academic literature. The main contributions, implications and limitations of the thesis are then pinpointed, and further avenues of research are suggested.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study compares and contrasts employment relations struggles over organisational restructuring in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The following two research questions are explored:

RQ1: How do comparative contextual factors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ2: How is union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

First, my literature review strategy is explained and justified. This is followed by an overview of the three frames of reference characterizing the employment relationship. Then, the relationship between the three frames of reference and employment relations trends in the UK and the Republic of Ireland is discussed. Following this, the chapter critically evaluates the state of knowledge on the use of discourse and rhetoric during workplace disputes and organisational restructuring in the fields of employment relations, corporate communication and organization studies. The chapter concludes by outlining the role of mainstream media in shaping public opinion on particular employment relations disputes and social media in creating a collective identity amongst employees.

Literature review strategy

The literature review is integral to the thesis as it discusses prior theoretical and empirical literature related to my two research questions, and justifies the study by identifying key knowledge gaps. My literature review takes a narrative form, thus, the aim was to conduct a reasonably comprehensive and critical assessment of the literature to provide an overview of a particular field of study, in this case, employment relations and workplace struggle. A narrative literature review is the predominant form used in many areas of social research because it suits fields of study with fluid subject boundaries, often subject to change. This form of literature review differs from a systematic review which has gained prominence in recent years, notably in scientific fields, such as medical science. A systematic literature review tends to focus on the technical aspects of how research is conducted, rather than the analytical interpretations

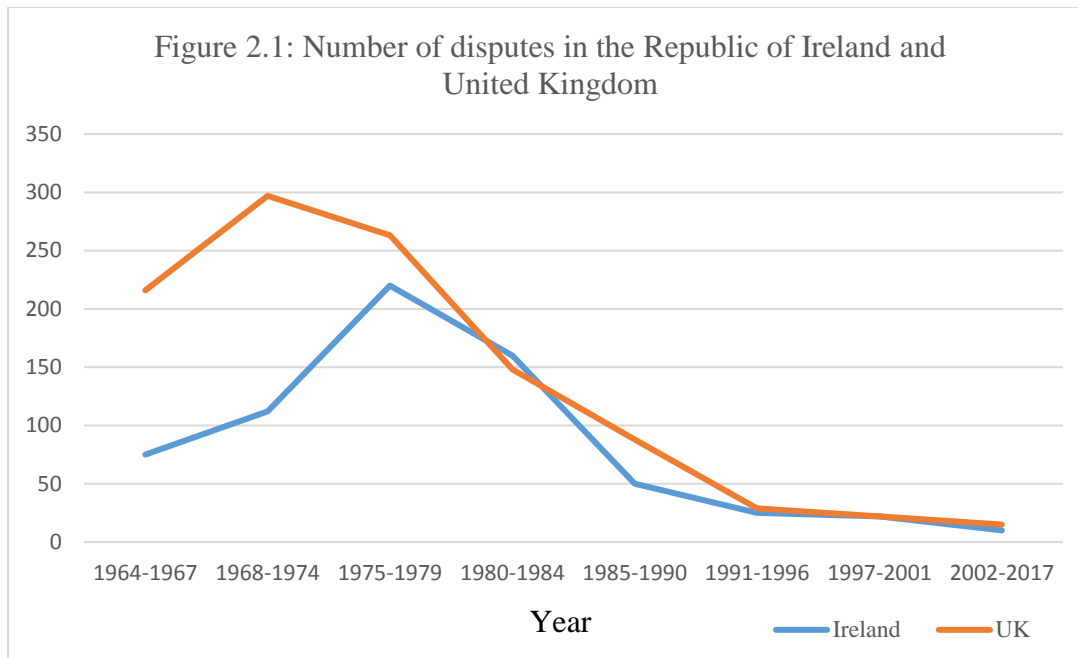
generated by the research. Furthermore, when conducting a systematic review, the method used to decide what literature to include is fairly rigid because researchers are required to evaluate literature based on a methodological criteria (Bryman, 2012).

Conducting the literature review for this study was first guided by my chosen research topic, that is, workplace struggle in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. I read a wide range of academic and grey resources including books, journal articles, conference papers and reports. The aim was to identify and grasp the various theories and concepts relevant to this area of study, and assess prior empirical work in the field. I soon realized during this process that broadening my focus to incorporate literature on the (de)legitimization of organisational change, discourse and rhetoric would be beneficial. I reviewed the relevant theoretical and empirical literature using a critical approach. This required considering factors such as, how the resource related to previous resources I had read (e.g., does it contradict/complement other resources, or does it present a different perspective?), the strengths and weaknesses of the resource (e.g., in terms of the methodology and research design adopted), the contributions offered (e.g., theoretical, methodological, empirical) and the assumptions made by the author. Adopting a critical approach when conducting the literature review exposed knowledge gaps, helped to re-fine my research questions and highlighted the contributions of my thesis. Searching for, reading and critically evaluating the relevant literature was an ongoing process throughout my PhD.

The importance of studying workplace disputes

A strike can be defined as “a temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce demand” (Griffin, 1939: 2). As Wallace et al. (2013) note, from a union perspective, strikes can cut both ways. On the one hand, engaging in industrial action may force managers to meet union demands and increase union power. On the other hand, an unsuccessful strike may lead to a decrease in union membership and the weakening of a union.

As shown in Figure 2.1 industrial dispute frequency in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, the two contexts focused on in the study, has declined dramatically since the 1970s. This trend is mirrored in other countries across the world (Dundon et al., 2017; Godard, 2011; Kelly, 2015).



Adapted from: Central Statistics Office (CSO, 2017), Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2017)

Studying workplace disputes continues to be a crucial area of research and has received considerable academic attention in recent years (e.g., Currie and Teague, 2015, 2016; Currie et al., 2017; Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Emmott, 2015; Kelly, 2015; Lyddon, 2015; Marginson, 2015; Martinez Lucio, 2015a; Nowak, 2015; Seifert, 2015; Teague et al., 2015). Even though strikes are far less common, this does not necessarily indicate that all organizations are harmonious (Edwards, 1986, 2003; Hughes and Dundon, 2018; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995; Van den Broek and Dundon, 2012). It may be that hidden conflict exists within organizations (Edwards, 2006; Lukes, 1974, 2005) and that dominant managerial ideologies, such as unitarism, neoliberalism, new public management and human resource management, prevent such conflict from becoming overt. What is more, it may be that conflict is being expressed in other forms than conventional collective strike action (Currie et al., 2017; Gall, 2013). Strikes are the most overt form of conflict (Wallace et al., 2013), thus, they visibly remind us of the inherent antagonism within the employment relationship (Edwards, 1986).

In addition, labour disputes are a vital area of study because of their possible broader implications (Kelly, 2015). Strikes as an overt form of conflict can undoubtedly result in economic and policy implications (e.g., severe financial consequences or changes in policies). However, the latent conflict that may be uncovered by studying strikes also has serious

ramifications attached (e.g., individuals view inequality as natural and inevitable) (Lukes, 2005).

To investigate the portrayal of workplace disputes, we must first consider how the employment relationship, notably workplace conflict, is understood by different social actors. For this purpose, the following section will outline the three main frames of reference, namely unitarism, pluralism and radicalism. This typology provides the theoretical foundation for the two research questions underpinning this study:

RQ1: How do comparative contextual factors in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ2: How is union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

The three frames of reference on employment relations

Employment relations in the workplace are often the subject of intense debate and controversy. The sharply contrasting interpretations of employment relations at work are particularly salient in academic scholarship (Heery, 2016). Research on the employment relationship tends to adopt unitarist, pluralist or radical positions.

Rival unitarist, pluralist and radical frames of reference for understanding the employment relationship were pioneered by Alan Fox (1966, 1974, 1979) and have since been elaborated upon, relabelled, cleaved into sub-frames, and debated by other scholars (Brown, 2000; Budd and Bhavé, 2008; Fox, 1966, 1974; Heery, 2016; Wallace et al., 2013; Watson, 2012). Classic and revised formulations of the frames are drawn upon not only to describe the world, but also to root assertions about how the world should or should not be. Frames of reference constitute “packages of values and assumptions” (Budd and Behave, 2008: 93), they can be referred to as discourses - “way[s] of representing aspects of the world associated with a particular perspective,” (Fairclough, 2003: 215) and ideologies - “representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation,” (Fairclough, 2003: 218). Put simply, the frames are characterised by competing claims about the origins and compatibility of worker, employer and state interests (needs, wants and aspirations) (Budd and Bhavé, 2008; Heery, 2016). How the frames of reference and their

conception of interests are brought into play during workplace disputes remains an underexplored issue, especially with regard to comparative country contexts. The task of this section is to expose the zones of contention between unitarism, pluralism and radicalism (see Heery, 2016).

Unitarism

Fox (1966: 12) defines unitarism as a “doctrine of common purpose, and harmony of interests”. The main assumption underpinning this frame of reference is that an ‘identity of interests’ exists between employers and their employees (Hyman, 1989; Kaufman, 2010; Wallace et al., 2013; Watson, 2012). Fox (1966) notes that ‘team’ and ‘family’ metaphors are often used to convey a harmonious organization where everyone is working together to achieve common objectives and common goals. Unitarism assumes that conflict is deviant, stimulated by poor management practices, the political interests of shop stewards and ‘troublemaker’ trade union leaders (Dundon and Gollan, 2007; Heery, 2015; Siebert et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2013).

Godard (2000) divides the unitary canon into ‘managerialist’ and ‘neo-classical’ orientations. As per Fox’s (1966) original unitarist perspective, the former camp emphasizes that a ‘family’ organisational culture, fomented through progressive management strategies, techniques and practices, fulfils both worker and employer interests. The latter camp adopts a free-market approach and postulates that employer and employee interests can be aligned by unconfined labour markets (Heery, 2016). This orientation corresponds to Budd and Bhavé’s (2008) ‘egoist’ frame which views the employment relationship as a simple, ‘one-off’, buyer-seller transaction contract, where individuals endeavour to maximize utility. This split between managerialist and neo-classical orientations corresponds to ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ unitarism (Heery, 2015, 2016). Advocates of soft unitarism propose sophisticated HRM policies emphasizing personal development, job satisfaction, autonomy and teamwork, while proponents of the hard stamp stress the need for work intensification, direct managerial control, and close monitoring (Thompson, 2011).

The neo-classical and ‘egoist’ perspectives are anchored in rational choice and free-market ideology which glorify a self-interested and self-reliant ‘homo economicus’. The economic and social behaviours of ‘homo economicus’ are driven by utility maximisation (Fleming, 2017). Individuals are assumed to partake free-willingly in contractual relations with others (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; Bowles, 2016; Fleming, 2017; Sayer, 2017). Such assumptions have been contested by scholars from various areas of employment, including moral economy researchers

who tend to use the work of Sayer (2000, 2010, 2011, 2017) as an initial anchor point to explain workplace behaviours.

Moral economy scholarship humanizes economic analysis and argues that multi-dimensional actor (worker) motivations are an empirical question that cannot be determined *ex ante* (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Bowles, 2016; Sayer, 2000). Individuals have ‘thick’ (multiple) needs, including economic and physical needs, but also multi-layered social and psychological needs (Sayer, 2011). What is more, ‘wealth’ is anything encouraging human flourishing, not only money (Sayer, 2017).

The ‘moral economy’ constitutes ‘norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others’ (Sayer, 2000: 79). Such norms extend beyond exploitation and equality to assumptions about the ‘public good’ or the well-being, needs and survival of ‘people’ as a collective (Fleming, 2017; Sayer, 2000). Moral economy scholarship foregrounds how individual actions (e.g., during workplace disputes), are steered by a multi-layered moral economy nexus of reciprocal obligations, rights, values, trust dynamics and social relations (Bolton et al., 2012; Fox, 1974; Gouldner, 1960, Sayer, 2007). Gouldner (1960: 170) discusses the moral norm of reciprocity and elucidates that ‘reciprocity’ is more than patterns of social exchange and mutual dependency, it is a fundamental component of ‘moral codes’, defining “certain actions and obligations as repayments for benefits received”. The moral norm of reciprocity shapes relations between managers and employees, or between co-workers. Importantly, it functions in context-dependent ways, not unconditionally.

Critical employment relations scholars continue to subject unitarism to great scrutiny and yet, this frame of reference has been the dominant ideological discourse since around 1980. Kaufman (2008) asserts that in reality, unitarism constitutes a top-down management approach through which conflict, employee voice and collective representation is either minimized or denied. Siebert et al. (2015) refer to unitarism as a descriptive and normative theory used by employers to prescribe how they think organizations should function: aligned interests, little if any conflict and no trade union involvement. This mechanism legitimates managerial prerogative, control, power and authority (Wallace et al., 2013). Unitarism possesses a persuasive dimension, it demonstrates to society that managers are technical experts who should be trusted to manage their employees and control employment policy (Geare et al., 2014).

A reoccurring argument made by critics of the unitary frame, relating to Legge's (2005) infamous 'rhetoric-reality' dyad, is that the picture painted by normative unitarism often contrasts with empirical unitarism (the effects of unitarism in reality) (e.g., Brown, 2000; Budd and Bhavé 2008; Cullinane and Dundon, 2012; Van Buren et al., 2011). Unitary postulations relating to mutual interests and conflict may represent the ideal, but sugar-coat reality and are unrealistic in terms of practical implementation in the real world (Heery, 2016; Van Buren et al., 2011). This scepticism brings us to the second frame of reference known as pluralism.

Pluralism

Pluralism is based on the premise that conflict within organizations is healthy and inevitable because employers and employees aim to pursue divergent interests, goals and objectives, in addition to sharing some common interests (Brown, 2000; Heery, 2015; Wallace et al., 2013; Watson, 2012). Labour cannot be regarded as a common commodity and cannot be bought as part of a 'one off' transaction contract. For the pluralist camp, the employment relationship constitutes a range of intermediate open-ended contracts which must be constantly re-negotiated due to the changing expectations, interests and goals of the parties involved (Colling and Terry, 2010).

This frame of reference postulates that employers should accept the different legitimate interests held by organisational stakeholders and seek to balance and control those interests, rather than trying to unify the organization. Balancing and controlling divergent interests involves managers sharing their power advantage with employees (Siebert et al., 2015). Contrary to unitarism, the natural power advantage employers have over employees is acknowledged on the pluralist wing (Sisson, 2008). However, pluralists believe that the power disparity and opposing interests between employees and managers can be addressed through institutionalizing employee participation rights. In this sense, a balance can be achieved between employee and manager interests through regulation or negotiation processes, such as collective bargaining, which takes place between trade unions and employers (Clegg, 1975; Heery, 2016; Kaufman, 2010). This is assumed to provide employees with opportunities to voice their concerns and fulfil the interests of both parties. Pluralists emphasize how workers have a key interest in being involved in the production of rules, practices and procedures, for example through union or non-union voice mechanisms (Heery, 2016). They refute the unitarist dictum that trade unions are irritants aggravating conflict. Instead, they are regarded as legitimate representatives of employees (Budd and Bhavé, 2008; Watson, 2012).

Pluralists extend the definition of substantive worker interests beyond economic and material goods, as stressed in unitarist neo-classical orientations, by highlighting the notion of 'well-being' (Heery, 2016). For example, Flanders (1970: 42) affirms that trade unions not only focus on the material standards of living of their members, "but equally their security, status and self-respect; in short their dignity as human beings."

Ackers (2002, 2014) is a contemporary advocate of what has been labelled 'neo-pluralism'. This modern variation of classic pluralism highlights the scope for collaborative mutual gains achieved through partnership between employers and unions. However, neo-pluralism has been criticized for moving too far in the direction of unitarism by over-exaggerating the prospects for mutuality and workplace order, and emphasising the need to adapt to business realism and competitiveness (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Heery, 2015).

Pluralists assume that the state should also play an active role in regulating and institutionalizing the employment relationship. Like employers, the state should accept the conflicting interests of all parties concerned, acknowledge the power disparity between social actors and enforce regulation to ensure equitable outcomes as far as possible (Budd and Bhawe, 2008).

Radicalism

In his later work, Fox (1979) admits that he subscribes to the pluralist frame of reference, notwithstanding, only on a normative basis. He agrees that pluralism prescribes how society should be, but he opines that pluralist values are not realisable in the current capitalist system. Fox (1974) asserts that his third frame of reference, known as radicalism, depicts how society actually functions in reality. Akin to pluralism, this perspective also criticises the unitarist premise that conflict is dysfunctional and that employers and employees share common goals and interests. Embedded in 'political economy theory' (Uno, 1980), radicalism holds that capitalist owners use the labour inputs provided by their employees to generate as much profit as possible during the labour process. Employees offer their labour to employers to earn a wage. Employers view employees as a cost that can be reduced and manipulated, for example by decreasing their wages, or by automating jobs. The resistance from employees to these 'cost cutting' strategies often stimulates conflict (Hyman, 1989).

Some radicals subscribe to the view that the employment relationship embeds a 'frontier of control' (Goodrich, 1920). The frontier of control intersecting worker autonomy and managerial authority, summarizes the extent and constraints of employee/manager power over

the labour process. Specifically, the frontier mainly sketches the degree of employee/manager power over work organization at the point of production/service delivery, known as ‘detailed control’ (Edwards, 1986), which will be elaborated on later. The fluid, incomplete frontier shifts, as managers and employees shape the terms of the effort-reward bargain (Baldamus, 1961). It has been previously noted in Chapter 1 that employment relations concerns the “study of the rules governing employment” (Clegg, 1975: 1). However, the establishment of such rules is complex, because few day-to-day working arrangements are stipulated solely through formal employment contracts. Rare examples include annual holidays or pay. Instead, working arrangements are often governed by informal understandings (Edwards, 2003). Employers and employees informally negotiate implicit contracts, and their perceptions about whether reciprocal expectations regarding work obligations are met, or violated, constantly shift (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013; Hyman, 1987). Employment indeterminacy creates spaces for tacit bargaining, renegotiation and conflict.

Radicalism also acknowledges power imbalances embedded within the employment relationship. However, contrary to pluralism, the core assumption underpinning the third frame of reference is that the structural dynamics of the capitalist exchange relationship between employers and employees cannot be balanced by implementing institutional and procedural reforms advocated by pluralists (i.e. collective bargaining) (Brown, 2000; Wallace et al., 2013; Watson, 2012). Radicalism postulates that while both parties depend on each other for mutual survival, employers hold a permanent power advantage because the demand for jobs from employees to earn a living is invariably higher than employer demand for employees’ labour; therefore, the labour contract is structurally asymmetrical in power and authority (Edwards, 1986; Fells and Prowse, 2016; Heery, 2016; Kaufman and Gall, 2015). The radical frame of reference can be sub-divided into various branches of radicalism, including political Marxism and radical pluralism.

Political Marxism

Political Marxism emphasizes how common conflict is within organizations and posits that labour relations are not self-contained within the workplace. Political Marxists are influenced by the materialist sociology of Karl Marx (1970, 1983) and Harry Braverman’s (1974) work on labour process analysis.

Marxists postulate that a capitalist society inevitably leads to the proletariat being exploited by the bourgeois. This argument hinges on the following assertions: in order to earn a wage,

workers become part of a labour process where their labour power (mental and physical ability to work) is used to produce a good or service. Workers are exploited because labour constitutes 'value', but workers only receive a portion of this 'value', the remainder fulfils the private need of the capitalist, namely, profit accumulation (Kaufman, 2010; Smith, 2015). Political Marxism centres on the premise that employer and employee interests inherently clash because lower wages for employees leads to higher profits for employers (Kaufman and Gall, 2015).

Marxists discuss the structure-agency interaction shaping conflict and resistance. However, their analysis tends to be curtailed by the premise that widespread militant action spearheaded and mobilized by politicized workplace activists is the best way of improving working conditions and forcing radical change in the capitalist political economy (Connolly and Darlington 2012; Darlington 2009a:b; Gall, 2013; Kelly 1998, 2004; Seifert 2015). For example, Seifert (2015: 755) considers purveying politicized struggle to be a union's key role. Gall (2009: 1) warns that unless militant struggles such as those in the 1970s in the UK are replicated, labour unionism "will be blown asunder".

Further, over the past twenty years or so, Darlington (2001, 2009a:b, 2012) has published widely on the political radicalization role played by left-wing political activists within the RMT union during workplace conflicts in organisations such as London Underground. Left-wing activists are praised for challenging more moderate employment relations approaches, for critically questioning the capitalist system and for developing a notion of working class consciousness. Even though Darlington (2012: 521) appreciates the importance of structural and agentic forces or "objective conditioning and subjective influencing factors", his analysis of 'agency' is impeded by an emphasis on the importance of left wing leadership. Left wing leaders undoubtedly mould RMT resistance to some extent. However, the multiple experiences of union representatives and lay members need unpicking to identify other intersecting forces during a concrete dispute, including limitations to the scope of mobilization and tensions between individual worker identities. Another unfortunate by-product of a Marxist position is scant interrogation of the diversity of discursive/identity mechanisms shaping conflict and dissent.

Kelly's (1996, 1998) militant-moderate typology is often referred to by proponents of radicalism, including Marxists. His framework is based on five pillars: ideology, membership resources, institutional resources, goals and methods, which are outlined in Table 2.1. In essence, he proposes a dichotomous framework of militant versus moderate unions. Militant

unions depend on member mobilisation, follow an ideology based on conflicting interests and often engage in industrial action. By contrast, moderate unions depend on employers, rarely take industrial action and follow an ideology based on partnership.

Table 2.1: Contrasting militant and moderate unions		
Component	Militancy	Moderation
Goals	Ambitious demands with few concessions	Moderate demands with some or many concessions
Membership Resources	Strong reliance on mobilization of union membership	Strong reliance of employers, third parties, law
Institutional Resources	Exclusive reliance on collective bargaining	Willingness to experiment with/ support non-bargaining
Methods	Frequent threat or use of industrial action	Infrequent threat or use of industrial action
Ideology	Ideology of conflicting interests	Ideology of partnership
Source: Kelly (1998: 61)		

Kelly (1996, 1998) outlines common arguments made by those supporting moderation over militancy. Advocates argue that by moderating their demands and offering some or many concessions, unions mitigate the risk of union de-recognition or job loss. Taking industrial action is perceived unfavourable by those favouring moderation, either because it will prevent unions from meeting their goals, or because it could lead to a ‘Pyrrhic victory’ (Darlington, 2001). This means that unions believe even if their goals can be met by taking industrial action, this strategy is still ineffective because of the high financial costs incurred by striking workers.

However, Kelly (1998, 2004) insists that union revitalization and survival requires strategies based on militancy and mobilization, as opposed to cooperation with employers. He views social partnership as unfeasible because of employer opposition to trade unionism and collective bargaining. Moderation allegedly has a corrosive impact on the willingness and ability of employees to withstand employer demands, making unions vulnerable and weak. An ideology of common goals is promulgated which results in co-opting union officials to incorporate managerial objectives. A related criticism is made by Danford et al. (2014), who assert that moderate approaches involving union-management partnerships are as useful as a ‘chocolate tea pot’. Such arrangements prioritise employer interests and limit both union independence and influence.

However, the consequences for employer, employee and union interests when militant or moderate union approaches are adopted are not always clear-cut. For instance, the three main theoretical perspectives on workplace partnership are: mutual gains (all parties can potentially benefit from partnership, even possibly to equal degrees), pessimistic (unions and workers are highly unlikely to achieve any benefits from partnership), constrained mutuality (unions and employees can benefit from partnership but the balance of advantage tends to tip in employer favour) (Dobbins, 2008). When examining workplace partnership in the Irish financial sector, Geary and Trif (2011) argue that because of the complexity and ambiguity of employment relations at their case study organization, their evidence does not fully support any of the three perspectives.

Further, Bacon and Blyton (2002) offer a rebuttal of Kelly's (1996, 1998) thesis. They refer to previous studies outlining how moderate approaches have enabled some unions to play a positive role in US companies, such as Motorola, Saturn and Xerox and have enhanced relations between unions and their members. Bacon and Blyton (2002) also repudiate Kelly's (1996, 1998) claim that moderate unions embrace 'partnership' ideologies which downplay the level of conflict within the employment relationship and promote a unitarist perspective. In their survey of members from moderate and militant unions, they concluded that the latter did not express the unitarist dictum of all organisational members sharing the same goals and objectives to a greater extent than the former. However, their results implied that militant unions were permitted greater involvement in organisational decision-making than moderate unions.

A limitation of Kelly's (1996, 1998) moderate-militant typology, noted by Kelly (1996, 1998) himself and other scholars since (e.g., Bacon and Blyton, 2002; Darlington, 2001), is that unions do not always have freedom of choice regarding their methods, goals and resources. Social actors, notably the government and employers may restrict methods, for example, industrial action (exemplified by the Trade Union Act 2016), or may abrogate resources, for example, particular employment laws. Accordingly, union militancy and moderation can emerge as a consequence of interactions between unions and their environment, not necessarily because of union preferences.

This point is particularly salient in Taylor and Bain's (2001) study of financial sector call centres. They refer to how the MFI union was forced to sign a 'no strike agreement' with management at Banking Direct, as this was the only way the union could gain recognition. Due

to this deal, the union was not able to apply a militant approach to resist the implementation of flexible working practices by management; instead, it chose to negotiate with managers in order to dampen the negative impact on employees and to represent employees in disciplinary hearings following the enforcement of these working practices.

Radical pluralism

Radical pluralism analytically bridges across pluralist and Marxist frames by supporting some of the assumptions underpinning both frames, yet criticizing others. Scholars endorsing this variant of radical thought include, originally, Fox (1974, 1979), Goldthorpe (1974) and, more recently, Edwards (1986, 1990, 2014) and Blyton and Turnbull (2004).

Radical pluralists often use the term ‘structured antagonism’, initially brought to prominence by Edwards (1986), to reflect that conflict between managers and employees not only exists at the level of interests (e.g., the inherent conflict between managers and employees), but also at the relatively autonomous level of concrete behaviour in the workplace (e.g., strike action by workers) (Budd and Bhawe, 2008; Watson, 2012). Whether conflict at the former level escalates to the latter level is contingent on the contextual setting and numerous colliding forces (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2014; Fleetwood, 2013). Radical pluralists posit that examining workplace relations requires a multi-disciplinary multi-level approach, where external and internal forces are scrutinized. Socio-economic forces, subjective perceptions and individual preferences (Edwards, 1990) re-shape and re-position the frontier of control, influencing behavioural outcomes. Additionally and adding another layer of complexity, strategies of control and resistance may emerge in less observable ways (Edwards, 2006).

A radical pluralist-materialist approach refutes the assumption of a conflict ‘spill over’ effect and proposes that class struggle within organizations should be regarded as separate from conflict in wider society, arguing that there is not automatic correlation between the two (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Smith, 2015). This assumption is referred to by Edwards (1986, 1990, 2003, 2014) as ‘relative autonomy’ of the labour process within capitalist accumulation regimes. ‘Relative’ in the sense that external factors exert pressures on day-to-day conflict, yet ‘autonomous’ because the degree of influence these external factors exert can diverge greatly, depending on specific contextual circumstances. External macro factors are therefore mediated by internal micro-organisational influences (Edwards, 1990). This point is illuminated in Edwards and Scullion’s (1982) study of seven factories. They tease out different patterns of

conflict and accommodation in each factory, even though some were operating in similar product markets, located in the same area and even owned by the same firm.

Radical pluralism and the ‘frontier of control’ (Goodrich, 1920) concept also highlight that management and labour rationales regarding workplace control constantly change, depending on context. ‘Control’ and ‘workplace autonomy’ do not fit nicely into two separate boxes. Control is multi-dimensional (Edwards, 1986) and does not always involve solely ‘controlling employees’ (Edwards, 2017; Hyman, 1987). Managers must balance the competing pressures of control and cooperation embedded within the employment relationship (Currie et al., 2017). They may attempt to do this by applying more collaborative workplace partnership initiatives where managers concede somewhat greater employee autonomy, albeit, never full autonomy, (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Geary and Dobbins, 2001; Thompson and Van den Broek, 2010). The objective here would be to harness employee co-operation, commitment, creativity and produce mutual gains outcomes for both parties. Equally, workers do not deliberately set out to reject all forms of capitalist authority and engage in ‘crippling resistance’. Employees accept managerial control in some situations, however reject it in others (Bélanger and Edwards, 2013; Collinson et al., 1997; Edwards, 2017). Accordingly, workplace co-operation and managerial control co-exist (Dobbins, 2008).

Edwards (1986, 2017) instructively demarcates between detailed and general control. Detailed control involves controlling immediate work tasks, a zero-sum concept, where one individual/group is disadvantaged and another individual/group benefits. Workplaces contain multiple direct control mechanisms and workers experience greater managerial control in some contexts and less in others. General control is not directly measurable, it signals the degree employees generally accept capitalist authority and the extent of employee commitment to the broader organisational objective of producing surplus value. Importantly, general control need not hinge on detailed control. For instance, managers seeking to enlist cooperation from employees and enhance general control, may implement more subtle control strategies and devolve a degree of worker autonomy over immediate work tasks. This echoes Friedman’s (1977) ‘responsible autonomy control strategies’, which soften or obscure the exploitative capital-labour relation by utilizing fewer rigid control mechanisms and providing somewhat greater employee discretion at task level. As previously noted, Goodrich’s (1920) valuable insights into the ‘frontier of control’ mainly refers to detailed control at the point of production, not general control. He elucidates that worker resistance during frontier of control struggles is reactive and protective with the aim of shielding specific material interests concerning work

organization at the immediate point of production, rather than seeking industrial democracy as an end to itself.

Workers experience control and influence in varying ‘depths’, ‘scope’, ‘levels’ and ‘forms’ (Dundon et al., 2017; Marchington, and Wilkinson 2005; Wilkinson et al., 2013), spurring multiple and conflicting consequences in terms of their individual concerns (Edwards, 2014). Bélanger and Edwards (2007) favour the term ‘concerns’ over interests, as it denotes that concerns are complex formulations, evolving over time and sculpted by situational forces. Concerns cannot be shoehorned into simplified categories, such as ‘intrinsically orientated’ or ‘extrinsically orientated’ (Watson, 2012). Moreover, the worker-employer dyad does not produce homogenous sets of predetermined and fixed preferences (Geary and Gamwell, 2017). Shifting lines of division exist amongst workers and managers based on gender, age, race, and class (Edwards, 2017; Heery, 2016). At different points in time, individual employees and managers, ‘push’ the frontier in multiple ways, directions and to varying extents, depending on contextual conditions.

Unions adapt to the contextual circumstances sculpted by various internal and external factors by adopting a combination of militant and moderate postures. Several scholars have pointed to the push and pull of conflict *versus* cooperation. For example, Dundon and Dobbins (2015) investigate a ‘new employment relations partnership’ model at an organization in the Republic of Ireland and uncover the conflict-cooperation couplet, moulded by multiple internal and external factors. They argue that a neo-pluralist frame espousing partnership and a political Marxist frame espousing conflict do not fully capture these intricate dynamics. In reality, workplace partnership initiatives involving collaboration between managers, employees and their unions to produce mutual gain outcomes co-exist with antagonistic relations.

Taylor and Bain (2001: 57) demonstrate that unions may adapt their approaches depending on the workplace issue concerned. They explain that at Wingspan, another UK call centre, the Union for the Finance Industry (UNIFI) was able to circumscribe management’s power to enforce disciplinary procedures linked to not reaching targets, by creating “a boundary, across which management knows it cannot cross without provoking conflict”. However, concerning other issues, such as understaffing and appraisals, a major complaint from union members was that the union chose not to promote itself enough because it feared being perceived as too militant by managers.

Unions may also choose to apply different strategies in different country contexts because of the contextual circumstances they face. MacKenzie (2009) examines how the Communication Workers Union (CWU) responded to the external outsourcing of Eircom, an Irish telecommunications company. Despite CWU's strong opposition towards the subcontracting of Eircom's services during the early and mid-1990s, by the end of the 1990s the union decided to embark on a 'proactive engagement strategy,' involving enterprise-level partnership agreements. This strategy was not designed to prevent the external outsourcing of services, but to shape the outcomes of the outsourcing. The union used the agreements as a mechanism to ensure, firstly, that contracts were awarded to unionized firms and secondly, that Eircom employees were guaranteed three years of work as an agency worker for one of the external companies.

Ramirez et al. (2007) discuss the response of the same union CWU, to the restructuring of British Telecom in the UK. By contrast, in this case the CWU chose to adopt a defensive and reactive approach. It was not willing to engage with the restructuring, support new 'high performance work practices' introduced by managers, or adopt an offensive approach against management. Ramirez et al. (2007) state that the union's choice of strategy was not surprising considering the UK's situation at the time. Even though union recognition was not under threat, the union feared marginalization under post Thatcher reforms.

Radicalism and the state

Those supporting the radical frame of reference repudiate the neutral, unbiased, portrayal of the state put forward by unitarist and pluralists. However, depending on the strand of radical thought, alternative views on the state are proposed. Some radicals, who are often, yet not always classed as political Marxists, believe that political processes may appear to create a level playing field on the surface, but in actual fact, tend to benefit the interests of employers over employees. As Kaufman and Gall (2015: 423) note, "the state is the political arm of the capitalist class." The capitalists who own the industry (i.e., big businesses), can also control the industry and will accordingly impact on the activities undertaken by the state. This assumption embraces 'instrumentalist theory' (Dewey, 1938), which hypothesises that the social elites will use the state as an 'instrument' to dominate society and to maintain class structure stability. Darlington (2014), for example, couples employers and the state under one umbrella, stating that rank and file members must be mobilized to challenge and resist employer/state prerogatives and employer/government attacks. Kelly (1998) avows that few

scholars acknowledge the capitalist nature of the state, the connection between the state and class interests and the state's prime goal of maintaining economic and political conditions that permit capital accumulation.

However, Jessop (2016) subscribes to an alternative view on the state, which he labels the 'relational' approach. Jessop (2016) admits that particular characteristics pertaining to state form make it susceptible to act in dominant class interests. Yet, according to Jessop (2016), the state has relative autonomy from dominant class clutches. On some occasions, state actions fulfil the interests of the powerful, notwithstanding, not in all cases. The recent living wage policy enforced by the UK government is a noteworthy example, but has limitations (Parker et al., 2016; Prowse and Fells, 2016). Based on Jessop's (2016) theory, state interventions are partly determined by the state's complex form, but also hinge on the relative weight of multifarious external and internal forces. The relative weight of these forces depends on conjunctural and structural factors. In terms of internal factors, the fact that the state has its own standalone set of interests, which cannot be lumped together with dominant class interests is important. Jessop (2016: 10) defines state power as "an institutionally and discursively mediated condensation (reflection and a refraction) of a changing balance of forces that seek to influence the forms, purposes and content of polity, politics and policy." However, this 'condensation' varies by country.

Jessop (2016) also draws attention to the difficulty of determining 'general capitalist interests'. Capitalists, or employers and managers in the context of this study, have a range of individual concerns, which are likely to conflict with the concerns of other employers and managers. The accumulation strategies (strategies for economic growth) pursued by different employers vary by organization and have contrasting consequences for other employers and organizations. Factors, such as the organization's position within the international economy (multinational, national), the regime of accumulation (competition, monopoly, state monopoly), the type of accumulation (commercial capital, industrial capital, banking capital) and the particular circumstances facing the organization, when the strategy is developed, all influence the accumulation strategies chosen. In similar vein, state policies have contrasting implications for different capitalists, as some policies may favour one industry over another.

Power in employment relations

'Power' is highly pertinent to this study because its acquisition and exertion shapes events during workplace struggle. Negotiating the rules and working arrangements governing

employment relationships involves power (Edwards, 2003; Ott et al., 2016). In the employment relations literature, Hyman (1975: 26) contextualized power as “ability of an individual or group to control their physical and social environment; and as part of this process, the ability to influence the decisions which are and are not taken by others”. Broadly conceived, power is a valuable resource that is mobilized by social actors to achieve shared or contested goals (Spicer and Fleming, 2014). The three frames of reference discussed in the previous section posit their own typology of power within the employment relationship.

Unitarists disregard power as an important aspect of employment relations. Power and politics are naively deemed irrelevant because all individuals within organizations share common goals and deep-seated conflict is ignored (Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Kirkbride, 1985, 1986). Pluralists acknowledge power imbalances within the employment relationship to some extent, but are criticised for conducting a shallow analysis of power. Pluralist focus solely on observable, surface-level power dynamics, yet eclipse deeper, less observable power manifestations. It is thereby argued that pluralists promote reforms permitting superficial and surface-level changes to power imbalances, rather than tackling the root causes (Heery, 2016; Kirkbride, 1985, 1986; Williams, 2014). At the other pole, radicals posit that a profound, in-depth analysis of power is imperative when examining workplace disputes. As touched upon previously, the indeterminate, open-ended nature of employment contracts create dynamic ‘frontiers of control’, as employers and employees negotiate, alter and resist the conditions of the effort-reward bargain (Baldamus, 1961). Frontier position is shaped by relative power relations, filtered through multi-dimensional internal and external forces (Goodrich, 1920). That said, different radical threads offer alternative perspectives on how power unfolds within organizations.

When theorizing power within the employment relationship, radical scholars often evoke Lukes’ (1974, 2005) influential framework identifying three faces of power. The first face of power is grounded in the work of Dahl (1957). This dimension holds that individuals are aware of their interests and preferences. Observable conflict occurs when the expressed views of one individual contradicts the expressed views of another. Put simply, power is exercised when ‘A’ gets ‘B’ to do something ‘B’ would not have otherwise done (Spicer and Fleming, 2014).

The second facet of power is drawn from work by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and is considered the pluralist perspective on power. This dimension supersedes the first dimension, by recognizing the power of ‘non-decision making’. The second mode of power posits that

individuals can wield power by mobilizing bias towards particular preferences, whilst suppressing alternative preferences. It follows from this understanding that some issues are kept off the agenda and the scope of decision-making is restricted. Akin to the first dimension, the second dimension assumes that individuals can recognize their preferences and that conflict is observable (Kirkbride, 1985; Spicer and Fleming, 2014). As mentioned above, pluralists assume that power imbalances and inequalities between the powerful and powerless can be overcome through robust regulation and reforms of institutions. Radical critics argue that a pluralist analysis of power is truncated, and that researchers need to penetrate deeper than the first and second faces of power to capture how structurally determined power relations are produced, maintained and challenged in less observable ways.

Proponents of radicalism tend to operationalize power by turning to Lukes' (2005) 'radical view' of power or 'invisible power'. They emphasize domination which refers to a process whereby the outcome of a particular act advances or does not harm the interests of the social elites, but suppresses the interests of the individual(s) being dominated (Lukes, 2005). The powerless are often unaware of their domination as they cannot always recognize or express their 'real interests'. This mode of power is exercised when social actors use language associated with specific (usually dominant) discourses, to make individuals view particular behaviours, actions, assumptions and unequal power relations as 'common-sense', that is, they are unquestioned and deemed natural, obvious and unchangeable (Fleming and Spicer, 2007).

'Invisible power' is linked to another conceptualization of power, developed by the Marxist political philosopher, Antonio Gramsci (1971). Gramsci (1971) views politics as a struggle over 'hegemony'. Individuals achieve hegemony by using language to universalize particular visions, representations of the world and assumptions, i.e., they become 'common sense' (Fairclough, 2003, 2010). Achieving hegemony is ideological, in the sense that it enables individuals to establish or maintain their position of dominance (Delbridge, 2007).

Though both radical pluralists and political Marxists highlight deeper, more invisible forms of power, the former argue that the latter offer a partial theory of power. First, they do not acknowledge that workplace relations encompass an interplay between 'power over' and 'power to'. The latter constitutes a positive sum concept where power exertion advances common interests and helps 'get things done' (Sisson, 2012: 177). For example, managers may build power-sharing collaborations with employees, enabling both parties to achieve a mutually desired goal. Power here is 'productive' and transformative. Indeed, several scholars assert that

power can be exercised to meet particular objectives without suppressing the interests of others, the interests of others may, in actual fact, be benefited (Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Edwards, 2006; Fleming and Spicer, 2007, Sisson, 2008; Spicer and Fleming, 2014). However, radical pluralists contend that whilst political Marxists downplay this aspect of power, traditional pluralists tend to overstate the capacity of ‘power to’ attain mutual gains in a capitalist political economy.

Second, radical pluralists repudiate the postulation in Lukes’ (2005) third facet of power, that human agents (individual or collective) are free to decide whether they exercise power or not. Lukes (2005: 72) states, “we will not attribute power to structures or relations or processes that cannot be categorized as agents”. Radical pluralism holds that legal, economic, political and historical structures all inscribe power. Common values, beliefs and behaviours can be moulded as individuals adapt to changes in these structures, not necessarily through employers enacting ‘power over’ employees through domination (Edwards, 2006). Radical pluralists theorize power as an interplay between structure and agency. Social structures permit and restrict human actions/agency, but human actions/agency transform and reproduce the social structures they are influenced by.

Fox’s (1974) triumvirate of unitarism, pluralism and radicalism each endorse particular power divisions between different social actors. However, the three discourses (and their sub-frames) used by social actors are enmeshed in a continuous struggle for dominance, shaped by structural forces and human actions; thus it is possible for a dominant discourse to be superseded and the balance of power between social actors to shift over time, as shown in the following section (Ackers, 2014; Edwards, 2003, 2006; Fairclough, 2005).

The historical background of employment relations in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland

This study aims to compare and contrast employment relations and workplace conflict in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, by focusing in particular on two case study organizations, London Underground and Dublin Bus. This aim cannot be achieved without looking ‘upwards’ to the contexts both cases reside within (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014). This involves examining not only immediate contexts, but also historical legacies that shape them. The employment relations background of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom have been moulded by the hegemonic struggle between the different frames of reference and discourses discussed above. The following section maps out this interplay by discussing the

employment relations background of labour disputes in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, respectively.

Employment relations in the UK

1900-1980s

During the 19th and early 20th century a ‘voluntarist’ model of employment relations emerged in the UK, following legislation such as the Trade Disputes Act 1906 (TDA, 1906). This model constituted voluntarily settlements between actors in the employment relationship, notably through collective bargaining between employers and trade unions as opposed to rules being imposed by the state (Dobbins, 2010; Flanders, 1970). Both employers and trade unions supported the general lack of government intervention and preferred to engage in “a free collective bargaining tussle” (Teague and McCartney, 1999: 344), rather than being constrained by what the government saw as permissible and non-permissible employment relations behaviour. However, despite the support of employment relations actors, this system led to many employment relations difficulties. McCarthy (1975) explains that voluntarism and the low level of regulation it embraces, made implementing worker participation and involvement policies extremely difficult. Adversarialism became a key feature of the system, which lubricated mistrust and suspicion between employers, employees and their unions (Teague and McCartney, 1999).

The depth of workplace mistrust fuelled high levels of industrial conflict between 1960 and 1968, a period regarded as the “golden age for trade unionism” (Nowak, 2015: 685). Collective bargaining coverage between employers and trade unions stood at 75%-80% (Brown et al., 2003) and union density (indicating the percentage of the workforce unionized) was 43% (Marginson, 2015: 646). However, this period also represents the emergence of decreases in profit accumulation and the vulnerability of the post-war system across the globe, most notably in liberal market economies (such as the UK) (Godard, 2011). These conditions hindered any pacification within the employment relationship. Accordingly, levels of industrial action in almost every industry increased (Hyman, 1989).

During the late 1960s, the Donovan Commission was established in the UK to engage in a ‘politics of formalisation’ and to recommend solutions to the employment relations ills. The commission was influenced by the work of pluralist employment relations academics such as George Bain, Bill McCarthy, Allan Flanders and Hugh Clegg (Martinez Lucio, 2015a; Seifert, 2015). The report established a political consensus which considered stronger unions as

economically beneficial (Brown, 2000; Heery, 2015; Nowak, 2015). However, despite the Donovan Commission's promotion of pluralism, employment relations problems continued throughout the 1970s. As shown in Figure 2.1, the level of industrial action was at its peak during this period.

Between 1974 and 1976, the Labour Government sought to reduce industrial conflict and solve economic problems by implementing a co-operation strategy, in the form of a 'social contract' (Hyman, 1989). The 'social contract' has been described as a vehicle to enable voluntary and statutory wage constraints. Indeed, the fifth phase of the contract involved a 5% limit on wage increases, a move which was strongly rejected, not necessarily by the unions themselves, but mainly by rank and file members (Hay, 1996). This provoked a wave of public sector strikes during the winter of 1978/79, known as 'the winter of discontent' (Nowak, 2015). These problems were compounded by a very challenging economic situation. Indeed, in the 1970s the UK suffered high levels of inflation and unemployment.

Thatcherism and neoliberalism

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher was elected as new Conservative Prime Minister. In an attempt to reform the economy, Thatcher pioneered neo-liberal policies in the UK, which fed through into an anti-union employment relations policy. Neoliberalism encompasses a revitalized unitarist approach (Smith, 2009). It is a doctrine of political economic practices which hinges on the assumption that human well-being is best achieved by "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005: 2). The doctrine postulates that the state is incapable of second-guessing market prices, thus, markets should function with minimum government interference. This 'free-market' approach, relates to the 'invisible hand' notion, developed by Adam Smith (1776/1937). The notion is based on the premise that in the absence of government intervention, individuals will fulfil their own interests and an 'invisible hand' will ensure that productive resources reach their most productive uses (Deegan and Unerman, 2011). Thatcher was responsible for market deregulation and a wave of privatizations including British Airways, British Steel, British Telecom and public housing (Harvey, 2005; Nowak, 2015).

In the labour market, trade unions came under attack (Cooper et al., 2009; Nowak, 2015). Neoliberalism posits that trade unions are detrimental to the free play of market mechanisms and to the liberty of individuals (Smith, 2009). Accordingly, the Thatcher government

implemented several anti-union laws in the form of employment acts, which had a corrosive impact on trade union power (see Table 2.2 for a list of the employment acts implemented). For example, secondary picketing, which refers to industrial action in sympathy of workers in other organizations, was made illegal in the Employment Act of 1980. The Employment Act of 1984 stipulated that unions must hold secret ballots when balloting members on industrial disputes and re-elect union executives every five years. Under the Employment Act of 1988, employees were provided with greater powers to act against their trade unions, for example if workers wanted to work during unofficial strikes (Craig and Campbell, 2005; Smith and Morton, 2001). Partly as a result of these policies and the decline of the manufacturing industry the level of industrial action declined dramatically between 1979 and 1990 (see Figure 2.1). Trade unionism was not only assaulted politically, but also culturally and ideologically. Collectivism and the notion of solidarity were marginalized, whilst individualism, the idea that all individuals are rational utility-maximizers who should take responsibility for their own advancement became dominant (Nowak, 2015).

Table 2.2 below lists the employment acts passed by the Conservative Government during the Thatcherism period.

Table 2.2: Provisions of the Employment Acts implemented by the Conservative government between 1980 and 1992	
Date of Employment Act	Provisions of the Employment Act
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial action in sympathy with workers from other organizations (secondary picketing) was made illegal Closed union shops were banned. Organizations could no longer force employees to join a union (unless 80% of employees were unionized.)
1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unions were to be prosecuted or fined if they breached any employment laws.
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unions were forced to hold secret ballots every five years at the workplace to re-elect any union executives Any proposed industrial action was to be justified by a secret ballot of union members, at the workplace. Any political contributions (for example contributions to the labour party) were to be justified by a secret ballot at the workplace of union membership, every 10 years.
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secret strike ballots at the workplace were to be replaced with postal ballots. Employees were given more rights to act against their unions.
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers were not permitted to discriminate against workers or job candidates based on union membership or non-membership.
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the above rules were combined to create The Trade Union and Labour Relations (consolidation) Act 1992.
Source: Craig and Campbell (2005)	

The advent of neoliberalism and mobilizing the policies discussed above resulted in achieving hegemony, political consent and ‘common sense’ as previously discussed. Margaret Thatcher has been referred to as “the mistress of common sense-language” (Hall and O’Shea, 2013: 10). She would evoke popular opinion by asserting “we are all consumers and as consumers we want a choice. We want the best value for money” (: 11). She also closed down space for any conflicting opinions by reiterating that there was “no alternative” (Harvey, 2005: 40) to implementing neo-liberal policies.

The UK after Thatcher

The legacy of Thatcherism has left an enduring impact on employment relations in the UK (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018). Neoliberalism and the tropes of ‘value for money’, ‘modernization’ and ‘competition’ it relies upon, have continued to penetrate the minds of employers, politicians and society. Emmott (2015: 659) cogently argued that the succeeding governments after Margaret Thatcher have been “Thatcher’s children”.

The rule of the Conservative Party came to an end in May 1997 when Tony Blair, leader of the Labour Party, was elected Prime Minister (Smith and Morton, 2001). The ‘New Labour’ Government implemented a softer form of neoliberalism, preserving Conservative legislation relating to trade unions, but promoting a softer social partnership discourse (Smith and Morton, 2006). Blair’s strategy was outlined in the Labour Party’s White Paper, entitled, *Fairness at Work* (DTI, 1998). In the paper, Blair shared his goal of eliminating conflict between employers and employees by implementing a social partnership programme and by endorsing co-operative trade unionism (Smith and Morton, 2001, 2006). In June 2000, the Labour Party enacted new trade union recognition legislation for unions representing at least 10% of a proposed bargaining unit. Under the legislation, any employer spurning union recognition would be referred to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC) (Hall, 2000). However, several scholars argue that Blair’s approach to social partnership embedded unitarist values, with a strong emphasis on meeting managerial objectives (Ackers and Payne, 1998; McIlroy, 1998). Partnership between employers and employees was acceptable on some occasions, yet only if it complemented direct communication between employers and their workers (DTI, 1998; Smith, 2009; Smith and Morton, 2006). ‘New Labour’ was defeated in 2010 by a Conservative-Liberal Democrat joint coalition and also in 2015, by the Conservative Party. Unitarism and

neoliberalism have continued to dominate and the dismantling of pluralist collectivism started under Thatcherism continues.

This is particularly evident in mainstream human resource management (HRM) scholarship (Brown, 2000; Dundon and Rafferty, 2018; Heery, 2015; Marchington, 2015; Thompson, 2011). The HRM paradigm often view the employment relationship through the prism of unitarism, in the sense that a common identity of interests is also assumed (Guest, 1989; Heery, 2016; Thompson, 2011). The archetypal assumption of research in this area is that the implementation of particular ‘high performance HR’ practices, such as work teams, employee involvement, performance appraisal and employee voice create ‘happy workplaces’ (Guest, 2011; Peccei, 2004; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Thompson, 2011) and enhance organisational performance (see Kaufman, 2015; Prowse and Prowse, 2010). HRM policies, such as individual performance related pay promulgate direct communication between employers and employees whilst seeking to omit and bypass collective interactions between management and trade unions (Dundon, 2002; Peetz, 2002; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Several critics argue that the HRM approach enables employee exploitation (Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Legge, 1995; Keenoy, 1997). They assert that the aim of many HRM practices is to mould employee subjectivity, enhance management control and increase the calculability and predictability of employee performance and behaviour (Thompson, 2011).

The individualist direct communication practices encapsulated within HRM policies have diminished the status of collective bargaining and collectivism generally. The pluralist negotiation mechanism is not portrayed by the state as the most favourable way of solving industrial disputes. Collective bargaining has increasingly been downgraded from a process of negotiation to consultation or a type of managerial communication (Van den Broek and Dundon, 2012), i.e., the mechanism has been ‘marketized’ and ‘hollowed out’ (Marginson, 2015).

In terms of industrial action, strike levels have continued to decrease since Thatcher left office in 1990. Several legislative measures have undermined unions and decreased the rights union have to arrange industrial action (Lyddon, 2015; Marginson, 2015; Martinez Lucio, 2015a; Nowak, 2015; Wallace et al., 2013), one prominent example being the Trade Union Act (Trade Union Act, 2016), passed in May 2016, which according to Parliament aims to, “modernise trade union law” and improve “oversight of trade unions” (GOV, 2015). However, it is important to note that other factors have also contributed to the decrease in strike action. For

example, the composition of employment has changed. Employment levels have decreased significantly in the strike-prone industries, such as mining and manufacturing, yet have increased in private sector service industries, where trade unions have less presence and power. Unions are still common in the public sector, but have been in sharp decline in the private sector (Williams, 2014).

Flexible working practices

A key component of neoliberalism in the UK today is the ‘flexibilization’ of the labour market (Marginson, 2015; Rubery, 2015; Smith, 2009). ‘Flexibilization’ represents “how we work, under what forms of employment contract, for how many hours, at what times of day and with what degrees of employment security” (Rubery, 2015: 634). This concept emerged during the 1980s and 1990s and was driven by competitive markets and high levels of unemployment (Fleetwood, 2007; Gregory and Milner, 2009). Under the auspices of neoliberalism, the ‘flexibilization’ of the labour market promotes cost competitiveness and removes labour market blemishes (Hay, 2004; Rose, 1999; Wallace et al., 2013). Labour market blemishes or rigidities (for example high employment benefits and restrictive organisational practices influenced by trade unions), are assumed to prevent a balance between labour demand and labour supply, thus causing high levels of unemployment (Fleetwood, 2007). Accordingly, since the 1980s, we have seen the emergence of ‘flexible firms’ (Atkinson, 1984) with flexible working practices and flexible workers. However, scholars have unpacked how ‘flexible working practices’ can intensify work, blur the boundaries between work and home (Prowse and Prowse, 2015) and ‘bite back’ (Rubery et al., 2016). The UK flexible working model is criticised by Rubery et al. (2016) for suffocating the development of worker talent, restricting productivity, feeding discrimination, emptying the public purse and ultimately acting as a ‘Trojan horse’ for future economic problems. What is more, a recent article in The Guardian (Partington, 2018), notes how precarious and unstable zero-hours contracts in the UK rose by 100,000 in 2017 to 1.8 million.

Flexible working practices have also been introduced in public sector organizations, such as London Underground, as part of strategies aimed at ‘modernizing’ the services provided to customers (Gregory and Milner, 2009). For example, in one of the disputes focused on in this study, London Underground aims to meet the demands of a 24/7 economy by applying flexibility to the working hours of full-time workers (Rubery, 2015). Applying neo-liberal

principles to a public sector organization is known as new public management (NPM) (Lorenz, 2012).

Several scholars suggest that unions lack power and influence when negotiating over work-life balance issues (Fleetwood, 2007; Gambles et al., 2006). Gregory and Milner (2009) note that in the public sector, unions are aware that their role has been circumscribed due to the neo-liberal logic, therefore, many have shifted towards a 'mutual gains' strategy, involving partnership between unions and management (for example, see TUC, 2001). However, Bieler (2007) demonstrates that whilst some unions may focus on partnerships, other, more radical unions continue to oppose neo-liberal restructuring and will arrange industrial action or demonstrations to resist it.

Fleetwood (2007) raises an important point pertaining to the role of discourses in justifying flexible working practices. He warns that there has been a shift in flexible working discourses in the UK, enabling the discursive rehabilitation of the word 'flexibility'. During the 1980s and 1990s, any discourses connected to 'employer-unfriendly flexible working practices' included negative connotations and reflected the actual practices being implemented. However, by today, discourses have become detached from the actual practice and the lines of fracture between employer-orientated and worker-orientated flexibility are masked (Rubery et al., 2016). Any negative connotations linked to employee unfriendly flexible working practices are glossed over by work-life balance discourses and employee-friendly discourses.

Background of employment relations in the Republic of Ireland

In 1922, Southern Ireland became independent from the United Kingdom. Yet, as Teague and McCartney (1999) note, for the following fifty years the employment relations system in the Republic of Ireland still bore a strong resemblance to the 'voluntarist' model developed in the United Kingdom, given the long history of British occupation. Similar to the UK, during the 1970s, the Republic of Ireland also suffered high levels of inflation, unemployment and industrial conflict. The latter is illustrated in Figure 2.1. Interestingly, it was during this period that the employment relations systems in both countries began to diverge. Several factors contributed to the divergence, but one of the prime factors was the differing political responses to these economic and employment relations issues. In contrast to the United Kingdom, where Thatcher undertook a confrontational neo-liberal revolution, the Republic of Ireland moved in a different direction by adopting a more consensual model of 'social partnership' from 1987

onwards (Geary, 2006; Roche, 2009a), which lasted until its demise in 2009 after the financial/banking crisis.

Social partnership (1987-2009)

The social partnership era was launched by Fine Fail leader Charles Haughey in 1987, the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland at the time. It constituted “a centralized wage bargaining process that also includes participation in broader social policy and welfare decisions” (McDonough and Dundon, 2010: 544). The economic disaster during the 1970s and 1980s prompted Haughey to start negotiating with trade unions. At the time, the doctrine of neoliberalism was beginning to surface in the Republic of Ireland due to the growing influence of the new small right leaning Progressive Democrat (PD) party. Trade unions were aware of how Thatcher’s neo-liberal agenda in the UK had marginalized their UK counterparts. Thus, they agreed to cooperate with the government in an attempt to avoid a similar fate. The Programme for National Recovery (PNR) was the first of many social partnership programmes, which were in effect, tri-partite centralized agreements between union leaders, employers and the government (Roche, 2009a). The nature of the agreements developed over the years, from first focusing only on pay and tax reform to later featuring a wide range of socio-economic issues, including housing policy, migration and social issues (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Doherty, 2005, 2011). Table 2.3 outlines the social partnership agreements.

When discussing the benefits of ‘social partnership’, supporters often refer to how the programme contributed to the success of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ (Doherty, 2011; Geary, 2008, 2015; Teague and Donaghey, 2009). During the 1990s, the social partnership agreements coincided with economic success in terms of employment levels, disposable income and tax reform (Roche, 2007a). More significant to this study are the arguments that through social partnership, unions were given “a place in the sun”, a higher level of influence in terms of macro-economic strategy and social policy (Geary, 2006: 5) and some protection from the effects of neoliberalism (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; McDonough and Dundon, 2010).

Adopting a ‘social partnership programme’ suggests a country with a strongly embedded pluralist consensus, promoting union participation at national level and firm level (Ackers and Payne, 1998). Katzenstein (1985) concludes in his widely cited study on small European states, that a social partnership structure enabled social democracy, equality and the promotion of pluralist values. However, not everyone shares such favourable views of the social partnership agenda, at least of the Irish version. Several scholars (e.g., Allen, 2000; O’ Cinnéide, 2000;

O'Hearn, 2001) refute the study by Katzenstein (1985) and argue that in an Irish context, social partnership was centred on wage flexibility, its prime role being to marginalize demands for an increase in social protection, and pay. Social partnership is depicted by critics as a cloak used by Irish governments to implement free market policies and as a programme which facilitated the ideological co-option of labour organization leaders and the 'capture' of union leadership (Allen, 2000, 2003; O'Hearn, 1998, 2001, 2003). Smyth (2011) highlights the ideological role played by the social partnership model in the Republic of Ireland. His view of social partnership reflects the concept of 'hegemony' and 'common sense' discussed above. The partnerships have created a particular narrative or perspective about the goals and objectives of society, whilst concealing any alternative ideas or discourses. Several scholars have argued that social partnership in the Republic of Ireland constituted 'competitive', 'lean' or 'supply-side' corporatism, as opposed to the social democratic corporatism evident in other European countries, such as, Norway or Sweden (Roche, 2007a; Teague and Donaghey, 2009). On this account, the partnership agreements were designed for structural adjustment, to enhance the economy and to improve organisational performance. They were not established to act as a redistributive social safety net (Teague and Donaghey, 2009).

Union representatives express similar views in research conducted by Doherty (2007). They state that the government used social partnership as a mechanism to manage industrial conflict, rather than to address issues causing discontent in the employment relations system. The General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, David Begg, while a keen participant and supporter of the process, contends that social partnership was built on sand, because it was not very strongly institutionalized (Begg, 2008). Though, it is important to note that some studies have shown positive employee responses to social partnership (Geary, 2008; Geary and Roche, 2003; Roche, 2009b).

During the social partnership era, commentators such as Dobbins (2010) and Hamann and Kelly (2008) regarded the Republic of Ireland as a 'hybrid' system under the LMEs-CMEs varieties of capitalism dichotomy established by Hall and Soskice (2001). The dichotomy differentiates between institutions in liberal market economies (LMEs) and institutions in coordinated market economies (CMEs). LME's (e.g., the UK, the US, Canada) exhibit the following characteristics: (1) the economy functions on free market principles, (2) the absence of national social pacts (agreements) concerning macro-economic issues involving participation from government, employers and trade unions as social partners, (3) a low level of regulation encouraging cooperation in the workplace. By contrast, in CMEs (e.g., Germany,

Sweden, Finland) cooperation is facilitated across several levels and collective, longer term agreements are established between trade unions, employers, and other organizations. The Republic of Ireland had national level consensus bargaining between government, employers and unions, but there was a lack of coordination between the national level social partnership and cooperation in the workplace; thus, the country possessed characteristics associated with both extremes (O’Sullivan et al., 2017; Roche et al., 2014b) and differed to some extent from ‘purer’ liberal market economies (Johnston and Regan, 2016).

O’Sullivan and Gunnigle (2008) claimed that mirroring the well documented national level social partnership at an enterprise level and forcing employers to adopt a pro-union approach was unlikely, as it would have been perceived by employers and their associations as having an adverse effect on the business environment in the Republic of Ireland. McDonough and Dundon (2010) share similar views and state that global neo-liberal forces are much stronger than the conditions supporting workplace level participation. As Dobbins and Dundon (2017) explain, a pertinent factor in this regard is the Republic of Ireland’s substantial dependence on multinational corporations (MNCs) since the 1980s, multinational companies of US parentage in particular. Multinational companies perceive negotiating with unions as time-consuming and a hindrance to production processes in rapidly changing product markets (Gunnigle et al., 2009b; Roche, 2007b; Wallace et al., 2013). They have widely implemented an agenda based on unitarism, HRM and union avoidance (Collings et al., 2008; Gunnigle, 1995; Gunnigle et al., 2005; Gunnigle et al., 2009a; O’Hagan et al., 2005). Reliance on multinational capital and global market pressures can lure employers to breach formal and informal agreements negotiated with employees (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017).

In October 2008, a new National Wage Agreement was negotiated between the Irish social partners, entitled *Towards 2016: Review and Transitional Agreement*. The agreement stipulated an eleven month pay freeze in the public sector and a three month pay freeze in the private sector. In addition, the agreement guaranteed better collective bargaining rights. Yet, the agreement was soon subject to review because of the financial and economic crisis (Regan, 2012a:b).

On March 17th 2008, the first wave of the global financial crisis hit the Republic of Ireland’s economy when Anglo-Irish Bank’s shares decreased by a significant 15%, an event which is frequently referred to as the “St Patrick’s day Massacre on the Irish stock market” (Smyth, 2011: 12). Given the extent of its liberalization and financialization, the Republic of Ireland’s

economy was one of the hardest hit by the international financial crisis (Roche and Teague, 2014a; Roche et al., 2014). Gross domestic product declined 11% between 2007 and 2009; between 2008 and 2010, retail sales volumes decreased by 17% (Roche and Teague, 2014a: 265), and company insolvency increased by a staggering 80% (Roche et al., 2014: 8). The scale of the crisis persuaded the Irish government to attempt to come to the rescue of a failed banking system and introduce a range of public sector cuts and austerity measures. Unions acknowledged the need for a decrease in public spending, but contested the governments' proposals; the pillars of social partnership crumbled in 2009 (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Roche and Teague, 2014a).

In 2010, the severity of the Irish fiscal crisis forced the government to request a £85 billion bailout loan programme from the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund, also known as 'the troika' (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Geary, 2015; MacCarthaigh, 2015; Roche and Teague, 2014a; Roche et al., 2014). The bailout induced more austerity measures, more public spending cut backs and intensified the neoliberalization of the Republic of Ireland's political economy (Regan, 2012a:b). Also in 2010, the government and unions negotiated a new public service stability agreement, entitled the *Public Service Agreement 2010-2014*, often referred to as the 'Croke Park' agreement (Doherty, 2011; Roche and Teague, 2014b). The agreement was depicted as a 'win-win' solution for the government and employees, however, in reality, it marginalized employee interests due to the scale of concessions and served as a vehicle for the government to gain political stability during the implementation of the troika programme (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; Roche and Teague, 2014a:b).

Kitchin et al. (2012) assert that neoliberalism in the Republic of Ireland has been ideologically hidden. By contrast to the UK, where Thatcher implemented an explicit neo-liberal ideology, governments in the Republic of Ireland did not adopt an approach as ideologically explicit and as far-reaching; for example, there was less open hostility towards trade unions. Rather, the Irish neo-liberal model emerged incrementally. McDonough and Dundon (2010) admit that a version of 'Thatcherism' may have been delayed in the Republic of Ireland because of the social partnership model, notwithstanding, they suggest that it has not been completely rejected. In similar vein, the Republic of Ireland may have been a 'hybrid' system under the LMEs-CMEs variety of capitalism typology up until 2009, but considerable literature suggests that since the collapse of social partnership in 2009, the Republic of Ireland is now more firmly

placed in the liberal market economy category (e.g., Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; O’Sullivan et al., 2017; Regan, 2012a:b).

Table 2.3: Social provisions of the social partnership agreements	
Agreement	Key Social Provisions
1987-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on government policy on social equity with particular attention to health services, education and housing for the disadvantaged. • Maintain value in social welfare benefits and where resources are available consider increases for those receiving the lowest payments.
1990-1993 PESP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven year health programme to improve community-based services • Education initiatives at all levels
1993-1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PESP terms for social reform to be carried over. • Particular attention to improving social welfare due to the 1994 Budget provisions.
1996-2000 partnership 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IR£525million to be spent on social inclusion. • Adoption of National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) • Particular attention to tackling unemployment
2000-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment of IR£1.5 billion on social inclusion measurers • Update and review NAPS and poverty-proofing arrangements • Establishment of Housing Forum to monitor supply and affordability of housing.
2003-2006 Sustaining Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on dealing with poverty and promoting social inclusion under NAPS, especially pensioner poverty • Structural reform of health service • Improving employment equality, especially gender inequality and treatment of persons with disabilities.
2006-2016 Towards 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment law compliance • Commitment to establish NERA.
Source: Adapted from Doherty (2011: 11) and Wallace et al. (2013: 290)	

Privatization in the Republic of Ireland

McDonough and Dundon (2010) explain that the privatization, outsourcing and competitive tendering of former state services in the Republic of Ireland indicate that a neo-liberal agenda has been actively pursued. An important point here is that union density in the Irish private sector is critically low at around 16% (Geary and Gamwell, 2017). The benefits of privatization, also referred to as ‘competitive tendering’, has been couched around the neo-liberal principles of ‘value for money’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘cost effectiveness’ (Tonge and Willett, 2005). For example, Reeves and Barrow (2002) study the impact of contracting out the provision of refuse collection services in the Republic of Ireland. Their results indicated average cost savings of 33.5% and significant efficiency gains for the authorities that decided

to implement a tendering approach. However, these advantages coincided with evidence of poorer working conditions. Subsequent studies have suggested that these efficiency gains are likely to have been recharged to other segments of the local authority (Tonge and Willett, 2005). What is more, many scholars (e.g., Colling, 1995; Ganley and Grahl 1988; Pinch and Patterson, 2000) contest that cost reduction from tendering is often a result of decreasing the number of jobs, a decrease in hours worked, casualization and a decrease in pay and working conditions.

The privatization of public services is another key element of the new public management discourse. The assumption that “private is better than public” (Lorenz, 2012: 887) is the linchpin of NPM. The paradigm constitutes market-orientated government policies, premised on the notion of cost-efficiency and aiming to decrease the tax burden of projects in the public sector (Currie and Teague, 2015). However, literature suggests that the discourse of NPM has not penetrated the Republic of Ireland to the same extent as the UK (Hardiman and Scott, 2010; Lorenz, 2012). Hardiman and MacCarthaigh (2010) admit that the Republic of Ireland’s version of NPM aims to enhance market type efficiencies (e.g., value for money, cost effectiveness), but is not designed to act as a radical change programme. They also argue that the conception of the Irish-style model was not influenced by new right-wing thinking and was not grounded in the belief that the market’s ‘invisible hand’ exceeds government-led decision making.

The use of discourses and rhetoric during workplace conflicts

The previous sections have provided the theoretical background for addressing the research questions. One assumption running through the literature is that language and discourse have the potential to impinge on employment relations, workplace disputes (Bamber et al., 2009; Colling, 1995; Kirkbride, 1985, 1986) and the (de)legitimization of organisational restructuring (Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Mäkelä, 2012). Specifically, frames of reference manifest themselves linguistically in the form of discourses. During workplace conflicts, social actors (management, trade unions, politicians, etc.) draw on and contribute to discourses to (de)legitimate organisational restructuring, privatisation, and industrial action. The media also plays an important role in shaping public opinion on workplace conflicts by reinforcing or challenging specific discourses.

Constituting “different ways of representing aspects of the world” (Fairclough, 2003: 124), discourses embed a particular set of values, beliefs and justifications and can be activated in

text(s) through language. Prior studies exploring language use (e.g., Brimeyer et al., 2004; Erkama and Vaara, 2010; Symon, 2005) may also focus on rhetoric, defined by Aristotle (1954: 24) as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion”. Discourse and rhetoric are united by their ability to strategically persuade audiences to accept particular assumptions and assertions.

Corporate and trade union communication

The study focuses on four workplace disputes, including three over organisational restructuring. It therefore contributes to knowledge about the (de)legitimization of organisational restructuring and workplace disputes in three fields, namely, corporate communication with employees, employment relations, and organisational restructuring. Prior research in these three fields falls into two main research traditions. The first group of studies employ a micro-level text analysis, i.e., focusing on what is said and the rhetorical devices used. The second group of studies link the micro-level analysis to a macro-level analysis by identifying the broader discourses and ideologies underpinning texts produced by parties involved in organisational restructuring and workplace disputes, including, management, trade unions, and the media.

The starting point for micro-level studies is the assumption that texts are persuasive. Researchers expose the arguments and counter-arguments presented by social actors to (de)legitimize a particular construction of reality and seek to identify the persuasive linguistic devices (e.g., figurativeness, vocabulary, argumentation) utilized to formulate these arguments and counter-arguments (Symon, 2005). Traditionally, studies in this area focus on three Aristotelian rhetorical strategies, known as, *logos* (appealing to logic), *pathos* (appealing to emotion) and *ethos* (appealing to ethics/authority), however, since the 1920s, scholars have been influenced by the ‘new rhetoric movement’. ‘New rhetoric’ studies explore a variety of linguistic techniques and underscore the importance of unravelling how rhetorical action is shaped by the ‘rhetorical situation’ (context). This can involve linking the rhetorical strategies in text(s) with broader discourses (Merkl-Davies and Brennan, 2017).

Within the second research tradition, studies seeking to link the micro-level and macro-level centre on the assumption that discourses are rhetorical devices, which contribute to changing or sustaining unequal power relations. Researchers postulate that discourses can be activated in text(s) through language, in order to persuade individuals to accept particular statements, but ultimately to further the interests of particular groups in society, whilst suppressing the interests

of other groups (Merkel-Davies and Brennan, 2017). Studies of this ilk aim to unmask the ideological workings of discourse. This requires conducting a broad linguistic analysis of text(s), and focusing on wider discourses in society which texts draw on and contribute to.

This study applies a thematic analysis approach and connects a micro-level analysis - focusing on the language used by social actors in both disputes to legitimate their claims and arguments, to a broader macro-level analysis - focusing on situating texts within their wider social, political and economic contexts. The latter partly involves studying how the language used is grounded in broader discourses. The study assumes that social actors use discourses ideologically to “establish, maintain and change social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003: 9). Even though the prior literature in accounting and organization studies has sought to link micro and macro levels of analysis, the remainder of this section identifies gaps and illustrates where the study’s contribution lies. In a nutshell, there have not been previous attempts to link the language used by social actors during workplace disputes, in two comparative case studies in different countries, with broader discourses, including the three frames of reference and other broader discourses introduced in sections 2.3 (i.e., neoliberalism, new public management).

The accounting literature that has sought to connect the micro-level and macro-level of analysis in the context of corporate communication with employees, focuses solely on the legitimization of organisational restructuring. Craig and Amernic (2004) are arguably the most successful in this regard. They examine how accounting rhetoric was utilized by the CEO of the Canadian National Railway in an employee newsletter in order to justify privatization. The CEO projected a rhetorical ‘privatization discourse’, grounded in free market principles. Craig and Amernic (2004: 44) underscore the importance of viewing discourse as a social phenomenon which shapes the power relations between social actors. In particular, they canvass how metaphors, for example health related metaphors, served as an “ideology-creator”.

Metaphors have been emphasized as a central feature of the statements, justifications and arguments made by social actors during organisational restructuring and public controversies (Beelitz and Merkel-Davies, 2012; Brennan and Merkel-Davies, 2014; Burnes, 2011). Under the theory of conceptual metaphors popularized by Lakoff (1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980), metaphors help individuals to understand and experience one thing, which is unfamiliar or abstract, in terms of another thing, which is more familiar and concrete. Thus, they constitute a two-domain mapping and an argumentative advantage (Burnes, 2011; Musolff, 2012). During

workplace disputes, the focus of this study, employers and trade unions may use metaphors in their statements to portray themselves in a positive way and the opposing party in a negative way, thus legitimising and justifying their own actions, while delegitimising and condemning the other party's actions.

Mäkelä (2012) provides useful insights into the ideological role of corporate communication with employees in 25 Finnish firms. She found that the CEO letters prioritised shareholder interests and applied the discourse of unitarism to convince audiences that shareholder interests constituted 'universal interests'. Any conflict of interest between managers and employees was 'glossed over', employee interests were either excluded, or were presented as being consistent with the interests of shareholders. A similar observation was made by Williams and Adams (2013) who conducted a longitudinal analysis of how employee issues were reported by the UK bank NatWest. They infer that the reports were used as 'ideological weapons' to promote government ideology and capitalist interests. The negative impact of changes to working practices and restructuring on employees were concealed from the reports, instead, NatWest drew upon the discourse of neoliberalism to highlight the efficiency and cost-saving benefits. The bank utilized the discourse of pluralism on rare occasions, for example, by mentioning meetings with the staff association and unions regarding organisational change. However, Williams and Adams (2013) suggest that this was merely a tactic to legitimate their proposals. It is likely that meetings were a 'consultation exercise' where employees were given opportunities to voice their concerns if they felt confident to do so, but no opportunities to exert 'real' influence over organisational change (Dundon et al., 2017).

Finally, Brown (2000) integrates accounting disclosures in the UK, New Zealand, America and Australia to Fox's (1985) three employment relations frames of reference, which she refers to as 'competing ideologies'. Brown (2000) claims that accounting systems, including accounting communication, allow shareholder interests to prevail and ignore the interests of other stakeholders. Her analysis uncovers that accounting communication, including employee reporting, was viewed by managers as a vehicle to decrease employee resistance towards organisational change and to erode union influence. Yet again, the reports were influenced by the discourse of unitarism. They included 'team imagery', emphasized co-operation and aimed to convey an 'us' feeling within the organization.

Previous efforts to examine cases of restructuring in the areas of organization studies and employment relations can be categorized based on the level of analysis (micro or macro), but

also based on the type and number of social actors included in the analysis. Some studies primarily focus on language use by managers or trade unions, whilst others focus on the role of language during struggles involving different types of social actors. The former group of studies are discussed first.

In the organization studies literature, Du Gay (2003) moves away from a linguistic rhetorical analysis by unpacking how a discourse of organisational change serves as a rhetorical device to reshape the perception of a public service. A prominent element of this discourse is the term ‘modernization’, which relies on a ‘global’ trope that in an increasingly competitive environment change is inevitable and essential for organisational survival.

Similarly, Bloomfield and Hayes (2009) point to how the transformation of local UK government departments from bureaucratic, functional units to cross-functional, customer orientated, electronic enabled departments depended on the rhetoric of ‘modernization’. ‘Modernization’, underpinned by new technology, was depicted by the government as a form of progress, a way of abandoning the ‘old’ and creating a more efficient, customer focused future. By contrast to Du Gay (2003), an innovative feature of the paper is the evoking of Lukes’ (2005) framework of power to conceptualise the restructuring. Bloomfield and Hayes (2009) explain that the rhetoric of modernization was enmeshed in the enactment of ‘invisible’ power in the way it aimed to shape individual perceptions surrounding the structure and delivery of public services. The concept of technology was a catalyst in this process. An attractive picture was painted to employees, depicting new technology as a means of making their jobs easier by providing more information and enabling the delivery of a more customer-oriented service. On the other hand, the way technology could be utilized to monitor and control employee performance was omitted from the picture painted by management.

Bell (1992) examines the subcontracting of Radio Telefis Éireann (RTE), a public service broadcasting company in the Republic of Ireland, from an ideological perspective. Under the aegis of neoliberalism and the “rhetoric of market competition” (Bell, 1992: 338) the restructuring was characterized as having social value, as providing benefit for consumers and as a cost saving strategy. However, Bell (1992) also opines that the reform of the broadcasting company was an ideological move. The restructuring did not aim to serve the interests of citizens, instead, it sought to further the interests of multi-national companies that the Republic of Ireland depended on.

The prior literature has pointed to the lack of attention given to the notions of rhetoric, discourse and ideology in the field of employment relations (Hamilton, 2001; Kirkbride, 1985). Scholars often refer to how particular outcomes within the employment relationship are a result of ‘managerial power’, however, there is a paucity of studies providing concrete empirical examples of how language and discourse are used to attain or maintain power (Kirkbride, 1985). This is particularly the case in the context of disputes over organisational restructuring.

Bamber et al. (2009) and Colling (1995) unpack the management and employment relations strategies adopted by British Airways. Bamber et al. (2009) touch upon the fact that British Airways utilized the rhetoric of employee commitment and engagement in their advertisement campaigns, whilst simultaneously implementing strategies to reduce labour costs. Even though both scholars avoid referring to discourse, their studies suggest that BA applied the discourse of unitarism. For example, Colling (1995: 23) refers to a quote from the CEO who states that “people are our most important asset.....everything depends on how they work as part of a team”.

In their study of three factories, Armstrong et al. (1981) analyse how changes to rules and procedures were legitimated by managers. They admit that even though the concepts of power and interests are referred to, their core focus is on the processes of legitimization. The study found that a rich and ramified managerial ideology, grounded in the unitarist principle of managerial prerogative, or the ‘right to manage’, was accepted and absorbed by workers. On many occasions, managers did not instigate changes by referring directly to their prerogative, their managerial position or their power over employees. Instead, they often couched their claims in terms of the ‘functional responsibilities they had’ (notably lower level managers), neoliberal principles, such as ‘efficiency’, ‘competitiveness’, ‘profitability’ and ‘technological matters’. Changes were also legitimated on the grounds of distinct managerial expertise, this included industry experience and expertise to make ‘fair’ decisions that benefitted everyone.

Armstrong et al. (1981) recognize that the employees at the factories accepted production changes and rules, which arguably countered their interests, however, some attention is given to employee resistance. In some rare cases, workers challenged managerial proposals by applying an inconsistent and fragmented world view, which embedded elements of radicalism. One element of the workers’ worldview was ‘the effort-bargain’ principle, that is, workers resisted changes in order to sustain the ratio of reward to effort.

A further case study by Batstone et al. (1978) sheds a great deal of light on the organization and management of discontent. They offer a detailed and lengthy analysis of the arguments used by trade union members during a dispute over changes to working conditions at a vehicle manufacturing company. The forces promoting or limiting the success of these arguments are assessed. This study adds to Batstone et al.'s (1978) valuable coverage of the social organization of strikes by making connections between the language used by several social actors (trade union reps, lay members and managers), broader discourses and context.

Kirkbride (1985, 1986)'s investigation of a manufacturing company, Bettavale Palcid Ltd, is an informative example of a study seeking to bridge between the micro and macro levels of analysis in the field of employment relations. At Bettavale Palcid organisational decisions were discussed and debated through the forum of a works committee, constituting managers and worker representatives. Kirkbride (1985) gives a critical account of how the works committee setting facilitated subtle power processes and enabled management to establish a powerful managerial ideology. Their ideology was rarely challenged and had become accepted as common sense amongst the worker representatives. During the work committee meetings managers strategically used language and arguments anchored by the unitarist frame of reference to define reality and to gain power.

Kirkbride (1986) refers to an occasion when the company faced threat of takeover and how this threat was used by managers in work committee meetings to reinforce managerial ideology. The chairman emphasized that the workforce had to prioritise achieving their profits/sales targets and improving their efficiency in order to avoid the takeover. He also explained that due to the pressure on the company to maintain their competitiveness and achieve targets they would not be able to meet employee wage demands. Even after the failure of the takeover bid, the chairman continued to use the threat of takeover as a bargaining tool. He warned the workforce that overtime hours may be reduced as part of the company's continuing 'fight' against the threat of a takeover and if workers did not continue to meet targets, another bid would be made. Kirkbride (1986) establishes that management defined their fears and interests relating to the takeover as mirroring those of all members of the organization. When interviewed, the chairman admitted that the threat of takeover was worrying, but had been used as a means of meeting objectives. This study builds on Kirkbride (1985, 1986) by identifying linkages between the micro-level and macro-level in two comparative case studies and drilling into the concrete experiences of workers, union representatives, union officials and managers.

The cornerstone of other studies is the role of language during struggles between managers and stakeholders over organisational restructuring. Symon (2005) accentuates the rhetorical tensions between managers and employees during a conflict over technological changes in a UK public sector organization. Adopting an interview approach, she observes that both parties utilize the notions of argument, counter argument and persuasion to portray themselves positively in front of the interviewer and to (de)legitimate particular points of view relating to the change. For example, Symon (2005) finds that management justified the change by referring to the concept of efficiency and modernization. This argument is rebuffed by an employee who portrays technology as unnecessary for their role and as creating problems.

In a similar vein, Brimeyer et al. (2004) identify the rhetorical tactics utilized by a trade union during their campaign against organisational change at a supermarket and the rhetorical tactics applied by management in their counter-campaign. They find that the union used the strategies of ‘promulgation’, ‘solidification’ and ‘polarization’ during their campaign, whilst management applied the strategies of ‘images of a negative future’, ‘sarcasm’, ‘education’, ‘polarization’, ‘diversion of attention’ and ‘drawbacks of change’. Symon (2005) and Brimeyer et al. (2004) limit the scope of their analysis by focusing mainly on the text (micro-level) with little consideration given to context (macro-level). The concept of ‘discourse’ is ignored by Brimeyer et al. (2004). Symon (2005: 1647) admits that her study “does not begin with the assumption of particular discourses, nor does it focus on how such discourses operate in defining subjectivity or provoking resistance.”

Erkama and Vaara (2010) apply a ‘new rhetoric’ approach to tease out the patterns of legitimization-delegitimization-relegitimization during the shutdown of a Swedish bus manufacturing company. Their analysis reveals that the classical rhetorical strategies of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* were utilized by corporate managers to legitimate the restructuring and by managers of the manufacturing unit, employees and their representatives to challenge the proposals. Two additional strategies also emerged during the study, namely, *autopoeisis* and *cosmos*. The latter, entailed offering arguments of inevitability and enabled researchers to advance on a traditional rhetoric approach by linking the (de)legitimization dynamics to the broader discourse of globalization. Erkama and Vaara’s (2010) analysis also differs from a traditional rhetorical approach by underlining the importance of context. They explain that the social actors changed their stance in particular settings and varied their rhetorical constructions. However, this study could be advanced further by incorporating a critical perspective, plotting

the ideological effects of the negotiations around the shutdown and referring to other discourses, in addition to globalization.

The persuasive nature of discourse is given far greater attention by Fleming and Spicer (2007) who explore the ‘discursive struggle’ between a public sector Australian broadcasting company (ABC), two unions, and one social movement group during organisational reform. ABC management articulated a ‘new media environment discourse’, connected to the discourse of neoliberalism and globalization. It sought to persuade audiences that the restructuring of ABC was essential in order to adapt to changes in the ‘world of broadcasting’ and to become more efficient. The restructuring was discursively contested by applying three strategies, namely, appropriating dominant discourses, surfacing shared discourses, and reviving traditional discourses. This study builds upon Fleming and Spicer (2007) by unpicking the discursive struggle between social actors involved in the London Underground dispute and the Irish bus dispute. However, Fleming and Spicer (2007) admit to providing a descriptive account of the discursive struggle. This study extends their analysis by canvassing the ‘social effects’ of the discursive struggles, including the impact on power relations.

This section carves a space for the study in relation to extant research on the (de)legitimization of organisational restructuring. There has been a preponderance of studies exemplifying how language and discourses are used to legitimate organisational reform and in workplace disputes. However, linking the micro-level and macro-level during struggles over organisational restructuring between managers, trade unions and politicians, in two different country-contexts, is an untrodden path.

Digital media communication

Scholars have recorded how digital modes of communication (i.e. websites, social media, e-mail) allow unions to fulfil their accountability and transparency duties by providing members with access to additional information, previously only disclosed to union officials or shared during official gatherings, such as union meetings (Martinez Lucio, 2003). E-forms also facilitate the reshaping of union democracy, by minimizing separation between union officials and lay members. During disputes, this electronic proximity can enhance union solidarity, by increasing workers’ sense of ownership over the dispute and fostering interaction between different members and officials (Greene et al., 2003). Upchurch and Grassman (2016) exemplify the ways in which social media strengthened union mobilization during a British Airways (BA) dispute by providing an almost unrestricted platform for unions to disseminate

information and counter-arguments. Yet, union mobilization was also undermined by BA management, who utilized social media posts by employees to justify disciplining procedures and dismissals.

Fuchs (2012) forcefully argues that riots and misbehaviour are often attributed by social actors to the technological medium 'social media' itself, thereby masking conflict within society between different social groups and unequal power relations. Relatedly, Upchurch and Grassman (2016) cogently argue that the focal point of investigation should not be on the technological facet of social media, but rather on the ideological discourses distributed by social actors online. Martinez Lucio (2003) argues that communication systems are contested, distinct terrains of power.

Media communication

Labour disputes, such as the London Underground and Dublin Bus disputes, often receive substantial media attention. Journalists contribute to the shaping of social reality (including workplace disputes) by influencing audiences' perceptions of social reality (Thomas, 2012). Audiences may include members of the public, or employees. The words and phrases included within newspaper articles are traces of particular discourses. Readers are likely to draw upon the assumptions associated with these particular discourses when interpreting text(s). This process has ideological effects in that it can "contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003: 9). Since the media depends on social, political, and economic elites for resources, for example, newspapers rely on large companies for advertisements, it usually texturizes articles to further the interests of employers during strike action. Traces of neoliberalism and unitarism are dominant. Manning (2001) elucidates how 'media incorporation' processes restrict employee/union media access during disputes. Journalists trim and simplify employee/union accounts thereby masking complex details of why conflict materializes.

Yet, as Hyman (1989) states, the portrayal of strikes and labour disputes varies between newspapers with regards to the extent of sub-editing, the level of dispute coverage and the way disputes are framed. For example, Thomas (2012) provides a comprehensive overview of how UK strikes are portrayed by three tabloid newspapers, namely, *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*. He applies critical discourse analysis to scrutinize the media coverage of the Fire Brigades Union strike, the Communication Workers Union strikes and the Lindsey Oil Refinery strike. He infers that unions are portrayed as preventing the essential 'modernization'

of public services. This was mostly evident in the articles published by the two politically right-leaning newspapers analysed, namely, *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*. *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* downplayed, or excluded workers' perspectives of the strikes. By contrast, Thomas (2012) notes that *The Daily Mirror*, a politically left-leaning newspaper, gave employees a voice to share their experiences. Thomas (2012) also finds that the suffering of the public as a result of public sector strikes was emphasized by the newspapers and in many cases exaggerated. For example, during industrial action, the fire fighters are placed solely responsible for the death of any member of the public. This negative portrayal of the workers was more pronounced in *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*.

Similarly, in an Irish context, Clarke and O'Neill (2001) unpack the media coverage of the *Irish Times* during the 1999 nursing strike. One of the most salient frames in the articles draws on the unitarist discourse by highlighting the physical and psychological suffering of the patients. As part of this frame, the articles accentuate the lack of care provided to emergency patients, the delay in administering medicines, and the non-availability of operating theatres.

A recent study by Hart (2017) throws valuable light on the media coverage of the British miners' strike between 1984 and 1985 in eight national newspapers. The article contains ample evidence that the strike was metaphorically framed by journalists as a 'war' between the National Union for Miners and the government. Milner (2011) makes the noteworthy and related point that contemporary journalists often utilize clichés that frame strikes based on discourse and practise in the 1970s and 1980s. Her examples include journalists referring to the 'winter of discontent' in 1978/1979 and trade union leaders being compared to the militant president of the National Union for Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill. Clichés are conventional sayings, which have become 'common sense'. They appear, obvious, natural, and unquestionable and are usually traces of dominant discourses. Social actors use clichés to reinforce particular discourses and their associated assumptions, but also to (re)produce hegemony and maintain particular relations of power (Fairclough, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter serves as a springboard for answering the two research questions by synthesizing past scholarship on labour disputes and organisational restructuring in the comparative contexts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The chapter first connects the study to existing debate over Fox's (1966, 1974) three competing perspectives on the employment relationship: unitarism, pluralism, and radicalism. This discussion justifies the research questions by

abstracting from the literature some of the internal and external contextual forces sculpting employment relations and workplace struggles. The chapter then illustrates how the context of the London Underground and Dublin Bus cases are influenced by the hegemonic struggle between Fox's (1966, 1974) three frames of reference over time. Following this, the chapter discusses previous literature on discourse and rhetoric, focusing on corporate and trade union communication and the (de)legitimization of organisational restructuring. A key finding for the purpose of this chapter is the paucity of studies on workplace struggles and organisational restructuring linking both the micro-level (text) and macro-level (broader context) in two comparative case contexts. Finally, the chapter outlines how the mainstream and social media provide a launch pad to diffuse particular discourses and assumptions. The following chapter introduces and justifies the two cases chosen to answer the two research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHDOLOGY

Introduction

This study critically analyses patterns of employment relations and workplace struggle in two different comparative country contexts, namely, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The focus of the analysis is twofold: first, to compare how country and workplace level contextual factors shape employment relations at two organizations, London Underground (the United Kingdom) and Dublin Bus (the Republic of Ireland). Second, to unpick how resistance is mobilized and inhibited during four recent workplace disputes. Multiple sources of data are examined, including press releases, newspaper articles, interview transcripts and ethnography notes, to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do comparative contextual factors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ2: How is union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

This chapter first outlines the research design in the form of a comparative case study approach. In the UK, London Underground is introduced and justified as the case study organization and RMT, ASLEF and TSSA as representative trade unions. Two recent organisational restructuring disputes at London Underground are then summarized. Following this, Dublin Bus is presented and rationalized as the second case study organization, along with representative unions, SIPTU and NBRU, and recent organisational restructuring and pay disputes at Dublin Bus are outlined. The chapter then moves on to introduce critical realism as the research philosophy the study is influenced by. This is followed by a discussion of data collection and analysis. Finally, the methodologies deployed are explained and justified.

Comparative case study approach

The study constitutes comparative cross-country case studies, which provided the structure for the application of the research methods and data analysis (Bryman, 2012). A case study is defined by Yin (2009: 18) as “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context.” A ‘case’ in this study is viewed as an ‘empirically real unit’ in line with a realist perspective, rather than a ‘theoretical construct’ as nominalism

assumes. The ‘unit of analysis’ did not emerge during the research, it constitutes a pre-existing and conventional ‘organization’ (Ragin and Becker, 1992). Two specific cases are explored, London Underground and Dublin Bus.

Employment relations are always contextually bound, operating within a social, political, economic, cultural, historical, national and global web (Gunnigle et al., 2017). The key advantage of a case study research design is that its context sensitivity enables researchers to dig deep beneath the surface and reveal fine-grained details about social phenomena. The analytical depth of a case study research design promotes multi-level inference, where the chosen cases can be compared to other cases and observed longitudinally. What is more, a case study research design permits the critical investigation of within-case observations (Gerring, 2017). In this study, a multi-level inference involves comparing the two cases against each other and existing literature, exploring the historical antecedents of the cases and analysing within-case observations, including differences in individual experiences and perceptions.

A context-sensitive explanatory case study research design can also provide causal insight and systematic explanation of the units under study (Edwards, 2005). Teasing out ever-deepening dimensions of reality enables researchers to “peer into the box of causality” (Gerring, 2007: 45), unpack the contextual forces underpinning particular events/behaviours and pinpoint how these forces operate and intertwine. However, because contextual forces are not always pronounced, conducting a singular context-sensitive case study risks overlooking particular forces (Kessler and Bach, 2014). Using more than one case study can help mitigate this problem (Vincent and Wapshott, 2014), as it provides an opportunity for social phenomena to be better understood (Bryman, 2012). A comparative case-study approach enables the cross-cutting patterns between different cases to be investigated, hence, similarities and differences are identified (Kessler and Bach, 2014). The internal/external forces underpinning these similarities and differences between cases are then explored.

Admittedly, a larger sample of cases could have been deployed, however, whilst larger samples offer breadth, they lack depth and tend to be analysed superficially rather than intensively (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2017). Larger samples also give less attention to variations within cases. Unpicking the complexities of employment relations and workplace struggle at London Underground and Dublin Bus requires a ‘close quarters’ analysis, where a great deal of emphasis is placed on within-case observations. For example, the London Underground and Dublin Bus cases need decomposing into different groups of social actors (e.g., employees,

managers, union representatives and union officials), then stratified further into individuals within the social groups. Additionally, Gerring (2017) explains that if the unit of analysis is heterogeneous, applying a focused and intensive case study research design analysing a single case study, or a few relatively homogenous cases, is more appropriate than conducting a larger scale study. ‘Organizations’, the unit of analysis, are heterogeneous because of a variety of internal organisational and broader external factors. Two highly unionized public transport organizations were chosen to control for the heterogeneity somewhat.

It is argued that the conventional pitfall of a case study approach is its restricted external validity. Critics claim that the evidence emerging from one, or a small number of cases, cannot be generalized to all settings and consequently, the evidence becomes of doubtful scientific value (Bryman, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2017). However, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that even if knowledge generated from a case study is not formally generalizable, it can still provide a valuable contribution to the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a particular terrain. As previously noted, little, if any attention has been given to a comparative cross country case study approach in the fields to which this study contributes: frames of reference in employment relations, the (de)legitimization of organisational restructuring and organisational communication with employees. Budd and Bhavé’s (2008) observation that there have been few contemporary empirical studies ‘testing’ the assumptions made by unitarism, pluralism and radicalism in a contemporary setting is pertinent in this regard.

Another common criticism pertaining to this research design is that a case study embodies verification bias, i.e., it is applied to confirm the preconceived views of researchers. Flyvbjerg (2006) also refutes this claim by stating that a case study approach maintains no greater bias towards preconceived views than alternative approaches. He adds that in fact, the case study approach encompasses a higher level of bias towards the falsification of preconceived scientific propositions. In this regard, case studies can, on some occasions, demonstrate that preconceived notions are not generalizable to all situations.

The UK and the Republic of Ireland

A detailed and intensive comparative analysis of two case study organizations is conducted in this study, London Underground in the UK and Dublin Bus in the Republic of Ireland. When choosing the cases, I was influenced by a book edited by Barry and Wilkinson (2011: 1) ‘Research Handbook of Comparative Employment Relations’. In the book, countries which are regarded as “relatively close comparators” in terms of employment relations are coupled, in

order to compare employment regulation within each pair. The pairs include the US and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, France and Germany, and the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Although each pair of countries share a degree of common ground, the authors highlight the “so-close-yet-so-far apart” (Barry and Wilkinson, 2011: 12) relationship between them.

As the preceding chapter explains, many scholars have referred to how the political economy of the UK and the Republic of Ireland began to diverge more clearly in the 1970s and 1980s. The United Kingdom moved towards a neo-liberal political economy under Margaret Thatcher, whilst the Republic of Ireland adopted a more consensual model of ‘social partnership’ (Geary, 2006; McDonough and Dundon, 2010). Yet, there is a strong body of literature arguing that the collapse of the social partnership model in 2009 has intensified the neo-liberalization of the Republic of Ireland’s political economy (e.g. Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Regan, 2012a). This study seeks to tease out the extent of this possible convergence in a comparative context of workplace struggles.

Strikes in the transport industry

Research conducted by Boehmer et al. (2015), on behalf of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), indicates that strike activity in 2014 and 2015, across the entire European Union (including the UK and the Republic of Ireland) has mainly affected the public sector. Boehmer et al. (2015) suggest that this is due to two fundamental factors: first, the public sector tends to be highly unionised, significantly more than the private sector and second, it has become customary for governments across the EU to alienate workers by implementing ‘fiscal tightening’ policies, involving changes to working conditions, pay and staffing numbers. Boehmer et al. (2015)’s findings show that within the public sector, the transport industry has been a key locus of strike activity.

Several other scholars assert that although strike activity has considerably diminished in the UK, some ‘monopolistic sectors’, such as the transport sector, are still strike prone (Bamber et al., 2009; Darlington, 2015; Gall, 2010). Darlington (2015) compares strike activity in six ‘essential service’ sectors between 1997 and 2015 and concludes that forty-four occurred in the transport industry. This compares to twenty-nine in education, eleven in the fire services, five in the health sector and one in the broader security sector. Similarly, although industrial action has significantly declined in the Republic of Ireland, data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO, 2017) indicates that strikes in the transport sector still occur relatively frequently. One

important factor is the rich history of political involvement and campaigning by transport unions and their predecessors in both countries, to defend employee pay and working conditions (Berlin, 2006; Griffiths, 2005; Kelly, 2009; McGreevy, 2009; NRB, 2018; SIPTU, 2018; Wallace, 1996).

In recent years, we have seen regular strike action in the UK and the Republic of Ireland in public and private transport services, such as the Luas tram service, Irish Rail, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, the London Underground and Southern Rail (Darlington, 2009a:b; Gander, 2015; Roger, 2015; Wall, 2015). Examining strikes in the transport sector is an alluring area of study, not only because this sector is still relatively ‘strike prone’, but also because industrial action in the transport industry tends to stimulate public debate. This is due to the immediate and significantly adverse impact on the ‘essential services’ provided to the public (Darlington, 2015; Gall, 2010).

Within the transport sector, the two London Underground struggles and the two Dublin Bus struggles have been chosen specifically due to several factors. Turning to the restructuring dispute and the Dublin Bus tendering dispute first, both constitute relatively long running disputes. The former lasted from November 2013 until February 2017 and the latter lasted from November 2013 until May 2015. These two disputes also have important historical facets. Similar proposals to close ticket offices at London Underground and to privatise Irish bus services were announced prior to November 2013. These historical connections produce more compelling cases and encouraged me to dig deeper under the surface when unpicking the dynamics of both struggles. In relation to the London Underground Night-Tube dispute and the Dublin Bus pay dispute, the former deals with an issue that has become prominent in recent years, ‘work-life balance’, and the latter constitutes a typical workplace dispute over pay, yet also embeds important historical dimensions. High levels of accessible, archival data from various sources are publicly available relating to all four cases. All disputes also involve more than one union. This permits a comparison of union approaches within each case in addition to between both cases.

The cases

I decided to focus on two companies, London Underground and Dublin Bus. To answer the first research question, how country and workplace level contextual forces shape employment relations and conflict in both sites is unpicked. Addressing the second research question involves unpacking how union resistance is capacitated and constrained in four workplace

disputes, two at London Underground and two at Dublin Bus. The organizations, unions and workplace disputes are discussed below.

London Underground

The UK's population is around 65,110,000 (ONS, 2017), of which around 8,674,000 live in London, the capital city. The London Underground is the city's main public service transport system. The Underground, or 'Tube' has carried over 50% of London's population in a day (TFL, 2018a). It employs around 17,500 people, working in five main functions: executive, clerical (including marketing, finance, human resources) stations, trains, and engineering. London Underground was under the control of local and central government up until 2003. Control was then transferred to Transport for London (TFL). Transport for London was created under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (GLA, 1999) and replaced London Regional Transport. TFL constitutes a local government body, currently chaired by Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London. Previous chairs include Boris Johnson (2008-2016) and Ken Livingstone (2003-2008). Its role is to manage the main components of Greater London's transport system including, London Underground, London Overground, London Buses, TFL Rail and Dockland Lights Railway (TFL, 2018b).

The first London Underground dispute analysed is over the restructuring of station staff. In November 2013, London Underground and the former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, announced a London Underground restructuring strategy. The plans involved closing all ticket offices, closing station control rooms, removing 953 posts and introducing a new staffing framework. Staffing grades were eliminated and merged, entailing new job titles, new responsibilities and new station locations. The second London Underground dispute examined is over the introduction of a new 24-hour Tube on Friday and Saturday nights. The study explores the legitimization of the plans by London Underground and the resistance to the proposals by three unions: The National Union for Rail Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF).

The RMT union

With over 80,000 members, RMT (2018) is the UK's largest specialist transport union. It represents workers from over 150 transport companies in a variety of different sectors, including shipping and offshore, buses and road freight, mainline and underground railways. The union is affiliated to the Trade Union Congress (TUC). RMT has a patent radical historical

heritage. It was established in 1990 through the merging of two influential unions, the National Union of Seamen and the National Union of Railwaymen (Berlin, 2006). Both unions engaged in extremely disruptive industrial action over pay and working conditions, for example, the well-known 1966 seamen's strike and the 1968 railwaymen's 'work-to-rule' industrial action.

RMT represents a spectrum of professions in London Underground, namely, drivers, service controllers, station staff and engineers. RMT was involved in both disputes. The first dispute mainly affected station grades, and RMT represents around 80% of station staff. The second dispute affected station staff, drivers, and engineers. RMT represents around 40% of drivers and around 98% of engineers.

RMT has been the focus of previous employment relations research, notably by Darlington (e.g., 2001, 2009a:b, 2015; Connolly and Darlington, 2012). Darlington (e.g., Connolly and Darlington, 2012) stresses that RMT has developed a militant, striking union 'brand image'. He states that, RMT is "one of the most militant and left-wing unions in the UK" (Darlington, 2009a: 3). Darlington (2009b) proposes that this stance has emerged due to a variety of fundamental factors. Firstly, RMT has repeatedly rejected social partnership on the national railway network and London Underground, espousing strike threats and strike action as an alternative. Darlington (2009a) claims that between 1999 and 2009, RMT has organized more ballots for strike action and has engaged in more industrial action than all other unions in the UK, including the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA), which also serves as a union for railway and Tube workers. For example, between 2000 and 2008 the RMT arranged 18 periods of industrial action on the Tube (some involving two or three days of action) (Darlington, 2009a). Between 2008 and 2015 RMT arranged 39 periods of industrial action on the Tube (some involving more than one day of action) (MQT, June 17th, 2015).

Another indicator of RMT's militant stance is likely to be its expulsion from the Labour Party. RMT is the only union involved in the London Underground dispute that is not associated with the Labour Party. Prior to 2004, the union had a historic connection with Labour. In 1899 a forerunner of the RMT voted to set up the party. However, the union was disaffiliated in 2004 for allowing Scottish members to fund the Trotskyist Scottish Socialist Party (see Clement, 2004). Finally, Darlington (2009b) asserts that strong left-wing figures at every level of the union have been emblematic of RMT's militancy. In this regard, numerous left-wing figures, from the former General Secretary Bob Crow to activists on the shop floor, have played a key

role in creating a militant internal union culture, by endorsing left-wing political values and ideology.

Since Bob Crow's death in March 2014, Mick Cash has taken over as General Secretary. Interestingly, during the election, Mick Cash was labelled as a 'moderate' candidate. This portrayal stemmed from Cash's link with the Labour Party. He joined Labour in 1982, served as a labour councillor in Watford for eight years and was a member of Labour's national executive committee, when RMT was disaffiliated. However, after his election, a militant attitude became more apparent. Cash criticised the Labour Party, stating that "if one or two large trade unions start to say we need an alternative, they have the organisation and the financial clout to start developing a political party that could have its roots back in the working class" (McSmith, 2014). Yet, speaking on BB1 Sunday Politics (Sunday Politics, 2018) in April 2018, Mick Cash stated that he trusted the more recent Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and that RMT are consulting with members about possible Labour Party re-affiliation.

TSSA

Despite strong opposition by the railway companies, The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association was established in 1897, known then as the National Association of General Railway Clerks (Wallace, 1996). The TSSA has over 20,000 members from a variety of different sectors, including, ports, ferries, land and underground rail. In London Underground, the TSSA represents administrative, managerial and around 20% of station staff union members. Akin to RMT, all elements of London Underground's restructuring strategy affected TSSA members, thus, the union arranged industrial action against all of the proposals. In 2016, Manuel Cortes was re-elected as General Secretary (TSSA, 2018). TSSA has been traditionally described as a more moderate union compared to RMT (Socialist Worker, 2011). The union is affiliated to the Labour party and to the TUC.

ASLEF

The Associated Society of Locomotive Steam Enginemen and Firemen' (ASLEF) is a union especially for train drivers. The union was founded in 1880 during an economic crisis and in response to a wage-cutting strategy implemented by Great Western Railways. Unsatisfied with the support received from their union the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS), a layer of more radical workers established ASLEF (ASLEF, 2018; Griffiths, 2005). ASLEF represents over 19,500 employees from London Underground, train operating companies, light

rapid transport, and freight companies. Mick Whelan, who is a member of the Labour Party, was elected as General Secretary in 2011 (ASLEF, 2018). The union itself is also affiliated to Labour and the TUC. ASLEF represents around 60% of London Underground drivers. During the second London Underground dispute, the union organized industrial action over the introduction of a Night Tube service, as this directly affected the workers it represents.

Table 3.1 provides a comparison of the three unions involved in the London Underground struggle.

Table 3.1: London Underground: comparison of trade unions			
Union	Membership	General Secretary	Staff represented at London Underground
RMT	80,000	Mick Cash	Drivers, service controllers, managerial staff, admin staff and ticket office employees.
TSSA	20,000	Manuel Cortes	Administrative, managerial, professional, technical workers and ticket office employees.
ASLEF	19,500	Mick Whelan	Tube drivers

Dublin Bus

The population of the Republic of Ireland is equivalent to just above 7% of the population of the UK. Its capital city, Dublin, has a population equivalent to less than 15% of the population in London. Given that Dublin Bus provides services in the Greater Dublin area and Bus Éireann provides transport throughout the Republic of Ireland, I decided that the former was most suitable to compare with London Underground, which mainly operates within Greater London. Dublin Bus typically carries around 30% of Dublin's population. This is compared to around 50% of the London population carried by London Underground. Dublin Bus has 3,400 employees, 19% of the workforce at London Underground. Dublin Bus' workforce is spread between drivers, maintenance, administrative, managerial and executive. The company owns a total of 950 buses, distributed across seven garages. Ultan Courtney is the chairman of Dublin Bus and Paddy Doherty is the Chief Executive.

The first dispute at Dublin Bus was over the competitive tendering of Dublin Bus services. Tendering proposals were introduced by the National Transport Authority (NTA, 2018) in November 2013. The NTA constitutes a statutory, non-commercial body in the Republic of Ireland, supported by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. Originally, under the Dublin Transport Authority Act (DTA, 2008), the body was to be named Greater Dublin's Transport Authority. However, the body's responsibility and geographic remit was extended

in the Public Transport Authority Act (PTA, 2009) when it became the National Transport Authority. Unlike TFL, the NTA's chairman does not hold the Mayor of Dublin position. Under the leadership of John Fitzgerald as chairman and Anne Graham as Chief Executive, the NTA controls public transport services in Greater Dublin and is the Republic of Ireland's public transport licencing agency. The body replaced the Dublin Transportation Office which was formed in 1996, subsuming some of the Department for Transport's functions, one being the regulation of Irish bus services. Contrary to Transport for London, the NTA does not usually operate its own services. Public service obligation contracts are established between the NTA and transport providers, including the Railway Procurement Agency, private company operators and Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ). The latter is a state-owned body, encompassing and responsible for, three operating companies, namely, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail.

The second dispute examined at Dublin Bus was over a pay claim made by the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) and the National Bus and Rail Union (NBRU).

SIPTU

The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) is a general union that has over 200,000 members working in a range of different sectors, such as, health, manufacturing, public administration and transport. The union was formed in 1990 through the merging of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Federated Workers' Union of the Republic of Ireland. Both unions were founded by the legendary James Larkin in the early twentieth century. Prior to this, the majority of employees seeking union representation were forced to join British based unions. Larkin helped establish the Irish Labour Party, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and was a key figure in the 1913 Dublin lock-out, which lasted 6 months (SIPTU, 2018). SIPTU represents between 1,150-1,250 drivers and just over 100 clerical workers. The union is affiliated to the Irish Labour party and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). SIPTU was led by General President Jack O'Connor from 2003 until the end of 2017. Joe O'Flynn, the current leader, has been the union's General Secretary since 2002. Akin to the RMT, some attention has been given to SIPTU by other scholars.

Geary and Gamwell (2017) explore the impact and outcomes of three specific SIPTU mobilizing campaigns across three sectors: hotels, contract cleaning and red meat processing. Doherty (2005, 2007) provides a valuable insight into the union's approach during a dispute

over the tendering of ‘Bus Company’ in the Republic of Ireland. Although the company is not named, the information provided suggests that the company is in fact Dublin Bus and the dispute relates to the proposed tendering in 2004. Interviews with employees illustrated their anger over the union’s decision to delay strike action, which according to employees was due to a perceived threat by officials to their status as a social partner. They argue that, even though SIPTU had “the backing of the whole garage” (Doherty, 2005: 10), “they had to pull back” (Doherty 2005: 8). SIPTU has been described as a prime supporter of the social partnership model (Doherty, 2007).

O’Sullivan and Gunnigle (2008: 7) refer to the “crushing (of) SIPTU” during a dispute between the union and the Irish-owned airline company, Ryanair, over a lack of pay and union recognition. However, on the other hand, Pulignano and Stewart (2013) observed that the union adopted a confrontational approach when protecting members in the aviation sector. This relates to the radical pluralist assumption, touched upon in Chapter 2, that a union adapts its strategy depending on context.

NBRU

The National Bus and Rail Union was founded in 1963 by a group of bus men from the Dublin Bus Clontarf garage, as a breakaway from the Irish Transport and General Workers’ union. One of its founders, Tom Darby, became the first General Secretary and earned a reputation for his militancy. Darby pioneered the one-day industrial action system in the Republic of Ireland, enabling employees to take short, but effective strike action when workers could ill-afford to sacrifice several days’ pay. This industrial action strategy soon gained traction across Irish trade unions (Kelly, 2009; McGreevy, 2009).

The NBRU currently caters for transport workers in Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) only and represents around 2,600 individuals. The union was originally called Dublin City Busmen’s Union. Notwithstanding, when the union expanded its membership across the Republic of Ireland, it became ‘The National Busmen’s Union’. The union’s name was changed for the third time to ‘The National Bus Workers’ Union’, when female staff began to join. Finally, when the union began representing Irish Rail train drivers, ‘The National Bus and Rail Union’ name emerged. Akin to RMT, the union is not affiliated to any political party, but it is also one of the few unions in the Republic of Ireland not affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The current General Secretary, since 2013 is Dermot O’Leary (NBRU, 2018). At Dublin Bus, the union only represents the driving grade and has roughly 1,300 driver members.

Table 3.2 includes union information relating to membership numbers, general secretaries and staff represented:

Table 3.2: Dublin Bus: comparison of trade unions			
Union	Membership	General Secretary	Staff represented at Dublin Bus
SIPTU	200,000	Joe O'Flynn	Bus drivers and clerical
NBRU	2,600	Dermot O'Leary	Bus drivers

Research philosophy: critical realism

Notwithstanding oversimplification, employment relations literature tends to find its roots in three main philosophies. Collis and Hussey (2009: 55) define a research philosophy as “a framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge”. In this study, the processes of collecting and analysing data are grounded in a broad critical realist philosophy (Bhaskar, 1989, 2014). Bhaskar (1989: 4), the founder of critical realism, assumes that the “social world is reproduced and transformed in daily life.” Critical realists occupy a middle position on the subjective-objective philosophical continuum. Objectivists (also known as positivists or empiricists), postulate that social phenomena are real in the sense that they are observable and measurable. Researchers espousing this position apply a ‘flat’ empirical realist/positivist philosophy. Positivist research is marked by a focus on statistical regularities, correlations and generalizable statements about a ‘single’ reality. A strong positivist current exists in the corpus of employment relations literature where scholars habitually reach for economic and psychological models and often (yet not always) produce research on the unitary wing (Heery, 2016). By overwhelmingly applying quantitative analysis, positivist research suppresses the richness of analysis by losing sight of broader context (Godard, 2014), power relations and the lived experiences of workplace struggle.

Subjectivists, often known as social constructivists, adhere to a weak view of reality, rejecting a single agreed knowledge of the social world existing 'outside' of individuals' experience of it. Extreme social constructivists contest that this is because reality does not exist beyond discourse and text. Individuals adopting a less extreme social constructivist stance contend that

results generated by positivist research are inadequate because, even if an objective reality exists, individuals will never grasp or understand it (O'Mahoney, 2011; O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). Social constructivists explicate resistance during workplace disputes from a subjectivist stance, often (but not always) drawing on postmodernist or post-structuralist interpretations of Foucault (1977). Resistance is viewed as a discursive practice, often associated with 'identity work', and emerges from a perceived subjective threat to individual identity (Knights and McCabe, 1998, 2000; McMurray et al., 2011; Willmott, 2005). For example, adopting a Foucauldian stance, McCabe (2016) discusses how a strategy discourse in a UK bank seeks to control employee subjectivity and their 'sense of self', and how workers resist this process. McMurray et al. (2011) apply a discourse analysis approach to explore how an employee constructs himself as an ethical subject in a letter to his employer, in order to defend his identity and resist the tendering of a medical practice. By collapsing the world to discourse, social constructivists produce single-stranded accounts of resistance, which elide the connection between agency and external contextual forces (Marks and O'Mahoney, 2014; Thompson and Vincent, 2010).

Critical realists explicitly differentiate between the transitive dimension (epistemology) and the intransitive dimension (ontology) (Bhaskar, 1989). In terms of the former, CR assumes that truth claims from different viewpoints can be empirically tested and compared (Edwards, 2017). In terms of the latter, CR posits that a real world exists outside individuals' subjective experience of it, constituting language, discourse and subjective perceptions, but is not irreducible to them (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014).

This study applies a broad/implicit critical realist approach, involving three main stages. First, the study pin-points country-level causal forces shaping employment relations and conflict at London Underground and Dublin Bus (UK and the Republic of Ireland). Attention is then turned to the interlocking causal forces at workplace level. Finally, the focus is on exploring how resistance is formulated and constrained during four specific workplace disputes, two at London Underground and two at Dublin Bus.

A study by Batstone et al. (1978) discussed in Chapter 2 and work by Turnbull (1992, et al., 1992) on dockers epitomize implicitly realist studies. Turnbull et al. (1992) examine a dispute over the abolition of the dock labour scheme and its aftermath. They sensitize us to a myriad of colliding contextual forces, including technological changes in the docks, transformations in patterns of trade, new labour legislation and inter-union conflict. These forces contributed

to the shifting of power (or the frontier of control) away from the dockers towards the employers. Crucially, Turnbull (1992) and Batstone et al.'s (1978) findings illustrate radical pluralist assumptions. Turnbull (1992: 299) observes that despite the strong occupational culture amongst dockers, solidarity between 'us' does not always translate into conflict with 'them'. Similarly, Batstone et al. (1978) point to the delicateness and brittleness of the strong collective identity at a manufacturing plant. Both studies conclude that worker opposition to management reflected 'parochial consciousness' in a particular work setting not 'true class consciousness'. Action was intended to resolve 'bread and butter' workplace issues, not to challenge capitalism more widely and directly.

Data collection

Case studies often have a rich holistic flavour by drawing upon different forms of data (Gerring, 2017). The data comprises archival materials, semi-structured interviews, and ethnography in the form of non-participant observation and informal discussions with employees at work and in union meetings. Data collection took place between August 2016 and September 2017. Triangulation was utilized, not to validate findings and demonstrate convergence, but to illustrate that all social phenomena have multiple aspects (see Marks and O'Mahoney, 2014). Triangulation involved oscillating backwards and forwards between the three main types of data- archival documents, interview transcripts and non-participant observation notes, and contextualizing them against each other to gain a fuller picture of workplace dynamics and the contextual processes at play.

Archival documents

Data collection first involved collecting unobtrusive secondary research, in this study, a range of archival materials related to both cases. An unobtrusive research method is "any method of observation that directly removes the observer from the set of interactions or events being studied" (Denzin, 1978: 256). The key advantage of employing unobtrusive methods is that the documents under scrutiny are non-reactive. Conventional methods, such as structured interviewing or self-administered questionnaires are susceptible to reactivity, in the sense that, participants/respondents are aware they are under study, and this awareness may influence their responses.

Table 3.3 lists the archival materials relating to the London Underground case, organized by social actor.

Table 3.3: Archival material relating to the London Underground case

Source	Number	Words
RMT		
RMT press releases	182	53,006
RMT monthly magazine	11	2,050
RMT campaign leaflets	12	216
Online video interviews (including press conferences, radio interviews, news and television interviews)	7	
Bob Crow (Former RMT General Secretary)	7	801
Mick Cash (Present RMT General Secretary)	3	630
Steven Headley (RMT Deputy General Secretary)	1	200
John Leach (RMT London Transport Regional Officer)	1	216
TSSA		
TSSA press releases	66	50,002
Online video interviews (including press conferences, radio interviews, news and television interviews)		
Manuel Cortes (TSSA General Secretary)	1	250
ASLEF		
ASLEF press releases	26	51,004
ASLEF monthly magazine	16	1,056
Article in Mick Whelan's column (ASLEF General Secretary)		300
London Underground		
London Underground press releases	67	22000
Letters from London Underground to unions	8	360
Letters from London Underground to employees	2	98
Equality impact assessment staff	1	506
Equality impact assessment customers	1	608
Economic impact of Night Tube report	1	800
London Underground PDF information leaflets/booklets about restructuring strategy	72	2000
Online video interviews (including press conferences, radio interviews, news and television interviews)		
Boris Johnson (TFL chairman)	8	3060
Phil Hufton (Former Chief Operating officer at London Underground)	1	200
Mike Brown (London Underground Managing Director)	2	210
Parliament		
Prime Minister's Questions transcripts	4	510
London National Assembly		
Mayor's Question Time transcripts	10	3,057
Television		
Andrew Marr Show (interview programme) transcripts	1	910
Tube documentary	8	2,060
Newspaper articles		
The Guardian	65	39,453
The Telegraph	80	504,160
The Mirror	40	20,492
The Daily Mail	60	35,067

The Evening Standard	<u>110</u>	<u>70,151</u>
Total	<u>874</u>	<u>865,433</u>

Table 3.4 lists the archival materials relating to the Dublin Bus case, organized by social actor.

Table 3.4: Archival materials relating to the Dublin Bus case		
Source	Quantity	Words
SIPTU		
Press Releases	42	12,000
SIPTU monthly magazine	8	800
Online Video interview		
Owen Reidy (former SIPTU utilities and construction divisional organiser)	1	250
NBRU		
National Bus and Rail Union press releases	53	12,600
NBRU worker newsletter	5	421
NBRU letter to ministers	2	123
NBRU labour commissions document	1	200
Online Videos		
Dermot O'Leary (NBRU General Secretary) ¹	2	346
Dublin Bus		
Dublin Bus report on direct contract	1	30,000
Online Video interview		
Dublin Bus Workers	1	8,021
National Transport Authority		
National Transport Authority press releases	5	516
National Transport Authority strategy booklet	1	2,012
National Transport Authority Media Briefing presentation	1	64
National Transport Authority consultation paper	1	2,031
National Transport Authority Technical report on contract options	2	5,067
National Transport Authority Dublin Bus performance report	1	6,231
Parliamentary press releases	2	542
Online Video interview		
Paschal Donohoe (Transport Minister)	1	363
Newspaper articles		
Irish Independent	40	18,679
Irish Times	27	12,980
Irish Daily Mirror	16	11,567
The Herald Dublin)	28	12,500
The Irish Sun	<u>10</u>	<u>6,078</u>
Total	<u>251</u>	<u>143,391</u>

Scott (1990) established criteria for determining the quality of documents collected using an unobtrusive method. Using his criteria, collecting archival materials poses limitations in terms of the authenticity and credibility of the data collected. In terms of the former, the risk is that the data is not genuine or has not been produced by a reliable source. This risk has been mitigated by collecting data from official websites, such as Transport for London or the National Transport Authority. Informal sources, such as blogs, which may include individual opinion rather than collective voice, have been eschewed. With regards to the latter, the risk is that the data is prone to distortion, impression management and bias. However, in this study scrutinizing the biases manifested in the data collected is one of the objectives.

Webb et al. (1966) do not postulate that methods prone to reactivity should be replaced by non-reactive, unobtrusive methods. Instead, they espouse the notion of ‘triangulation’ as discussed above, whereby researchers combine reactive and non-reactive methods. In this study, the method of collecting archival materials is employed in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and ethnographic enquiry.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are a valuable and necessary tool for exposing “human thought, meaning and experience” (Smith and Elger, 2014: 123). The rich textured data yields insights into the underlying processes and conditions characterizing events. In order to maximize the depth and texture of the information obtained, ‘probing’ for further details and implications is encouraged (Bryman, 2012). However, researchers warn that for interviews to be successful, the interviewer should avoid generalities and maintain a focus on particular events, corresponding to the specific research topic. Moreover, in order to conduct a multi-level, fine-grained analysis, the evidence generated from each interview needs to be compared with insights from other interviews and alternative data sources, rather than analysed in isolation (Smith and Elger, 2014).

Researchers conducting interviews tend to follow one of three options: structured, semi-structured, or unstructured frameworks (Walliman, 2016). One prime concern related to structured interviews is the standardization of the interview process. Researchers espousing this framework affirm that producing reliable and valid evidence requires interviewers to deal with every interviewee in the same way (Bryman, 2012). For this reason, researchers conducting structured interviews prepare an interview guide beforehand, listing clearly specified questions. The original order and wording of the planned questions are followed

strictly during the interview process. Interviewees are strongly encouraged to only answer the questions being asked (Seale, 2018).

Conversely, researchers applying an unstructured interview approach make minimum preparation before-hand in terms of possible questions. Generating data depends on the level of social interaction between researchers and the respondents. Interviewers may only ask one question, then follow up on particular points made by the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews stand between the 'structured' and 'unstructured' forms and are essentially a combination of both (Walliman, 2016). They are more flexible than structured interviews, yet are not as flexible as unstructured interviews. Similarly to structured interviews, an 'interview guide' is prepared beforehand outlining a set of questions or factors to be focused on (Galletta and Cross, 2013). Notwithstanding, the interview process can and tends to be adapted depending on interviewee responses. Question wording may be altered or additional questions may be asked. Interviewees are often prompted to provide more details about a particular issue (Seale, 2018). The standardization of the interview is therefore not the priority. However, the questions asked and their ordering are closely linked to the purpose of study and the overarching research question. A combination of open-ended and theoretically focused questions are asked in order to generate data encompassing the interviewees' perspectives and experiences, in addition to theory (Galletta and Cross, 2013).

Even though each interview framework has its merits, a semi-structured framework was chosen as the most appropriate for answering the research questions because of its flexibility. The unstructured approach was rejected because of its extreme flexibility. Data generated from the interviews had to contribute to answering my specific research questions, thus, specific issues needed addressing and the questions asked needed linking to the underlying purpose of the study. Furthermore, a level of structure was required to enable cross-case comparability between both cases and also between the different social actors interviewed (Gerring, 2017).

A more structured approach was rejected because of its lack of flexibility. Even though an appropriate interview guide was prepared beforehand and was followed during the interview process, the questions were often adjusted slightly and further questions were asked. This enabled me to gain deeper insights into patterns of employment relations and struggle, and the situational forces shaping them. Open-ended questions were used to create opportunities for respondents to share their experiences and perceptions' about employment relations and workplace conflict. Moreover, I began transcribing the recordings as soon as possible after

each interview, noting any gaps in the data that required filling, or points that required further digging, thus, new or revised interview questions often emerged from previous interviews. I also took notes during interviews and used them to inform the structure of future interviews.

Social actors playing a prime role in the disputes were interviewed using a semi-structured framework. These included interviewees from London Underground, the three unions representing employees, namely RMT, ASLEF and TSSA, and the conciliation service ACAS. Table 3.5 and 3.6 below list the social actors interviewed, but pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity. The interviewing period for the London Underground case was between August and mid-December 2016. Interviews with individuals representing London Underground included one member of the current senior management team, two former senior managers who worked for London Underground during the disputes, one train depot manager, three middle-level depot managers (two of which are ASLEF members). In addition, two managers from the London Underground marketing and communications team were interviewed.

With respect to the RMT union, interviews took place with two national executive members, two other head office employees, twenty workplace representatives and two lay members. The workplace representatives were drawn from stations, trains, engineering and cleaning. Three national executive members were also interviewed from ASLEF, along with one ASLEF official, four workplace representatives and eight lay member drivers. Eight were interviewed from the third union, TSSA, including two national executive members, two other head office employees, two station workplace representatives and two lay members. Additionally, one former station staff worker was interviewed. Finally, to gain an outsider's perspective, I spoke to an ACAS spokesperson, who deals with various London Underground disputes.

Table 3.5: Interviewees relating to the London Underground case		
Interviewee	Number	Words
London Underground		
Present senior management	1	6,580
Denise		
Former senior management	2	10,236
George		
Colin		
Trains depot manager	1	7,120
Jessica		
Middle level depot managers	3	13,465
Lisa		
James		
Daniel		

Marketing and Communications	2	11,567
Stuart		
Danny		
RMT		
National Executive Members	2	22,456
Harry		
Callum		
Other union employees	2	16,578
Tony		
Ellie		
Workplace representatives		
Stations	9	46,000
Charlotte		
Claire		
Darren		
Roger		
Andrew		
Michelle		
Hugh		
Mandy		
Dave		
Cleaners	1	8,967
Pete		
Trains	8	43,089
James		
Barry		
George		
Harry		
Susan		
Bob		
Libby		
Gregg		
Engineering	2	10,114
Sam		
Rob		
Rank and file members		10,345
Stations	1	
Sally		
Trains	1	
Scott		
ASLEF		
National Executive Members	3	15,648
David		
Craig		
Callum		
Union officials	1	5,780
Gary		
Workplace representatives	4	24,365
Trains		
Mark		
Malcom		
Adam		
Gregg		
Rank and file members		41,356
Trains	8	
Stephen		
Stuart		

Tom		
Les		
Bob		
Damian		
John		
Peter		
TSSA		
National Executive Members	2	7,123
Chris		
Sally		
Other union employees	2	7,120
Jeff		
Grant		
Workplace representatives	2	10,678
Stations		
Edward		
Cliff		
Rank and file members		9,023
Stations	2	
Kelsey		
Jimmy		
Former station staff worker	1	6,701
Martin		
ACAS spokesperson	<u>1</u>	<u>5,800</u>
Stuart		
Total	<u>61</u>	<u>340,111</u>

Interviews for the second case took place between January 2017 and September 2017. As shown below in Table 3.6, three senior managers from Dublin Bus and seven garage-level managers (including administrative managers and operational managers) were interviewed. Interviews took place with two SIPTU national executive members, two union officials, two other union employees, one former union official, fourteen workplace representatives and ten lay members. Two national executive members from NBRU were interviewed along with fourteen workplace representatives, one former workplace representative and ten lay members. I also spoke to one employee representative, one former employee representative, one health and safety representative and one TSSA clerical representative. Similarly to the London Underground case, for a valuable outsider's perspective, one senior Labour Court spokesperson was interviewed.

Table 3.6: Interviewees relating to the Dublin Bus case		
Interviewee	Number	Words
Dublin Bus Management	3	

Karl		
Mike		
Jack		
Garage manager	7	19,023
Kyle		
Connor		
Susan		
Nicola		
Claire		
Richard		
Sam		
SIPTU		
National Executive Members	2	15,230
Sandra		
Kenny		
Union officials	2	
Declan		
Gregg		
Former union official	1	6,021
Arthur		
Other union employees	2	14, 222
Will		
Oliver		
Drivers' workplace representatives	14	45,090
Karl		
Cameron		
Sean		
Adrian		
Luke		
Tom		
Martin		
Gavin		
Kieran		
Callum		
George		
David		
Jordan		
Liam		
Lay members		1,200
Drivers	10	
Cameron		
Steven		
Duncan		
Callum		
Anthony		
Matthew		
Miles		
Martin		
Trevor		
Thomas		
NBRU		
National Executive Members	2	10,230
Andy		
Michael		
Drivers' workplace representatives	14	44,990
Graham		
Cliff		

Daniel		
Duncan		
Adrian		
Karl		
Simon		
Dwain		
Jeremy		
Stuart		
Craig		
Gavin		
Paul		
Mark		
Former drivers' workplace representative	1	7,506
Freya		
Lay members		1,120
Drivers	10	
Tim		
Harry		
Ben		
Jacob		
Josh		
William		
Alexander		
Noah		
Allen		
Aaron		
Employee representative	1	9,800
Ethan		
Former employee representative	1	10,000
Louis		
Health and safety representative	1	600
Conrad		
TSSA clerical representative	1	600
Kelly		
Labour Court representative	<u>1</u>	<u>9,080</u>
Keith		
Total	<u>73</u>	<u>221,602</u>

Ethnography

Ethnographic enquiry was utilized to add vivid colour to the picture painted by interview transcripts and archival documents, through non-participant observation and informal discussions with employees at work and in union meetings (Van Maanen, 2011). Van Maanen (2011: 1) defines ethnography as a “written representation of culture (or selected aspects of culture)”. Watson (2012) refers to ethnography as a sociological practice, not a data collection

process. The practice required marrying my ethnographic accounts with multiple strata of context and social structures, not only to describe, but also explain social phenomena (Rees and Gatenby, 2014). In employment relations research, scholars such as, Burawoy (1972, 1979, 1985, 1989, 2013), Gouldner (1954) and Batstone et al. (1978) provided the foundations of rich ethnographic analysis. Burawoy (2013) has undertaken over 40 years of ethnographic research. He began his ethnographic journey in 1968 as a worker in a Zambian copper mine, focusing on the racial order and how classes reinforced the cultural norm of white supremacy. He then moved on to a Chicago factory and conducted ethnographic enquiry as a machine operator, this time exploring the question of ‘why workers work as hard as they do?’ Hungary was his third destination, where he studied working class consciousness while working in a champagne factory, a small spinning shop, a machine shop and in the steel industry. He ended his journey in Russia by conducting a factory ethnography in the Soviet Union. Reflecting on his ethnographic journey, Burawoy (2013) discusses his ethnographic fallacies, including playing down the impact of global forces and relying on the theory of Karl Marx rather than Karl Polanyi (1957). The bedrock assumption of Burawoy’s (2013) ethnographic journey was a politicised and homogeneous, militant working class (proletariat), yet as Polanyi (1957) argues, market fundamentalism has created a diverse ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2011) united by experiences of labour commodification. Notwithstanding, whether the precariat will combine to form a Polanyian counter-movement is yet to be seen and cannot be assumed.

As with all methods, ethnography is not flawless, there are limitations. Observations are experientially contingent and the habits, characteristics and political orientation of the ethnographer influence what he or she observes and how they interpret their observations (Van Maanen, 2011). Nevertheless, in both cases, ethnography added a valuable layer to the analysis and encouraged the probing of deeper, less observable, causal mechanisms, by yielding direct contact with the individuals being studied. Ethnography powerfully captures human behaviour in workplace settings and offers rich visual data to uncover articulated and unarticulated features. I recorded observation notes from both cases in an ethnographic journal and reflected on my notes between observations.

At London Underground, ethnography offered a window to observe the nature and demands of the job for workers in stations and trains in various locations across the network. This allowed me to gain deep insights into how jobs differ between grades and locations. For example, I observed how the duties of a station staff worker differs from the duties of a train driver and how the work tasks or environment on one underground line/station differed from another

line/station. I had valuable informal discussions with workers on their shift and during their breaks. For example, talking to train drivers in depot mess rooms provided crucial insights into the culture within the depot and the interactions between drivers. Time was also spent with train managers behind the depot desk, where drivers sign in and receive their train numbers. This enabled me to examine relationships between drivers and managers. In addition, I was permitted to attend union meetings, including regional council meetings and branch meetings. This element of observation was important for understanding the structure of union meetings and the dynamics between union members during such meetings.

With regards to the second case, I was also immersed in the employees' working lives and the workplace culture by visiting seven Dublin Bus garages. Garages were visited on Thursdays, known as 'union day' because at least one representative from both unions is present to respond to member enquiries. Garage visits offered rich data of daily interactions between unions, representatives, members and managers and provided me with valuable insights into workplace cultures at different locations. It also gave me an insight into the type of issues members confront representatives about on a daily basis. Another useful ethnographic element was observing bus drivers on different routes in Dublin, at various times of day, garnering insights into the demands of their job and interactions with passengers. As in the first case study, I observed interactions between union members in union meetings.

Negotiating access

Given that both cases required travelling long distances on a regular basis, I pragmatically decided to focus on one case between August 2016 and mid-December 2016 and the second case between January 2017 and September 2017. The Irish case involved travelling on the weather dependent ferry, thus, it was decided to begin negotiating access for the London Underground case first, with the intention of conducting the majority of the interviews during the winter months. The process of negotiating access followed the same path for both cases. Initially, gaining access involved foraging through online material, including London Underground's website, Dublin Bus' website and any websites associated with the trade unions concerned for publically available e-mail addresses and phone numbers. A non-probability 'snowball approach' was then applied, in the sense that interviewees (acting as gate-keepers) provided contact information of other possible respondents. Opportunities for observation and visiting work places were also organized following interviews, either by the interviewee himself/herself, or with a contact provided by the interviewees. However, sifting through the

internet for contact information continued throughout the data collection process, ensuring that no stone had been left unturned.

In both cases, building trust and a positive relationship with interviewees was often a key to the door of further access. Trust was built with respondents in several ways. For example, I emphasized that their identity will be protected using pseudonyms and that any information they provide will be treated as strictly confidential, and securely stored (i.e., on password protected laptops). I highlighted that their participation is voluntary and thus they are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, or refuse to answer any question. I also timed the interview to ensure that its length corresponded to the length agreed prior to the interview. Building trust with respondents also involved actively listening to their responses, showing a keen interest in the information they provided and treating them with dignity and respect (Bryman, 2012).

Data analysis

Discursive thematic analysis

The study analyses the archival documents, interview transcripts and ethnography notes using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, importantly, the thematic analysis approach adopted in this study acknowledges the cardinal role played by discourse during the production and re-production of reality. Discourses encompass “different ways of representing aspects of the world” (Fairclough, 2003: 124). In this study the ‘aspects of the world’ focused on are employment relations and workplace struggles. As elucidated in Chapter 2, social actors draw upon different discourses and their associated assumptions when referring to employment relations and workplace disputes.

Applying a discursive thematic analysis involved multiple stages: first, I engaged ‘actively’ with all the data. This was an iterative process, involving oscillating between interview transcripts, archival documents and interview/ethnography notes, to identify issues of potential interest and repeated patterns of meaning, relating to both research questions. The second stage involved generating particular ‘codes’ from the data. Each ‘code’ featured a few words outlining why that segment of the data (this could be a word, sentence or paragraph), was significant to the study and answering the research questions (Bryman, 2012). The segment for example may show how a particular discourse had been evoked, the use of particular grammatical devices (e.g., metaphors, similes, idioms) or an important argument put forward by an interviewee. Segments of data were coded once or coded several times.

The next step entailed revisiting each code and pinpointing how particular codes fuse together to produce broader themes (e.g., job design, workplace culture, union culture, manager-employee relations). The themes were then reviewed and refined. This process required me to consider whether all the segments within each theme cohere together and whether each theme was relevant for answering the underlying research questions. At this point I decided to abandon, merge or break down particular themes. The ‘story’ told by the data, within and across the themes is presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, and linked back to previous literature, purpose of study and research questions in Chapter 7.

Despite being strong advocates of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss the pitfalls associated with the method. First, thematic analysis does not generally examine how language is used by social actors in the data. Second, there is a danger that the results presented from conducting a thematic analysis are merely descriptive, lacking cognizance of broader assumptions, structures and meanings. This study attempts to overcome these pitfalls by foregrounding the use of different discourses. The approach has close parallels with work by Spicer and Fleming (2007), as referred to in Chapter 2, who apply a discourse analysis approach to unpick the discursive struggle over the restructuring of a public sector broadcasting company. Initially, their analysis followed the procedures of thematic analysis, the data was coded and discursive themes were extracted. However, their analysis advances on a conventional thematic analysis by pinpointing the linguistic ‘tactics’ applied by social actors when drawing upon particular discourses.

Researchers analysing discourse are interested in how specific texts draw upon and contribute to specific discourses and how these relate to other discourses. Discourse can complement or denounce other discourses. Since the process of establishing meaning is never absolute, meaning is continuously negotiated, discourses often compete in a dialogical struggle for dominance, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Keenoy et al., 1997). Some researchers analysing discourse follow a social constructivist epistemology, for example, Laclau and Mouffe (1985). This approach posits that language is a self-referential sphere, constituting reality and that the material world has no existence beyond language and discourse (Sims-Schouten and Riley, 2014).

This study is sympathetic to Fairclough’s (2005, 2009) dialectical-relational perspective on discourse. Fairclough (2005) considers language as a ‘generative mechanism’, which needs conceptualizing in relation to other generative mechanisms, social structures and power

relationships (Reed, 2000). Discursive practices are “constrained by the fact that they inevitably take place within a constituted material reality, with pre-constituted subjects and pre-constituted social subjects” (Fairclough, 1992: 60). The discursive options available to social actors are restrained by institutionalized economic, political and cultural forces. For this reason, the focus of investigation should be on the dialectical interplay between pre-existing structural limitations and the attempts by social actors to use innovative discursive practices to shape and reshape these obstructions to their advantage. In Fairclough’s (2005, 2009) approach, the word ‘dialectic’ is used to indicate that the relationship between social structures and discursive innovation is viewed as antagonistic, complex, dynamic and rooted in material and social constraints (Reed, 2004).

I endeavoured to locate verbal accounts of employment relations and workplace conflict at London Underground and Dublin Bus, in a wider framework constituting contextual mechanisms (including discourse), which are partly, but not entirely discursive (Thompson and Harley, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter sets out to outline the processes of collecting and analysing the data and the methodologies employed. This chapter first introduced the comparative case study research design and explained why cases in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland transport sectors were chosen. London Underground is introduced as the first case study organization, along with representing unions RMT, ASLEF and TSSA. The second case study organization, Dublin Bus and representing unions SIPTU and NBRU are then discussed. This is followed by a discussion on the research philosophy underpinning the thesis, critical realism. The chapter then detailed the data collection processes, specifying the qualitative data sources and the individuals interviewed, and charting how ethnographic enquiry was pursued. Finally, the chapter outlined the discursive thematic analysis approach adopted in this study. The following chapter addresses the first research question by comparing employment relations and workplace conflict at London Underground and Dublin Bus. The chapter begins by focusing on the country-level and then proceeds to discuss the organisational-level.

CHAPTER 4: EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS AND WORKPLACE CONFLICT AT LONDON UNDERGROUND AND DUBLIN BUS

Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question by comparing how contextual factors in the public transport sectors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus. The question is addressed as follows. First, the chapter probes the first research question at country-level by examining industrial relations history, dispute resolution and employment law in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The second part of the chapter shifts the focus to the organisational-level, where job design, union rivalry, union culture, workplace cultures and manager-employee relations at London Underground and Dublin Bus are unpicked. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, bold font in quotes indicates the use of particular grammatical devices (e.g., metaphors, similes, sayings).

Industrial relations history, dispute resolution, and employment law in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland

Industrial relations history in the UK

It has already been noted in Chapter 2 that the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have different industrial relations historical backgrounds. The historical antecedents continue to colour employment relations in both countries to this day. Since the Thatcher government in the 1980s, plummeting union power in the UK has coincided with the intensification of unitarist discourse, the proliferation of neoliberal ideas and an emphasis on cost-cutting, efficiency, and customer service. In the majority of UK organizations, unions are too weak to contest managerial authority during struggles over the ‘frontier of control’ and effort-reward bargain. Yet, some unions, notably RMT and ASLEF in the transport industry, are still relatively strong. This is largely due to the nature of the industry, as transport unions have more disruptive economic and political power during strikes than unions in other industries. Though, as will be elaborated on in the following sections and Chapter 5, there are other important contributory contextual factors such as the characteristics of a particular dispute and the mobilizing discourse diffused by representatives.

However, operating within an unfavourable neo-liberal political economy, where union power country-wide has been weakened, inevitably decreases union and employee potential to resist

in the workplace. Darren, an RMT representative, applies a class-related metaphor to highlight this:

The labour movement as a whole is half the size it was, 65% fewer reps. **The balance of class forces is pitched against us** and that means that the confidence of workers, even in industries where we have greater leverage and have more militant unions, is not high.

Stephen, an ASLEF train driver, echoes these sentiments by referring to the loss of union power:

I have thought of leaving the union a couple of times because they're not as powerful as they were before.

Many interviewees referred to how power relations have been re-shaped since they first started working at London Underground. In recent years, the 'frontier of control' has shifted towards greater managerial control. There are various contextual forces at play here which will be discussed in the proceeding sections, however, the dominance of neoliberalism and the widespread weakening of UK unions have undoubtedly played a key part in hardening managerial attitudes at London Underground, and developing a powerful managerial ideology at workplace level. This is illuminated by the use of the verb 'folded' in relation to management in the following quote:

In the early days when I first joined, when the union was in a dispute, **management just folded, but management are not folding anymore.** (Claire, RMT station worker at London Underground)

Industrial relations history in the Republic of Ireland

As elaborated upon in Chapter 2, the Republic of Ireland implemented a social partnership model between 1987 and 2009:

The people here gave us a choice in the late 1980s, do you want Thatcherism or do you want the German model, social partnership? So the union leadership went back into the room and said yes we'll have social partnership. (Sean, SIPTU representative)

Interviewees referred to the positive aspects of social partnership:

Thatcher famously said there's no such thing as society, but under social partnership, society here was 'real'. We got pay rises for a lot of places where there was no union. You had the unemployed, the farmers, the private-public sector people, people who worked for the homeless, they were all given a voice. (Louis, former employee representative)

It gave unions access to people, like the Minister of Transport and I think we've been able to hold onto a lot of that access. (Arthur, former SIPTU official)

However, interviewees also explained why social partnership is still criticised today:

In strong industries, they got [pay] increases without using strength, workers lost that feeling of having to struggle for things. I don't think there is an appetite to go back to it from a trade union movement's point of view. I think there is an appetite for things like sectoral bargaining, where we can try to engage with employers in the private sector. (Arthur, former SIPTU official)

The right and the government got really angry because unions were dealing with budgetary matters and micro-economic policy when they weren't elected. (Louis, former employee representative)

What is more, interviewees suggested a 'rhetoric-reality' gap surrounding social partnership because the 'real influence' it provided to employees at workplace level is questionable:

Social partnership was good, you did get a voice, whether you actually changed anything was another matter. (Cameron, SIPTU representative)

Declan, a union official, explained SIPTU's perspective on social partnership:

Our view is, if you don't have social partnership, fine, it's not something that we're overly concerned about, if it was there we would utilize it, but in the absence of it we do what we've always done, we represent people in employment and in sectors and industries and try to get the best for them.

The term 'social partnership' carries negative connotations for NBRU because not being affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions meant no input into decision making. Their rival union SIPTU, on the other hand, was a key social partner.

Despite mixed feelings, there was a consensus that, social partnership was softer than Thatcherism in the UK, which severely damaged society and social partnership tipped the balance of power more towards unions than in the UK. Two powerful metaphors are deployed in the quote below to convey this.

It was definitely better than **the Thatcherite model that wrecked communities in the UK and battered the unions**. The UK trade union movement is still suffering from it. (Arthur, former SIPTU official)

Dublin Bus senior managers also referred to the advantages of social partnership, evoking pluralist discourse:

There's no doubt that social partnership reduced industrial unrest, which was great. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus manager)

It was good for getting all stakeholders around the table to discuss not only pay, there was a lot more to it than just pay. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

However, there were mixed feelings amongst Dublin Bus management as to whether social partnership contributed to the 2008 financial crisis in the Republic of Ireland and subsequent recession:

A lot of people in the Republic of Ireland blame social partnership for the recession, they will say that we benchmarked too high, we were overpaying people, I don't believe so. We were no different to any other country. The banking system fails, the construction industry fails, you have a process. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager).

I would say in my opinion social partnership probably raised rates of pay too high a little bit too fast. We probably reached a point in the early 2000s where people had a little bit too much money, the banks were giving out money like it was confetti and we all lost the plot, the country went a bit mad. People overspent well beyond their means. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Dispute resolution in the UK

Dispute resolution is emphasized in pluralist discourse. In the UK, conciliation services for individual or collective workplace disputes are provided by ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) (ACAS, 2018). The first conciliation service was established by the Labour government in 1896, and, up until 1974, the service remained under the government's direct control. After complaints by trade unions and employers relating to the Conservative Party's prices and income policy in 1974, ACAS was formed as an independent body, under the 1975 Employment Protection Act (TNA, 1975).

As part of the prices and income policy, government dictated how much prices could go up on the high street as well as determining what awards employers could reward as pay awards. In companies that were making big profits, like Ford, workers wanted a share of those profits. They were striking, saying they wanted 20%, which was above the government's maximum, but Ford didn't want a strike and they were prepared to pay. They needed help from a third party to facilitate a deal, they came to us, but we said, sorry, we can't go over the figure the Minister

has given, or we would be breaking the law. Both employers and unions got frustrated and ACAS was formed. (Stuart, ACAS spokesperson)

The majority of companies visiting ACAS have dispute procedures in place at local and company level. Employers would rather settle issues in house, without using a third party, because of the cost and convenience implications. However, the ACAS spokesperson explained that in some circumstances, the machinery in place fails and establishing a deal is too difficult without an outside facilitator. One factor curbing the capacity of internal dispute mechanisms to resolve disputes is multiple unions, as is the case at London Underground. In addition, trust is a key factor:

Because we've been around for so long, we've got a reputation, when people come to us, it's a name that people trust. Often, when people are in dispute, what goes out of the window is trust. The parties trust us to be independent and not to favour one or the other when trying to get a deal. Also to maintain confidentiality, that is very important. (Stuart, ACAS spokesperson)

How conciliators attempt to broker a deal depends on the circumstances and characteristics of that particular dispute.

Conciliation is a very flexible and creative process. There's different ways of doing it, getting people in the same room and you're chairing the meeting, or we have a shuttle service where you've got a union in one room and management in another room and you go between them. The parties are saying to each other, this is our position and you've got to reach our position. So we go between them and say, tell us where you are and where you might be prepared to go. They'll say, well we're prepared to do this, we would then ask, would you be prepared to do that? Then you may throw in some ideas yourself, so it's more proactive, than just passing messages. (Stuart, ACAS spokesperson)

During disputes between individual employees and their employer, if both parties fail to reach an agreement at ACAS the case can be referred to a UK Employment Tribunal. Employment Tribunals determine the liability or remedy associated with the claim. During collective workplace disputes, if employers and trade unions fail to reach an agreement at ACAS, unions tend to organize a ballot for industrial action and action short of a strike (such as overtime bans).

Dispute resolution in the Republic of Ireland

Between 1946 and 1990 the Labour Court, established under the Industrial Relations Act 1946 (ISB, 1946) was the prime conciliation service in the Republic of Ireland. If an agreement was

not reached between parties at the court, a recommendation was issued to resolve the dispute. However, as the system of employment law expanded, a specific conciliation body was required, therefore, the Labour Relations Commission was established in 1991. Prior to October 2015, the Labour Relations Commission provided a conciliation service to unions and management during workplace disputes. The Workplace Relations Commission Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) stipulated the merging of five former Irish employment rights bodies: the Labour Relations Commission, Rights Commissioner Service, the Equality Tribunal (dealing with anti-discrimination laws) the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) (mainly dealing with unfair dismissals) and the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) (covering labour inspection and employment rights) to form the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) body. The WRC deals with all types of employment law complaints (similarly to ACAS in the UK) and the Labour Court is a court of appeal for WRC decisions.

Now after the restructuring, we are left with a single point of complaints, there's only one place to go, the Workplace Relations Commission adjudication service. All the time limits are the same, whereas before they all varied, the claim methodologies are the same and if you want to make an appeal of a decision from any of those adjudication people, it is only going to one place and that's here (the Labour Court). Therefore, it's a good idea and simplifies the matter for people who have a problem in their employment. (Keith, senior Labour Court spokesperson)

During collective disputes, if employers and trade unions fail to reach an agreement after using the conciliation services provided by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Republic of Ireland renders an additional negotiation mechanism for both parties to use. Collective grievances can be referred to the Labour Court to attempt to resolve industrial unrest. At the court, parties are asked to provide sworn statements outlining their arguments relating to a dispute. Upon hearing the arguments provided by both parties, the court recommends the terms on which a dispute should be settled, for example, it may recommend a pay increase of 2.75% during a pay dispute, as discussed in Chapter 6.

The recommendation is based on the submissions of the parties, the engagement of the court with the parties at the hearing and sometimes we will break them up and talk to them separately to hear what they're saying. It is also based on how the parties engage with each other's submissions, we would ask the trade union(s), have you got anything to say about the employer's submission? The same to the employers about the union's submission. (Keith, senior Labour Court spokesperson)

As shown in Chapter 6, employees may decide to reject the recommendations issued by the ‘pluralist’ Labour Court negotiation mechanism and adopt a more radical stance through organizing industrial action. Although recommendations by the Labour Court have been rejected at Dublin Bus, interviewees believed that the service is needed during workplace disputes in the Republic of Ireland. It can help hold the tension between employer, employee and union interests in balance to some extent.

The Labour Court is good, but you have to be prepared that you might not get a recommendation that you like. (Karl, SIPTU representative).

Registered Employment Agreements (REAs) and Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs)

Employment agreements between employers and trade unions in the Republic of Ireland related to employee pay or working conditions can become formally registered by the Labour Court. Registered Employment Agreements (REAs) were first introduced in the Industrial Relations Act 1946. Prior to 2015, they applied to all employers and employees within a particular group/industry, in addition to employer(s) and employees party to the agreements. However, REAs were deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2013 after a case concerning an REA in the construction industry. Keith, a Labour Court spokesperson, explains why:

Fundamentally it was seen as the legislator government, delegating unconstitutionally its law making functions to the Labour Court. In other words, we were registering an agreement that had the force of law among people who had known nothing about it in the first place. They weren’t members of the trade unions and they didn’t know anything about the organizations that were doing the negotiating on the employers’ side. So suddenly you had a law effectively setting rates of pay that was seen as being unconstitutional, because under our constitution, the only arm of the state constitutionally empowered to make laws applying to the citizens, is the government. They’re not entitled to sub-contract that.

Industrial relations in the Republic of Ireland was recently altered by the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015). The amended act stipulates a new system for REAs, where agreements are confined to the parties directly involved.

We only register agreements now within the employment. The people making the agreements are substantially representative of the people they’re supposed to cover. There’s about 15 in the entire economy, that’s about it. The airport, police and fire service have one, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann have one from the tendering dispute, and there’s a few others. (Keith, senior Labour Court spokesperson)

The agreements are registered by the Labour Court providing that the trade union is substantially representative of the employees and that all parties agree on its registration. The agreements are grounded in a pluralist perspective on the employment relationship. They seek to encourage harmonious relations between employers and employees by stipulating that negotiations must take place before any industrial action is organized associated with the agreement. However, they are a mechanism Irish unions can potentially utilize to contest the frontier of control and thus constitute a potential power resource which is inaccessible to UK unions. Keith explains the consequences in the unlikely event that one of the parties breach the agreement.

If an employer is going to register an employment agreement they're going to mean it. If they did breach it, theoretically, the court could hear the alleged breach and make a final finding, which could be turned into an order. It's never happened. Trade unions could injunct employers in the Civil Courts because they're in breach of the Registered Employment Agreement. Or, if a trade union decided to engage in an industrial dispute in contravention of a Registered Employment Agreement, the employer can go over to the Civil Courts and get an injunction straight away. (Keith, senior Labour Court spokesperson)

The new Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) also introduced a new Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) system to replace the previous REAs. SEOs set minimum standards for pay, sick pay and pensions across a particular sector. As explained in Chapter 6, the barriers for establishing SEOs are fairly high, yet, they constitute a potential power resource for Irish unions which are also inaccessible to UK unions. SEOs provide unions with potential power to contest the terms of the effort-bargain not only in one particular workplace, but in workplaces throughout an industry. The first SEO was established in October 2017 for the construction industry. In this context, the SEO provided construction workers with a 10% pay increase.

Union recognition

In the UK, any trade union can negotiate with an employer for recognition. Under the Employment Relations Act 1999 (TNA, 1999), if both parties fail to reach an agreement, statutory recognition can be sought through the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). The recognition will be approved by the CAC providing that at least 10% of employees are union members and that the majority of employees support union recognition. However, as previously discussed, UK unions are operating in an unfavourable neo-liberal political economy which peddles unitarist ideology and encourages direct communication between

managers and employees. Hence, union recognition does not indicate that employers will provide unions with ‘real’ input into organisational decision making, or that unions will be capacitated to secure substantive concessions relating to enhancing the pay and working conditions of the employees they represent.

By contrast, in the Republic of Ireland, there are no statutory procedures compelling employers to recognize a trade union. Trade union action or a Labour Court recommendation may persuade employers to recognize unions, notwithstanding, it is ultimately the employer’s decision. The lack of union recognition legislation has not historically been a major limitation in the Republic of Ireland. The majority of medium and larger business employers decided under their own discretion to recognize unions and establish collective agreements. However, since the elevation of neoliberalism unions are facing great difficulties securing recognition, notably in the private sector.

Gregg, a SIPTU official, explains:

You have an automatic right in this county under constitution to join a trade union, but you have no automatic right to be recognized prior. So one balances off the other. In the UK, you have a legislation which says that if you have a certain percentage of numbers, you can get recognition, in the Republic of Ireland we don’t have that. In the Republic of Ireland even if you have 100% of members, you still can’t have recognition. It depends on the employer and private companies don’t want to recognize.

Yet, the Irish Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) has re-cast the frontier of control quite significantly in organizations where unions are not recognized. The recent (Amendment) Act does not force employers to engage in collective bargaining with unions, but it provides a potential power resource for employees in non-union organizations to advance their frontier of control and improve their working terms and conditions. The revised act stipulates that submissions can be made to the Labour Court to investigate the working terms and conditions of such workers and their situation in terms of collective bargaining access. If the Labour Court concludes that collective bargaining does not occur in their organization, the court can issue a recommendation or determination regarding their terms and conditions of employment. If employers fail to adhere to a determination issued by the Labour Court, trade unions can request an order, which legally binds an employer to comply with that determination. The first order of this kind was issued by the Labour Court in June 2016 in relation to the pay of 63 employees at Freshways Food Company. This new arrangement

empowers employees (and unions) to by-pass employer power and challenge managerial ideology.

Employee board representation

The Worker Participation State Enterprises Act 1977 (ISB, 1977) facilitated employee board level representation at seven Irish companies, including CIÉ, the parent body of Dublin Bus. Further companies were added to the list following enactment of the Worker Participation State Enterprises Act 1988, however by today, representation has been withdrawn, or diluted in some companies post-privatization. CIÉ currently has 4 worker directors acting as employee representatives for three CIÉ subsidiaries: Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann and Irish Rail. In contrast, employee board representation has never been compulsory in the UK. It was pledged by Theresa May in July 2016, but was not implemented after opposition by the Confederation of British Industry who asked for the proposal to be withdrawn by the end of the year. The transport company, First Group (First Group, 2018), is the only UK company with an employee board representative. RMT's former General Secretary, Bob Crow, was appointed to the TFL board by the former chairman, Ken Livingstone. However, he resigned from the board in 2004 after Livingstone called on RMT members to cross the picket lines during an upcoming strike. Some interviewees in the Irish case emphasized that the impact of employee board representation should not be exaggerated as a source of employee power:

It depends on the worker who's elected. Some of them have been absolutely hopeless, just sitting there doing nothing. If I didn't understand something in a board paper, I would go around asking people to assist me, some don't bother (Louis, former employee representative).

They have a part to play but I wouldn't overstress it. I would rather 90% density, strong active trade union reps, who are highly motivated and highly educated with good union officials, than every board has to have worker directors. Dublin Bus has individuals on the board who did not vote for certain policies and changes, but they still went through, it shows that their power is limited. (Arthur, former SIPTU official)

Other representatives deemed worker directors crucial as a form of employee and union power, yet affirmed that this is contingent on who the worker director is.

I'll often formally write to the worker director from our union about an issue so that he can bring it up in one of their board meetings. Also if the board want to do something, he can say, I'm not having my name down agreeing to that. (Graham, NBRU representative)

Managers at one Dublin Bus garage stated that the attitude of one of the worker directors working at the garage has changed dramatically since beginning the role.

Since he has been sitting in board meetings, he is more reasonable, he understands the situation better. Before he was coming in demanding unreasonable things. (Sam, garage manager)

UK Trade Union Act

The Trade Union Act (Trade Union Act, 2016), passed in May 2016 by the Conservative government, restricts union power to take industrial action by its tight thresholds. The Act enforces a 50% minimum participation threshold for any industrial action ballot. Unions representing employees who deliver ‘essential services’, that is, services related to health, fire, transport, nuclear and education, also require the support from at least 40% of the union membership, before arranging industrial action. Other constraining changes stemming from the Trade Union Act 2016 include: reducing ‘live’ mandates for strike action to six months and increasing the notice period for industrial action to two weeks (Gall, 2016). The act inhibits union capacity to resist during workplace struggles, reflecting the Conservative anti-union stance and the dominance of neoliberalism in the UK.

The aim of this section was to address the first research question at a country-level. In doing so, it has compared industrial relations history, dispute resolution and employment law in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The section also identifies how the potential power resources available to employees and their unions in both countries differs. The following section examines the first research question at an organisational-level and unpacks job design, union rivalry, union culture, workplace cultures and manager-employee relations at London Underground and Dublin Bus respectively.

Employment relations and workplace struggle at London Underground

Job design

London Underground station staff have different duties based on their job title. Some station staff are mainly based at the gate line to assist passengers when purchasing tickets and to answer queries. Station staff are often bombarded with questions, especially from tourists because the Underground is a relatively complex network. Other station staff may work on the gate line and have managerial duties. The size of the station and the number of passengers using the station day-to-day shapes working patterns for employees. For example, in bigger

stations employees are likely to face more problems than in smaller stations, which can be stressful, but also keeps employees busy. Furthermore, in bigger stations staff are always working with others, affording ample opportunities to develop working relationships.

In bigger stations, there's always going to be something to do for station staff and there's other staff around to have a bit of banter with. (Charlotte, station representative)

In smaller stations some employees enjoy the fact that they encounter fewer problems, however, this also means far fewer opportunities for interaction with others, making the job isolated. The role of a station staff assistant is 'safety-critical', in the sense that security is a key factor because of the threat of terror attacks. I interviewed a former station staff assistant (now a driver) who was working the day of the 2005 terror attack. The scenes he described to me will stay in his memory forever.

London Underground drivers sit in the front cab of their train, isolated from passengers and employees. Advantages of their job include attractive wages (around £50,000 a year) and the fact they have no traffic to navigate around, or difficult customers to deal with. However, there are also several disadvantages to the job, as Stephen, a train driver, explains.

Being a driver is very boring, repetitive and lonely. I miss the customer interaction I had on stations. Here, the shift drags on and it is only me and my train. We are not allowed to put the light in the cab on, but I would not want to see myself staring back at me for hours anyway. I ask friends and family if they want a trip in the cab sometimes to have someone to talk to.

From the outside people think it's the perfect job, but it isn't. It's monotonous, tiring, but it pays the mortgage and we get good holidays. (Scott, RMT driver)

When drivers begin each shift, they must be prepared to face a 'one-under', that is, a passenger jumping in front of their train. When they approach a platform, they must look out for any body language suggesting that a traveller may jump. One train driver interviewed noticed a woman looking suspicious at the edge of a platform he was approaching one day and stopped the train in time. The woman was trying to end her own life. Another driver interviewed experienced a 'one under' within his first eleven weeks of working as a driver. After such an event, the driver must make an announcement on the tannoy and ask all passengers to evacuate the train. Some passengers are sympathetic, yet others give the driver a mouth of abuse because of the disruption to their journey. Unfortunately, 265 passengers suffered fatalities the past ten years (1993-2013) after jumping in front of London Underground trains (Meltzer, 2013). I was shown by drivers how some individuals who jump do not die because the tracks are dipped by the

platform, meaning that travellers end up in the gap between the train and the platform. Yet, they still suffer life changing injuries.

Some drivers drive automatic trains, which makes the job easier, however, by the same token, it has a negative impact on driver well-being by making the shift more monotonous and tiring, as explained by Stuart, an ASLEF train driver:

My line is now automatic, so I don't need to worry about signals controlling when I can move, or when I must stop. But I preferred driving manually because the signals forced me to focus on something, especially when driving through tunnels. Many new drivers like automatic trains, but they have nothing to compare them to.

I also spoke to another driver who transferred from the automatic Northern line to the Piccadilly line because he wanted to return to driving manually. He said that he found automatic driving 'mind-numbing'.

The job is also tiring because it involves driving through long tunnels and adjusting between darkness and light. However, the extent of driving underground varies between lines. For example, the Metropolitan and District lines mainly operate above the surface, whereas the Northern line is primarily a sub-surface line running underground. Furthermore, the length of the line affects how many times drivers travel backwards and forwards during a shift, shaping their tiredness/boredom and possibly relations between managers and employees, as expanded on later in this chapter.

During disputes, the fact that customers never see or interact with drivers can affect public support. Drivers are often accused of earning undeserved high incomes. Yet, such perceptions are mediated by negative mainstream media representations of 'money-grabbing' Tube drivers. James, an RMT representative stated:

What people don't seem to realize is that we get together as a band of people and say no, we're not taking this. Which shows that if you all unite and have a similar goal, you can achieve things.

Many drivers feel trapped in a situation where they do not enjoy their job, yet they are fully aware that getting another job with the same salary is highly unlikely, as Stephen, a driver stresses:

Where else am I going to go? I have no qualifications, I do not even know what a CV is. It would be difficult enough for me to get a job, let alone a job with decent pay. Many other drivers are in the same situation.

As noted previously, London Underground employees wield high levels of industrial power, presenting a challenge to managerial ideology and enhancing employee ability to resist during struggles over the frontier of control. Notwithstanding, in reality, the situation is far more complex because of power imbalances between different grades. Drivers have more disruptive power than station staff because of the design of their job; trains cannot run without drivers. The 1989 Fire Regulations are a potential power resource for station staff because they stipulate minimum number staffing levels for Underground (sub-surface) stations. The regulations were introduced after the fire at Kings Cross Tube station in 1987, killing 31 people and injuring over 60 others. However, overground stations can open without staff, restricting the disruptive effects of station staff only strikes. Office staff are also often deployed to cover strike breaking station staff, as explained by George, a former London Underground senior manager:

The other thing that TFL have done is be very successful in training loads of people throughout the organization to do basic jobs. So there's a load of people who can be Customer Service Assistants.

However, the 1989 Fire Regulations also stipulate that for underground stations to open, at least one employee must have the appropriate level of health and safety training.

Legal minimum staffing levels vary from station to station. But all staffing levels are one plus another number. For example, I think Kings Cross is something like 1+19. The 'one' is a supervisor or Customer Service Manager. The law says that you have to have what they call a 'responsible person' there to enact the fire legislation and they have had enhanced training. Then the '19' could be Customer Service Assistants. (Roger, RMT station representative)

Accordingly, if regulations are adhered to, station staff strikes can potentially cause major disruption, yet this is contingent on the number and type of employees taking strike action.

Engineers are only briefly touched upon in this study, nevertheless, it is worth noting that engineers have more financial power than disruptive power, as Sam, an engineering representative explains:

If we call strike action, we're going to do it on a day when there's some big engineering works going on, where they have had to pay other companies especially to come in. That type of an

event would have been planned months ago, they can't move it and it's too late to cancel, so there's a financial burden.

After saying that, the financial power engineers wield can become disruptive power, if drivers refuse to drive trains that have not been maintained.

Union rivalry

At London Underground, there is some degree of rivalry between TSSA and RMT because both unions represent station workers, notwithstanding, there are significant power imbalances between both unions. As previously noted, RMT represents around 80% of station workers. There are 'zones of contention' between the discourses both unions disseminate because they subscribe to a different set of values and have conflicting identities. Historically, TSSA are known as a moderate union that rarely organizes strike action. They project a more pluralist discourse revolving around negotiation and adapting to changes, as Edward, a TSSA representative elucidates:

TSSA are different to RMT. In this day and age we know that there will be changes, life changes, we have to put up with those things. But we focus on how to adapt to the changes rather than fighting against them. The TSSA always gives recommendations of how we can resolve the dispute instead of going on strike.

RMT's narrative evokes more radical discourse and stresses militancy, yet also highlights its willingness to cooperate with employers.

TSSA are known not to strike much, RMT takes a much more militant approach. RMT members will join TSSA to avoid going on strike. (Stephen, train driver)

Station staff switch between unions during disputes, either to avoid striking or to strike legally. Workers also change unions if they prefer the representative from the alternative union at their station. Some members are dual members, for example, Cliff, a TSSA representative explained:

I did not like Bob Crow's leadership style, I felt that it was too political, so I joined TSSA. But I am now a dual member because I like being able to go on strike.

Merger talks have taken place between RMT and TSSA in the past. However, the zones of contention between both discourses, together with contrasting union identities are likely to prevent amalgamation. Chris, a TSSA executive, states:

RMT are not going to merge with us, it's just the way it is. They run a different structure to us, their officers are elected, ours are appointed. Apart from the structure it's a political thing too, they're not affiliated to the Labour Party, we are.

Intense lines of demarcation exist within the driving grade between RMT and ASLEF. ASLEF represents around 60% of the unionized London Underground drivers, however only since 1989, as Gary, an ASLEF official explains:

It was only in 1989 that the majority of drivers on the Underground became ASLEF members. Historically, ASLEF had not been particularly interested in London Underground because they're a 'proper train drivers' union', Steam Trains Associated Society Automotive, that was the union's interest.

Constant switching occurs between RMT and ASLEF. Rivalry is always present, yet surfaces more during disputes. Firstly, because unions sometimes disagree on different elements of a dispute. Secondly, disputes often involve one union, usually RMT, but not always. Disputes occur either company wide, on one line, or in particular depots, but the latter is less common. Akin to station staff strikes, during such disputes and depending on contextual circumstances, some members of the union taking action will switch to the alternative union to avoid striking. Barry, an RMT drivers' representative, used a particular idiom to refer to employees who constantly switch between unions:

We say they **rumble the hares and the hounds**. (Barry, RMT drivers' representative)

For example, during an RMT dispute, social pressures from colleagues can stop drivers from crossing a picket line as an RMT member, yet changing their membership to ASLEF is perceived as a legitimate means of avoiding striking in the eyes of colleagues. If ASLEF drivers are on strike, RMT members are unlikely to cross the picket line, because they are aware that ASLEF is the majority union and the likelihood of services running would be low. However, if RMT drivers are on strike, it is less likely that ASLEF members will join the strike, but some do (particularly ASLEF representatives who have good working relationships with RMT representatives). On the Piccadilly line, where RMT have the majority in all four depots, George, an RMT representative, claimed:

I've got to take my hat off to most of the ASLEF members on our line because they do respect our picket lines if it's an RMT only strike.

The majority of drivers start working on stations before becoming a driver because of a union agreement stipulating that drivers must be recruited internally, unless there are no suitable

candidates. Yet, London Underground have recruited externally on specific occasions. In 2001, an advertisement was placed in 'Cosmopolitan' magazine specifically to recruit female drivers. London Underground also led an advertising campaign for ex-military personnel to become London Underground drivers. Finally, it has already been noted in the preceding chapter that part-time drivers have recently been employed externally to run a Night Tube service on Fridays and Saturdays. If employees join RMT whilst working on stations, then become drivers, RMT have an advantage to retain them, however, ASLEF is the majority union, thus, it is not unusual for drivers to switch. Moreover, if a driver started working at London Underground as a guard (the position no longer exists), they would have been more likely to join ASLEF and therefore may have continued their ASLEF membership when becoming a driver.

Similar to the situation on stations, some members are dual members, paying two sets of union fees. This may be a matter of loyalty as David, an ASLEF executive member explains:

It's a kind of loyalty thing. If somebody has worked on stations and they've been a member of RMT for a long time, they get a job as a driver and recognize that the trade union for them to join is ASLEF. So they join ASLEF, but they still feel a loyalty to RMT, so they sometimes retain their RMT membership.

Mark, an ASLEF representative, admits that he encourages dual membership in particular circumstances:

Last year a driver was demoted to station assistant for ill health. Although he was only going to be there for a short period of time, I said to him, stay in ASLEF, but RMT would be best representing you on stations because they are more specialized in that area, so he became a dual member. So whilst he was there, they protected him for his work, but I was also fighting to get him back on the trains. Now he's back on trains and just with us.

More intense zones of contention exist between the discourse promulgated by ASLEF and RMT, shaping the rivalry between them. The discourse shared by RMT and ASLEF also shapes the union members join to some extent. ASLEF uses a discourse based on a craft union identity. Persistent emphasis is placed on specialized representation only for train drivers, which is assumed to generate more effective outcomes. The phrase 'watered down' is applied in the quote below by Craig, an ASLEF executive, to describe the lack of power general unions have:

Everything we do is specific. Everybody who negotiates and everybody who's involved in working groups or representing us at conferences, they have all done the job, they all understand

the specifics of what the job entails and also there are no distractions. It's a specialist organization, with specialist knowledge delivered by people. If you're in one of these super unions that cover all sorts of industries and all sorts of grades, while they are effective in terms of massive finances, they have massive voting power at TUC, **their effectiveness, I believe is very much watered down by the general nature of what they do.**

RMT is not a 'super union', it represents transport sector employees, but, it has an 'all-grades' identity and uses a discourse revolving around unity between grades. The assumption is that the union is powerful because of the way it brings all grades together.

We represent all grades, from the least paid cleaners, to the higher paid engineers. We have knowledge in all of these areas and fight for everybody and bring everyone together. RMT unites people from all around the world, despite the tensions and not just tensions between black and white. (Callum, RMT executive).

Harry, an RMT representative applied a metaphor to depict grades as 'cogs' that need to work together:

In this job you've **got loads of different cogs and they all need to be working properly to make the wheels turn properly**, not just the drivers.

At garage-level, the union drivers join is not necessarily based on their individual values, or whether they believe in an all-grades union (RMT), or a specialized union (ASLEF). One key factor is the majority union in a driver's depot, many feel that joining the majority union is most advantageous because that union may wield more power at garage-level.

I was with RMT for three days, so I had joined an all-grades union, but when I went to my depot the majority in my depot were ASLEF, so it made sense to be in the same trade union as them. (Gary, ASLEF official).

It also depends largely on the choice of representatives in a driver's garage. When Stephen, a driver, was promoted from stations to trains, he believed in an all-grades approach and maintained his RMT membership, but changed after the ASLEF representative helped him organize time off for personal issues.

Some drivers join ASLEF after leaving stations because they like the idea of a specialized union representing drivers only. For me, it was not about the union itself. I agree with RMT's all-grades approach, but I did not feel that the RMT rep here was doing enough. It was the final straw when I requested time off because of a personal issue, the manager refused and I went to the RMT rep, but he would not challenge the decision. The ASLEF rep overheard the

conversation, went to the manager and sorted the time off I needed. I joined there and then. I had to think about the rep I deal with day-to-day. Other drivers here, or in other garages, may decide they prefer the RMT rep.

James, a train manager, explains that drivers ask him for advice about unions and he advises them to focus on garage-level representation:

A lot of guys will come to me and say I'm thinking of changing unions, what do you think? I always say, base it on your relationship with your rep, because these are the people that you will be depending on to represent you.

Some RMT members seek to amalgamate with ASLEF. They acknowledge that multiple unions significantly thwarts employee power, while feeding managerial power.

The ideal would be to have a union that represents all rail workers, an industrial union that organizes everybody from the cleaners to the train drivers to the signallers, to the engineers. That would be what we strive for and what we're looking for. I think that would benefit all workers not just the drivers. (Harry, RMT executive member)

We make it easy for London Underground to divide grades and employees by having more than one union. We hand it to them on a plate, it's ridiculous, all rail and transport workers should be in one union. (Michelle, RMT representative)

The idioms 'divide and conquer' and 'divide and rule' were regularly drawn upon in interviews to justify the argument of having one union representing all London Underground employees. However, members also recognize that amalgamation is very unlikely. An ASLEF executive member affirms that members will not vote for it, because of the zones of contention between the values the two unions subscribe to:

Firstly, it's not something that we would buy into and even if, hypothetically speaking, the leadership of ASLEF were on the mind to go down that road, the membership would not support it. Our rule book makes it very clear for any merger to take place with any other trade union, there must be a referendum, or ballot, with members supporting it. I think it's something like 5/6 of all members, not all members who vote, but all members, that's an impossible number to reach. So even if we wanted to go down that road, it would be entirely dependent on our members almost all supporting it and they wouldn't. (David, ASLEF executive member)

Stuart, an ASLEF driver, also points out:

Any amalgamation would mean that half of the people that have desks won't have desks, they'll have their old jobs back again.

Another cardinal factor is that relations between RMT and ASLEF extend to other transport companies, which can shape union relations at London Underground. A recent long-running dispute involving both unions occurred at Southern Rail over the removal of guards.

Union culture

London Underground is a highly unionized company:

The density of union membership bucks the trend, if you take all employees, 90% of workers are members of a union on London Underground. (Callum, RMT executive member)

George, a former London Underground senior manager, stated:

It's not our aim to subdue unions, they've got a job to do and so have we.

However, management attitudes towards different unions vary. Denise, a senior manager, differentiates between the identities of different unions:

There are trade unions who want to engage and want to engage early with the view of not just agreeing with you but actually really testing you, making sure that you've thought things through. Which is great, that can be really progressive. Other trade unions, our experience if you like has been that, you will never have that sort of dialogue, it will always be opposition immediately to any change.

George explicitly distinguished RMT from other unions. In line with unitarist discourse, RMT is portrayed as disruptive and problematic.

Any proposal on the Underground triggers a dispute with the RMT. They feel themselves duty bound to oppose everything.

RMT's former general secretary, Bob Crow, who died in March 2014, was well-known for his leadership style:

Bob remembered people by name, he remembered who they were and what was important to them. (Claire, RMT representative)

He was everything to everyone. If you walked up to him in a pub and said hello Bob, I would like to have a chat, he would sit with you and chat at the level you wanted. (Sam, engineering representative)

I read through a comments book in RMT's headquarters featuring messages from people across the world after Bob Crow's death.

The media depicted him as responsible for every RMT strike:

The press thought that he was a lunatic that wanted to take us back to the 1970s. (Roger, RMT representative)

However, RMT's actions are not simply attributable to the general secretary, the union embeds a democratic system and I observed this during union meetings:

Bob would do what the executive would do and they would generally do what we would do. (Roger, station representative)

The general secretary never actually calls a strike, he's instructed to, ultimately by the representatives of the members so after strong democratic debate decisions are made. (Callum, RMT executive member)

Denise, a senior manager, confirms that engagement by unions is not attributable to one person and actually suggests that representatives and regional organizers shape union engagement more than the general secretary:

Some of the trade unions engage better than others and actually it very much depends on the reps and the regional organizers.

Furthermore, many interviewees argued that Bob Crow was not as militant as public perception suggests. He used strike action as a leverage of power, however, he preferred negotiating a deal.

Bob was a fantastic deal-breaker. There were many times when he called a strike but then called it off after securing a deal. He would visit the managing director, no appointment, just door stepping and say, 'right, what can we do?' (Roger, station representative)

Roger also claimed that many senior railway managers actually liked Bob Crow. Colin, a former senior manager at London Underground, said:

Bob Crow bless him. Bob's passed away, he was a nice guy.

Workplace cultures

At London Underground different stations and train depots embed very different cultures. Turning to stations first, the size and location of stations are two factors shaping their culture and how relationships play out. The extent of union activism in stations varies,

notwithstanding, it is historically lower than the driver grade. Interviewees explained that this is mainly because station staff wield less power than drivers. Additionally, many station staff are younger, which means that union activity is more unfamiliar to them. Libby, a drivers' representative and former station staff worker, also explains how representation arrangements in stations weaken the fabric of union organization.

To run a successful militant union on stations is quite difficult because you mainly have a team of 20 on one station, a team of 20 on another, so keeping them linked, keeping them strong is very difficult. Also, if I worked at South Wimbledon and I came in on a strike day, the likelihood is that the majority of the staff in the group wouldn't know, whereas in a depot there's not that anonymity, if you come in, you have to cross that picket line and everyone knows.

On a day to day basis, station staff representatives deal with company-level, garage-level or individual-level station staff issues. Attendance is one individual issue representatives and managers often deal with. An employee has not met London Underground's standards of attendance if:

- In any 13 weeks, there are 2 or more items of non-attendance.
- In any 26 weeks, there are 2 or more items of non-attendance totalling 5 or more working shifts/days. (London Underground Attendance, 2004)

An 'item' of non-attendance is classed as a shift, or more than one consecutive shift of absence due to sickness, including self and medical certification. An 'item' of non-attendance also includes a shift, or consecutive shifts of unauthorised absence. If an employee comes into work, but returns home early without permission, this is classed as a non-attended shift. In addition, 'patterns of non-attendance' are a concern to management and can be acted upon, even if they do not infringe the above standards. A 'pattern of non-attendance' includes non-attendance occurring at particular times, or if the length of absence seems too long for the stated cause.

Station staff disputes at company, or garage-level are rare, not because of a lack of contestable issues, but because gaining support has been historically difficult, due to the factors noted above. Albeit, they do occur. One recent dispute at London Bridge Tube station was over the dismissal of an employee. On stations, some RMT and TSSA representatives work well together, others do not. This often comes down to representative personalities and the values they subscribe to.

Cultures in train depots are significantly different to stations, the higher level of power drivers wield is a key factor. Accordingly, train depots tend to be more militant and employees have

the potential to exert more control and resist managerial authority. One train manager, Lisa, explains why depots are harder to manage than stations:

Depots are always harder to manage than stations because people have more power to say I'm not moving this, I'm not doing this and it actually has such an impact.

Interviewees explained that it is possible to be a driver without interacting with colleagues at all and some choose to do this. However, the nature of the job also creates unity between drivers, as a train manager explains:

Drivers are by far the most sort of tribal set of workers you will ever meet anywhere. The job by nature makes them stick together. It's you alone in a cab, 4 hours at a time. One thing that you will hear a lot is 'me and my train', 'what you did to my train'. There's a strong sense of ownership because it's only them and this friggin train and the only person that can understand what they go through, is another driver.

Moreover, in contrast to stations, drivers are clustered in depots with hundreds of other fellow drivers. This creates opportunities for solidarity bonds to emerge and helps representatives disseminate an independent radical discourse to compete against the employer's narrative.

In view of driver power, together with the nature of the job and the traditions of solidarity amongst drivers, it is not surprising that during struggles over the frontier of control, relationships between drivers tend to be more close-knit than on stations. This is illuminated in a story told by Scott, a driver:

A driver came into the depot, but was unable to wear his shoes that day, so he had white trainers on and was sent home. The next day, all the drivers in the depot came in with white trainers, they weren't going to send all of us home were they?

This does not mean that train depots are full of union activists. Activism fomented because of the contextual conditions drivers encounter.

I would like more union activists, every train representative would probably say the same. The majority of the drivers are in a union as an insurance policy. There are a few that act out, they're political, but a lot of them are in a union for when they screw up, then they can come and see a rep to try and get them out of trouble. When we have a strike though we're never short of people on the picket line. (Bob, drivers' representative)

It depends on the day of the week. Again it's back to the fact that members want contradictory things and the membership is contradictory. I think most people most of the time want to do

their job, come in, get paid. People who have strong political feelings are a minority, but of course that changes at different times, when something interesting is going on. A lot of our members are very supportive about the Jeremy Corbyn election, because they think he is different, fed up with the same old routine. I don't think our train drivers are any more or less political than the working class as a whole and in fact we're probably more likely to be less, because we're better paid than the majority of the working class. (Gary, ASLEF official)

Depot cultures are largely shaped by the line the depot is located on. I observed several differences between lines. For example, some lines are automatic (e.g., the Northern line) and some are still manual (e.g., the Piccadilly line). I was shown how driving on manual lines is controlled by electronic signals, as briefly touched upon above.

Signals are like traffic lights, telling me when to drive on and when I have to stop. If drivers pass a red signal, it's classed as a 'Signal Passed At Danger' (SPAD). If drivers get too many SPADs we can be disciplined, moved to another line, or even dismissed. (Stephen, train driver)

SPADs can spark employment relations issues between union representatives and depot managers on manual lines. If drivers get four SPADs in two years, they risk losing their job.

One interviewee explained that on his line, the Bakerloo line, it is accepted that drivers can have their breaks in other depots on that line, however this does not tend to happen elsewhere. He also explained that in some mess rooms, drivers have specific seating areas based on hierarchy. Another RMT representative, elucidated that because of high non-attendance levels, some drivers are expected to cover duties for other depots on their line and this can cause unnecessary tensions between depots. It can also spark conflict between managers and representatives, as Daniel, a train manager, explains:

I've had an ASLEF rep come up to me saying, this driver is for this depot, why did you send him up to another depot to do a job for them. I'm like, because he works for the London Underground, he does anything he's qualified to do within the agreement, including working at another depot, I didn't breach his parameters as per the framework agreement. 'Their drivers wouldn't do it for us' is their response. Some of it is tribal mentality.

The manually driven Piccadilly line is historically known to be more militant than other lines. The majority of drivers on this line are RMT members. In fact, around a third of all RMT driver members work on this line. Drivers are particularly powerful because the line terminates at Heathrow airport. Piccadilly line disputes make national headlines to warn people travelling to and from London. The line is also used by theatre goers and tourists, as it runs through the

West End and links key tourist attractions, such as, Harrods, The British Museum and Buckingham Palace. A recent dispute on the Piccadilly line was over a safety issue known as ‘flat wheels’ and the way staff are interviewed about toilet breaks. Lisa, a train manager, explains:

We call it PNR, Physical Needs Relief. If you’re in an office, you can go and use the loo and it has no effect, but if you are on a train and you’re having to stop your train and all the trains behind you, it causes problems. On the one hand people have a human right to use the loo when they need to, on the other hand, the company are saying well hold on, we’ve got people suddenly needing an hours break just to use the loo when we’re trying to move things.

Up until around two years ago there were only two depots on the Piccadilly line, Arnos Grove and Acton Town. Cockfosters and Northfields provided facilities to store Tube trains, yet the former two constituted the drivers’ depots and were also two of the biggest depots in the network. London Underground then decided that they needed an additional depot, thus Northfields was built. Some representatives and a train manager stated that the additional depot was built to dilute the militancy and as a ‘divide and conquer’ strategy, because the drivers at Arnos Grove and Acton Town were problematic for management. However, another representative claimed that if that was the case, they failed miserably because:

Nobody ever goes to Northfields anyway. They sign in there, but they still come to have their break in Cockfosters, so that didn’t work.

I visited Northfields with a driver and confirmed the relative emptiness of the depot.

A train manager referred to the unity and companionship between Arnos Grove and Acton Town depots on the Piccadilly line:

Those drivers all grew up together, came up to driving together, plan their holidays together, shut the line down together and call in sick together.

Union rivalry varies from depot to depot, some representatives work together, others don’t.

That’s the good thing about here, RMT and ASLEF reps get on really well and we get things done. In some depots this doesn’t happen. (Malcom, ASLEF representative)

Like in stations, representative rivalry largely depends on individual representative personalities, the values representatives subscribe to, and the specific garage-level issues they encounter day-to-day. At garage-level, representatives deal both with collective and individual issues, such as, representing drivers in a disciplinary proceeding over non-attendance (as noted

above), performance levels, or dismissal. It is commonplace for drivers to take strike action over the unfair dismissal of a driver and for the driver to be awarded his job back. Drivers argued that the driver's role is the easiest job to lose at London Underground, because if anything happens, a 'blame the driver first' mentality prevails. Stephen, a driver, explained how he was once wrongly accused:

I was accused of following the wrong procedure during a station evacuation and was stood down, meaning I could not drive. It was not long before they found workers in other grades were to blame.

To retain members in a multi-union depot, representatives must work hard to deal with driver grievances. However, discontents vary dramatically:

There's one driver, unless he gets a proper diagnosis, he's going to die. On the other hand, you get people complaining because they haven't got the right overcoat. But to that person who doesn't have an overcoat, that issue is as big as the health of the other driver. (Malcom, ASLEF representative)

Manager-employee relations

It must be strongly emphasized that relations between managers and employees vary by depot and station. Micro-managing seems more prevalent in smaller stations, as Stephen, a former station worker explains, however this is not always the case.

At one station it was mayhem because of the number of people using the station. Providing I did my job, I was left alone by supervisors and managers. The other station was quieter, supervisors were on your back more.

Individual manager personality is an important factor, as Andrew, a station supervisor and RMT representative, elucidates:

Say there's two of you doing the same duty on stations, when one comes in, they can let the other one go a bit earlier. That's not a problem as long as someone's there, it's accepted. But there's managers on stations who used to enjoy that benefit before and now don't have that benefit, so they're questioning it and being awkward.

Having a 'manager' did not seem to be an issue for workers, yet they argued that managerial attitudes have become less people orientated in recent years. Employees tend to prefer 'old school' managers who have progressed internally within the grade, because of their knowledge

of the role. Such managers are still scattered around the network, but only thinly. Interviewees argued that this was far more commonplace in previous years:

Before, managers who were employed by the company, generally had a very broad umbrella of knowledge, I liked that. Now you've got people telling you to do things who don't know what they're doing and sometimes don't realize what the ramifications could be. (Tom, train driver)

This concern is crystallized by James, a train manager:

The fact that I have come in from the graduate scheme, is more significant than the fact that I'm a manager.

Another train manager recruited under the graduate scheme claimed that the company values external experience and felt that to progress within London Underground, for example to senior management level, working in external companies is something the manager would need to consider.

An RMT representative on the Piccadilly line felt that the inexperience of management is one of the main factors fracturing employment relations and creating significant distance between managers and front line realities.

When I first arrived on the Piccadilly line, you had to take all the necessary steps to be a manager. You would have started as it was in those days as a leading railwayman, which basically meant you clean the station, you clean the platform, then you worked your way up. So all of our train managers in them days had gone through all the steps and knew everything. You could not con them with anything and say this has happened today, they knew everything. At the moment we've only got one member of train management on the whole Piccadilly line that has any driving experience. When we had train management who had worked their way up, there was less hostility.

Stephen refers to an 'old school' manager who understands the notion of give and take:

In our depot there's a train manager who has been a driver himself, he understands where we're coming from. He gets the best out of drivers like that. But many managers now have never driven a train, it causes problems.

I sat behind the front desk in one depot with the 'old school' train manager Stephen refers to above and observed the good relationship he has built with drivers. However, another manager in the depot warned that he is an exception and would skew my observation, because of his

unique personality, together with the fact that he has been a driver. He also stated that the depot itself was more peaceful than others.

This is not to say that all ‘old school’ managers are perceived as ‘good’ managers, because styles, personalities and attitudes vary. By the same token, managers who have never driven a train may have good interpersonal skills. Lisa, a train manager, who has never driven a train, explains how she has built trust with drivers, notwithstanding, she suggests that most managers would not implement such strategies:

I’ve done really simple things that have just built trust. Things like, if I’ve made a mistake everybody will know, hands up I’ve made a mistake. This is because I think people are fed up of managers finger wagging and they can’t even put their hand up if they make a mistake.

Lisa also explains how she applies a more informal notion of ‘off the record’ with drivers and representatives which breeds a sense of collaborative mutuality:

The most powerful tool we have is what we call ‘off the record’. Where I just say right, we’re going to talk about this off the record, see if we can help this person, or see if we can stop the whole thing exploding and creating a lot of unnecessary work. It might be something like, you know what, that member did swear at me but I’m not going to mention it, would you just go and have a word and we will just keep it all off the record.

However, in her depot alone there are eleven other train managers and one garage manager. Managers apply different, sometimes conflicting strategies to deal with the competing tensions inherent within the employment relationship. Power relations between managers can inflict further pressure. Stephen, who is a driver at the same depot as Lisa, explains how managerial behaviour is shaped by other managers:

There’s one manager who is constantly looking for a reason to discipline drivers. If she is away and another manager is taking a disciplinary interview for her, she ensures that they give the punishment she had planned, even if they have a different opinion on the situation.

Lisa refers to a militant depot located on the Circle line, where different managerial styles have been trialled, yet hostile relations remain.

When I worked there, I almost felt the antagonism and hostility bristling in the air as I walked through the doors as a manager. There’s been various attempts to deal with it. They’ve put in a hard faced garage manager, it’s had repercussions, they’ve put in a wheeler dealer, old school type to try to please everyone, that’s had repercussions too.

When asked for the underlying reasons, Lisa suggested it may be because of a few unreasonable representatives working at the garage. This may indeed be a factor, but it is unlikely to be the only one. As noted above, the fact that there are a number of train managers within each depot, who all apply their own unique strategies, will have a bearing. Furthermore, Lisa explains how she is restricted by a ‘company mask’:

I will tell people upfront when I’ve got my company mask on. I could sit in an interview that could not have a great outcome for that person, depending on what they tell me, and say look, none of us want to be here, this is really horrible to you, but I’m going to have to put my company mask on now and be the manager...

The above quote speaks volumes to how dominant social norms about how managers ‘should’ behave are absorbed and institutionalized. It also connects to Goffman’s (1959) idea that individuals in society play specific roles.

All London Underground managers, even ‘old school managers’ or ‘wheeler dealers’, are under pressure from above to deal with drivers in a particular way and apply a significantly harder disciplinary stance on issues, such as attendance and punctuality. Workers discussed how colleagues who are only late once in a blue moon are still ‘booked’ in an attempt to treat everyone equally. In terms of non-attendance, representatives referred to the fact that cases, which would not have reached disciplinary action years ago, do now. One driver representative discussed a driver who had suffered a road accident on the way to work and explained that this would have previously been classed as ‘an accident at work’, which does not reach disciplinary level under the attendance policy. However, a manager wanted to class it as an item of non-attendance. As this was the driver’s second item (as previously explained), he was issued a disciplinary proceeding.

Managers are under pressure to cut costs, which impacts relations with employees and shapes the space for worker control. This is illustrated by an example provided by one train manager. A driver had requested an ‘emergency loan’, a traditional custom where an employee receives an advancement on their salary, incurring minimal cost to the company. The manager firmly believed that the simple and reasonable loan application would be approved and conveyed this optimism to the driver. However, the loan was disapproved, placing the manager in a difficult position. Another issue concerns accounting for overtime. Drivers are not permitted to work overtime because of a union agreement, but if an incident occurs, which involves a driver being late signing out, this is classed as ‘overtime’. Overtime would generally incur very low costs

due to the union agreement, albeit, because of the cost-cutting climate, managers are now under pressure to account in great detail for the reason, in many cases, minutes of overtime are paid.

The cost-cutting climate is significantly shaped by the fact that TFL's central government subsidy has been cut gradually starting around 2013. Government plans for a self-sufficient TFL in coming years, operating with zero central government subsidy, implies that turbulent times may lie ahead.

I feel for the reps in some ways because the company is gradually shifting towards an 'I don't give a crap position'. They're under financial constraints. There's a lot of pressure on managers to get more out of what we have. (James, train manager)

It's just gone from something that was designed to carry people to and from work and to try and be the best public transport system, to be a money making machine. That's where it's started to fall down I think because we've brought people into the business that haven't got the train knowledge (Gregg, RMT representative).

Employees and representatives appreciated the realities of the external situation in terms of cuts to government subsidy. However, the wide-spread feeling was that employees are not going to accept financial constraints as a justification for attacking terms and conditions. Interviewees felt that large savings could be made in other ways, including reducing managerial project bonuses and bringing sub-contracted services back in-house. Union representatives also argued that the government needs to provide more subsidy, not remove it and that Sadiq Khan, the Labour London Mayor and TFL chairman, needs to push for more funding. Crucially, workers and representatives perceived that enhanced mutual reciprocity is possible despite financial constraints.

Linking back to a previous point discussed in this chapter, one train manager was confident that the harder an underground line is to drive, the more friction exists between managers, employees and their representatives. On shorter lines, for example the Metropolitan line, drivers have longer turnaround time, meaning they have short breaks in addition to their official break. This is enough time to have a cup of tea, catch up with colleagues and crucially, it breaks up the monotony of driving. In some ways, this fits the picture presented by employees because the Metropolitan line was characterized by interviewees as a more relaxed line compared to other lines. On longer lines, such as the Piccadilly line or District line, workers have fewer opportunities to interrupt the monotony of driving with short breaks. The friction on the Piccadilly line has been highlighted. Yet, how difficult the line is to drive patently combines

with other forces to shape relations between managers and employees; for example management styles, as discussed above. This point is subtly supported by one train manager who previously worked on the Metropolitan line and claimed that the line is more relaxed, but was unsure whether this was because of the structure of the line, or senior management on that line.

There was a widespread consensus that there is generally no competition at all amongst drivers to work on particular lines because of employment relations matters. Primarily, but not always, drivers want to work on a line close to where they live. However, the intense friction between employees and management on the Piccadilly line has led to some drivers moving lines.

A lot have come over to our line because they've had enough over there. Our management is better. (Scott, RMT driver)

Overall, the overriding impression I received from interviews was that at London Underground, 'give and take' relations between managers and employees have diluted over the years and trust relations have broken down. Although not universal, London Underground seems to embed an atmosphere of hostility, adversarialism and generalized discontent. Unitarism and neo-liberalism are intense and a stark collision of preferences exists between employees (and unions) and managers, which frequently produces situations of 'deadlock' and conflict. Managerial control is perceived as too tight. Staff morale has collapsed to what employees referred to as an all-time low and non-attendance is very high. However, the situation varies from depot to depot, line to line and station to station.

Productivity, a fundamental neoliberal principle, is a key issue. Managers are adopting a firmer stance on attendance and punctuality. Workers feel that managers are much more reluctant to help them out now (for example, if they need additional time off), even when employees would return the favour. Workers explained how more give and take would benefit everyone because the Tube network is fragile. On trains, for instance, managers have to deal with incidents, such as signal failures, and driver duties may need to be adjusted to get the network running smoothly again. An efficient network requires employee cooperation.

The diluted give and take relations and low-trust atmosphere are coupled with an intensified cost-cutting culture driving managerial and organisational strategies. According to interviewees, another issue is the people steering the sinking London Underground ship. Employees explained that senior and lower level managers are not being promoted through the ranks as was the case in previous years. More and more managers have been employed through

the graduate scheme, after completing an MBA, or from other organizations. Such individuals were perceived as lacking insight into workplace realities, but individual managerial approaches can vary. Furthermore, some interviewees also explained that this does not mean all managers who are promoted through the ranks are good managers, personal style is a key factor.

This section has focused on how job design, union rivalry, union culture, workplace cultures and manager-employee relations shape employment relations and workplace struggle at London Underground. The following section concentrates on Dublin Bus, employing the same contextual themes.

Employment relations and workplace struggle at Dublin Bus

Job design

Akin to their counterparts at London Underground, Dublin Bus drivers wield high levels of industrial power because of their specialist skills. Simply put, buses cannot operate without drivers. At Dublin Bus, there are no ‘station staff’ as such, notwithstanding, power imbalances exist between drivers and clerical workers. The latter arguably have less power than London Underground station staff. The focus in this study is on drivers, not office workers, but two clerical workers were interviewed to gain further insights. In terms of driver job design, non-participant observation demonstrated that in marked contrast to London Underground drivers, all Dublin Bus drivers drive manually and have regular passenger contact. Furthermore, unlike London Underground drivers, Dublin Bus drivers are not isolated from passengers and they develop a working relationship with them.

The regular customers you get to know, you recognize them, they always use the route. You wait a bit for them at the stop if they’re not there. (Adrian, SIPTU representative)

I observed a relationship between a driver and a regular passenger with learning difficulties. The personal nature of the relationship is characterised by an exchange of gifts.

We’ve got an agreement that when we go on holiday, we bring each other back a present. (Cliff, NBRU representative)

When travelling on the company’s buses, I observed drivers dealing with difficult passengers. Drivers explained that they may be one-off passengers or regular passengers on particular routes. Some areas of Dublin are more prone to problematic passengers. Drivers also get assaulted by passengers. I spoke to a driver in one garage, who was off work because of a

passenger assault. However, the number of passenger assaults has decreased since the auto-fare box was introduced in 1996 after union campaigning. This means that if passengers pay by cash, the money travels down to a box at the bottom of the bus. Around the time of its introduction, Dublin suffered a bad heroin period. Before the auto-fare system, drivers were robbed and threatened with weapons.

I remember being robbed, luckily I had a full bag of money to give him. (Luke, SIPTU representative)

More than one interviewee referred to a former Dublin Bus driver who was robbed and assaulted with a Stanley knife in 1995. He returned to work after one year, and within two months, was robbed again.

However, increasing driver safety sometimes frustrates passengers:

Because we don't handle cash, we can't give change. So if people don't pay with the right money, we have to give them a ticket to go and collect their change from head office. Some complain about that. (Daniel, NBRU representative)

The geographic location of the company significantly shapes job demand. Dublin is bursting at the seams with regular passengers and tourists. One driver explains that tourists are not usually difficult passengers, but are full of questions:

It's just this perception people have that bus drivers know where everything is, hotels, shops, anything really. (Cameron, SIPTU driver)

In contrast to London Underground drivers, customer interaction helps during disputes, because passengers often support the drivers they have built a relationship with.

You get passengers coming up to you the day before a strike saying, good luck tomorrow, I hope you get what you're looking for. (Sandra, SIPTU executive member)

Interviewees also referred to members of the public who bring food and drink to drivers on the picket line. However, that is not to say that all members of the public support industrial action. Influenced by dominant neo-liberal and customer service discourses, some assume that transporting 'customers' from A to B is far more important than employee working terms and conditions.

In contrast to London Underground drivers, I observed how Dublin Bus drivers navigate around pedestrians, cars, and cyclists during their shift, a challenge heightened by the level of

traffic and roadworks in Dublin. This tends to frustrate inexperienced drivers more, yet poses a significant challenge for every driver. As Tim (NBRU driver) states:

It's still difficult but I am much more used to it by now. There's not many jobs where you get paid for sitting in traffic.

Tourists can create difficulties for drivers:

People who are used to traffic coming from the other direction think it's clear, but I'm coming with my bus! (Tom, SIPTU representative)

If a driver must brake suddenly on their journey to avoid hitting a pedestrian in the road and a passenger on their bus falls, a claim is likely to be made against the company. The number of accident claims has increased dramatically over the past few years and interviewees referred to a 'claim culture' within society. I observed a meeting between a driver and a union representative in one garage, where the representative took notes about a claim made against a driver. The driver explained how another car was involved and was to blame, the driver braked and a woman on his bus fell over. The driver asked the woman several times, if she was ok and she answered that she was fine.

The chances are she will speak to a friend or family member who says, 'you should claim for that'. Loads of people do and get big money. (Martin, SIPTU representative)

Even if a claim is not made, drivers must write a statement of what happened because passengers can claim years later. General health and safety has become a more serious issue at Dublin Bus since a tragedy in 2004, when one of the company's buses mounted the pavement and killed five individuals waiting for a bus. The driver of the bus was cleared of dangerous driving charges. Interviewees explained that the bus is likely to have suffered a 'power surge' (mechanical failure) causing the accident. The incident cost the company millions of euros. Drivers are awarded a 100 euros bonus, if they drive safely for six months. Drivers are also more particular about driving buses which they perceive to have problems, notwithstanding, representatives admitted that a minority of drivers refuse to drive a particular bus to be awkward.

Unlike London Underground drivers, Dublin Bus drivers enjoy opportunities to work overtime. However, far fewer overtime hours are available since the 1997 Working Time Act was enforced and since the 2009 recession. The lack of overtime has changed the culture within

garages and affected staff morale because high incomes were earned from working extra hours in previous years.

Some drivers would finish work at 12am and start again at 4am. (Steven, driver)

Union rivalry

Similarly to London Underground, intense rivalry exists at Dublin Bus between the two driver unions, NBRU and SIPTU. I would argue that the rivalry is more intense in the Irish case. Both unions hate each other there is possibly more hatred at executive level than at RMT and ASLEF. This is significantly shaped by the fact that NBRU is a breakaway union from SIPTU. The breakaway was influenced by a dispute over the removal of conductors in the early 1960s. The NBRU was born in the Dublin Bus Clontarf garage. Today, this garage has the lowest number of SIPTU members out of the seven Dublin Bus garages. Hence, there are deep historical tensions. In addition, the power imbalances between SIPTU and NBRU at Dublin Bus are less than between ASLEF and RMT at London Underground. NBRU has around 100 members more than SIPTU at Dublin Bus. Even an NBRU executive admitted that membership numbers are extremely close. Similarly to RMT and ASLEF at London Underground, the relationship between SIPTU and NBRU extends to other companies, albeit, NBRU is a house union, i.e., it only represents drivers in the three CIÉ organizations (Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann and Irish Rail). Similarly to London Underground, zones of contention exist between the two competing discourses disseminated by the unions. SIPTU, like RMT, uses a discourse highlighting unity between grades, while NBRU, similarly to ASLEF, highlights the union's specialized representation. Yet, an NBRU representative perceived RMT as more militant than ASLEF and compared his union to the former:

We're like RMT in the UK, we're a militant union. (Duncan, NBRU representative)

On the other hand, SIPTU members argue that NBRU is perceived as more militant both by the public and by its membership, but in reality this is not the case, as NBRU largely depends on the company for its existence.

The zones of contention between the two unions manifests differently at Dublin Bus than London Underground. In addition to not being affiliated to the Labour Party, NBRU is not affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). This means that NBRU is not forced to adhere to ICTU rules, one example being union transfer procedures. This foments constant switching between unions.

NBRU is unique in the sense that we're not part of the Congress of Trade Unions. We're the only union in this country that is not. We don't have to follow the line. If we wanted to change that, it would have to be done in an annual conference and I don't think our members would countenance that, they just wouldn't put up with it. They like the independence of what we are today. (Andy, NBRU executive)

Similarly to London Underground, for some Dublin Bus employees, the union they join depends on their individual values, that is, whether they believe in an all-grades union, or a specialized union. In many cases it depends on garage representatives. In contrast to London Underground, drivers do not join both NBRU and SIPTU. Interviewees were shocked that this occurred in the UK. An NBRU executive stated that dual membership would not be permitted by either union because of the rivalry between them. Moreover, there is no call for dual membership at Dublin Bus. Unlike London Underground, drivers are usually recruited externally, thus situations where employees are loyal to one union, but wish to also join another union after becoming a driver are unlikely.

Clerical workers want to progress within the clerical side or management side. They don't want to become drivers. (Adrian, SITPU representative)

Moreover, a significant factor is that in contrast to London Underground where line disputes occur and strike action called by only one union is common place, at Dublin Bus strike action occurs predominantly at company-level and both unions strike together. One union may announce an additional strike date during a dispute, notwithstanding, that strike is usually deferred. Thus, members do not join another union to avoid striking. In 2000 (during social partnership) drivers took action over a pay claim, arguing that the pay rise provided by the Partnership 2000 agreement was inadequate. NBRU called strike action but SIPTU drivers respected their picket lines. In this context, calling strike action would have been very difficult for SIPTU, because it was a key social partner and the pay-claim was breaching the Partnership 2000 agreement.

Both unions admit that they would be stronger as one union. However, they also recognize that this will never occur because of conflicting values and historical facets. Karl, an NBRU representative, stated that the distance between unions will only increase over time. Andy, an NBRU executive member, uses an analogy to compare unions to football teams and an antithesis to describe union traditions.

We would never amalgamate. Absolutely not. **That would be like Celtic and Rangers** (football teams). The tradition of this union and the tradition of the SIPTU trade union, are alien, **it is jet black and pure white.**

One NBRU representative said that some UNITE clerical employees in his garage are keen to join the NBRU, notwithstanding, this is not currently on the agenda.

Andy admits that discussions have previously taken place between NBRU and TSSA:

If I was to be honest now, there were discussions with the TSSA. They didn't come to anything. They would have given us a line into clerical. It wasn't an amalgamation, but more of a federation thing.

Another NBRU executive member, Michael, shared his aims to establish a federation, especially for transport workers.

I think different sectors should have federations, so for example, a health federation, a transport federation. They're still individual unions, so it's not amalgamation, but it's like an umbrella.

If he achieves his aim, NBRU would be part of a federation with the TSSA and possibly other unions. TSSA is a member of a similar federation in the UK named, 'The General Federation of Trade Unions'. However, NBRU representatives and executives recognize that if they amalgamated with other unions or became involved in a federation, there may be resistance from members fearing that NBRU's specialized nature would be damaged.

Union culture

While London Underground is highly unionized, union density at Dublin Bus is even higher. An important factor here is that in contrast to London Underground, Dublin Bus employment contracts stipulate that employees must join a union. The company encourages and prefers employees to be unionized. Overall, managers discussed negotiation with unions enthusiastically, and unionization was deemed extremely important and beneficial for the company as a whole by the senior managers interviewed. A noteworthy point is that the vast majority of managers, including senior managers and the CEO, are employed internally from within the company. Managers may be promoted from the clerical side, rather than the driver grade, nonetheless, the fact that they are promoted internally significantly enhances their commitment to continue traditional customs and practices. A maintained tradition of compulsory union membership also implies a more pluralist culture where the benefits of union employee participation are recognized.

It's just always been that you have to join a union, going back to the early CIÉ days. (Mike, Dublin Bus senior manager)

You must be in a union, because they're the people who have collective agreements, they're responsible for the collective agreements and for negotiating on behalf of the union bodies. (Karl, Dublin Bus senior manager)

However, one senior manager explained that around 3% of employees are not unionized. Management attempted to challenge this, but failed.

Out of 3,500 staff, there could be around 100 that are not in a trade union, even though it states in their contract that they must be. We sought legal advice on it and the legal advice was that it's a constitutional right if you don't want to be in a trade union, no matter what's written on your contract. (Mike, Dublin Bus senior manager)

Within the driving grade around twenty drivers (out of approximately 2,500 drivers) are not unionized. Similar to London Underground, the power drivers wield does not indicate that depots are full of committed union activists. Some are engaged on a day-to-day basis, while others transform into union activists because of the contextual conditions they encounter, for example during industrial disputes. By the same token, some drivers are political, yet the majority are not. Their main concern is receiving decent pay and working conditions.

Overall, Dublin Bus management viewed its relationship with unions as positive, yet noted that inevitably, disagreements occur.

On a personal level no problem whatsoever with the unions. I've built up quite a good relationship with them. We have had our disagreements obviously. (Jack, Dublin Bus senior manager)

Jack then discusses a particular union representative I interviewed:

He is a good guy. He and I would have had many difficulties, but we would have had many good times as well. I think it's very very important just talking about life in general, when you are dealing with trade unions, in any description, you can never make it a personal thing. You always show respect and act professionally. You may lose your temper now and then and they may lose theirs and that's fine as long as you do it in a controlled way.

Another manager referred to how give and take is important:

We have a fairly good working relationship with them like, a lot of the time with trade unions they do a lot of good too, there has to be flexibility, not the case of you scratch my back and

I'll scratch yours, but there has to be a little bit of leeway between the two groups. Fairly civil.
(Mike, Dublin Bus senior manager)

Unlike London Underground management, Dublin Bus management did not single out one union as particularly problematic in terms of opposing any change:

It doesn't vary between unions, it shouldn't, if it does we're doing something wrong. Yes, in some situations I think that one union is more responsible than the other, in another situation it's the other union, that can happen. But I think it's very important as a manager, if you have a bias towards one union or the other, you're not doing your job right. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus management)

However, managers stated that relations between unions in the driver grade play out differently to any other grade and this causes problems. Karl uses the simile 'stepping on eggshells' to convey this.

Relationships between management and trade unions, I would say, by and large are good, but the difficulty is for drivers we have two trade unions. If you have two trade unions there will always be inter-union rivalry and sometimes that can defeat the purpose for both trade unions and undermine their actual purpose. So you're always trying to work your way through that, **sometimes that's like stepping on eggshells.** (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

We have two strong driver unions and almost by nature if you are making progress on a particular issue and one of them is inclined to agree with you, almost inevitably the other one won't. If I had a frustration it would be that we spend an awful lot of time going around that circle. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Workplace cultures

By contrast to London Underground, Thursday at Dublin Bus is known as 'union day' as mentioned in Chapter 3. This is a long-standing tradition that has been maintained. On Thursdays both unions have their own table, set up in the communal area of the garage. At least one representative from each union is present. On each union table, union press releases are presented and any other necessary documents. Thursday was chosen as 'union day' at the company because up until late 1980, employees collected their cash wages on Thursdays from their garage. This furnished ample opportunities for representatives to educate members about garage or company issues and build collective identities and networks of solidarity. However, electronic wage transfer introduced in 1989 means that a significantly lower number of employees visit the 'union clinics' on Thursdays. Yet, a small number of employees who

worked at the company when electronic wage transfer was introduced still receive their wages by cash. This is because at the time, unions were in dispute over the introduction of the new electronic payment system and the company agreed that current employees could choose how to be paid. The footfall on 'union day' varies between garages and I noticed this during observation. Bigger garages are still relatively busy.

In some garages union tables on Thursdays are extremely close to each other, in others they are further away, but this is due to the layout of the garage, not the relationships between representatives. As in London Underground, at garage-level, the rivalry between representatives varies, nevertheless, only a few garages at Dublin Bus have a good working relationship between unions. In one garage, where the tables of both unions touch each other every Thursday, the rivalry between both unions is intense. However, I observed them sharing a pot of tea. In between both groups of representatives sits a health and safety representative, Conrad, responsible for collecting money for the use of the garage gym and pool table. He explains:

I try to calm things down between them, I'm right in the middle of the drama. But it's a bit awkward for me because I was in NBRU, I've recently moved to SIPTU and the NBRU reps want me back.

On the other hand, in one garage the relationship between union representatives is much better, however they cannot see each other's tables on Thursdays. However, within both groups of representatives, some representatives get on better than others. In another garage, the tables face each other, but the relationship between unions is antagonistic. I visited this garage on a particularly bad day when both unions were in conflict over the implementation of a new schedule for a particular bus route.

Unlike London Underground, the Dublin Bus network is not divided by lines, albeit similar to London Underground, the cultures in the seven garages are very different. Elements of competition exist between depots, further fuelled by sport competitions (e.g., football and golf). Unlike London Underground train depots, six out of the seven Dublin Bus garages do not have their own canteens, a canteen is situated in the centre of Dublin. However, the canteen area tends to be divided between different depots:

In the main canteen in Dublin centre, depots have their own seating areas, people usually keep to those areas. (Gavin, SIPTU representative)

Garage size is significant. At the time of data collection, the number of employees in each garage was approximately: 212, 220, 315, 315, 450, 450 and 588. In smaller garages relationships tend to be more close-knit because of fewer employees. In bigger garages there are various, sometimes contradicting sub-cultures and employees do not see each other as often. Simon, a NBRU representative, has worked in three different garages, but prefers his current garage because of its size:

You don't get as many different 'cliques' of workers here. It's nicer as a smaller community.

However, drivers and representatives in bigger garages also told me that they would never move from that garage and are happy there.

The garage in Harristown embeds a combination of sub-cultures, not only because of its size (around 450 employees), but because when it opened in 2004, drivers from different garages were transferred there to work. Representatives referred to how they and other drivers developed and moulded the garage culture, because it was non-existent before they arrived. Another garage is historically known to be the most militant, because problematic drivers were traditionally transferred there. However, Connor, a garage manager, explains:

When I was first allocated this garage, I was wished good luck by other managers because of its reputation. Yet by today, in the list of drivers who are the worst for sickness and other issues, no one here makes the top 40.

However, there are particularly innovative representatives in this garage. During a recent dispute about the use of radios in the cab of the bus, three NBRU representatives took over a local radio station to share their story with the public and won their case.

Similar to London Underground, day-to-day garage issues vary from one garage to another. For example, I observed drivers complaining to a representative because manoeuvring the bus into one of the stops on a particular route is difficult and dangerous. Similar issues concerning the practicalities of driving certain routes often arise. Garages are further divided by their formal and informal garage-level union agreements. For example, formal special arrangements were brokered between the company and Harristown union representatives because of garage location. For instance, because the garage is far from the city centre, drivers have their own high quality canteen in which I had lunch. Another agreement specifically for Harristown stipulates that drivers can start, finish and have their break at the garage.

Other garages have their own special agreements that union representatives have arranged with managers. This may be over a wide range of issues, but many interviewees laid particular emphasis on agreements over the scheduling of a route, as discussed above.

Scheduling is a very important issue for drivers. Representatives are often negotiating with management over a particular change in a schedule they want to introduce. (Dwain, NBRU representative)

Dublin Bus route schedules are changed quite often because of a diffuse set of factors. For instance, the opening of a new shopping centre or a new housing estate may encourage managers to change route timetables. Managers may feel that more buses are needed in certain areas and less in other areas. Further, managers have targets set by the NTA to run services as efficiently as possible, which also shapes schedules. More than one garage manager admitted that they need unions on their side to agree changes in schedules, affording representatives a strong hand to play during negotiations. Managers may concede some degree of control over other garage-level issues in return for an accepted schedule, effectively eliminating any ‘active struggle’ around both issues. In London Underground, the situation is different, schedules are not changed as regularly. London Underground trains run every two minutes along one specific line, a delay with a single train affects the entire line. When visiting a London Underground train depot, I observed the chaos created by a fault on one particular line. Accordingly, there is less scope to change schedules on the Underground.

Dublin Bus drivers with standard employment contracts have a specific route and the schedule of their route is important to them. Such drivers are known as ‘marked in’ drivers. It is worth noting that if ‘marked in’ Dublin Bus drivers work overtime, which many do, it tends to be on a different route. Furthermore, ‘marked in’ drivers do not necessarily work the same hours every week, they may be part of a rotating roster, nevertheless, they know their shifts well in advance. Some more senior drivers work a Monday to Friday shift pattern, with the opportunity to work weekends, if overtime is available. Monday to Friday shift patterns are no longer offered at Dublin Bus, yet, drivers who work Monday to Friday were confident that the company could never force them to work a different shift pattern.

When drivers begin working at Dublin Bus, they are not ‘marked in’, meaning they do not have a particular route and do not know the exact time of their shift until a minimum of 24-hours before. Such drivers are known as ‘spare drivers’. Representatives claimed that around 900 drivers in Dublin Bus are currently ‘spare’. Before the recession, becoming ‘marked in’ took

around 4-5 years, during the recession there was not much movement at all, and it currently takes around 10-12 years. Interviewees explained how balancing family and work commitments can be extremely difficult for drivers who do not follow a set shift pattern.

A 'minimum 24-hours' notice policy' was recently established for spare drivers after two union representatives (also involved in the dispute concerning the radios discussed above) represented a spare driver over the issue. Prior to this, spare drivers were in some cases given less than 24 hours' notice of their scheduled start and finishing times. The representatives concerned argued that the company was in breach of the 1997 Working Time Act. The representatives first requested 'spare drivers' to be texted the scheduled times of their shifts. This provided the necessary evidence to represent the driver and prove that less than 24 hours' notice was being given. The company claimed that they had a union agreement stating that Dublin Bus drivers are exempt from the Working Time regulations, but the Labour Court discounted it, stating that they were not in a position to prove the existence of an agreement. Dublin Bus was ordered to comply with the legislation and the spare driver was compensated €1,200. The unions have since asked other spare drivers who were affected to complete individual grievance forms.

'Spare' drivers tend to get the worst routes/shifts because of how route/shift allocation is organized. If drivers leave, are long-term sick or transfer garages, their route becomes available for other drivers to apply for. The same applies, if Dublin Bus wishes to introduce new routes. Routes become available for drivers to apply around every 6-8 weeks (but this varies by garage). Routes are allocated based on seniority, thus, 'marked in' drivers will apply for the best routes, leaving the worst routes for 'spare' drivers.

Like at London Underground, unions also play a key role in representing individual drivers at their garage. However, in contrast to London Underground, this tends to happen on union day (Thursdays as discussed above), more than on any other day. If a manager wants to see a driver over any issue, they will usually send a letter to the driver beforehand asking him/her to visit their office on a Thursday. I was shown an example of a letter. This arrangement advances common interests because managers and representatives have a specific day to deal with issues. For instance, one garage manager explained that when he was working on a company project, he only needed to be present at the garage on a Thursday to meet drivers, another lower level manager was present on other days to deal with any daily issues.

Union representatives have access to the list of members who need to visit the manager's office and the majority request a union representative to represent them. Representatives at one garage mentioned a manager who calls a driver in for a minor issue, for example 'lost and found', but then questions the driver about a more serious issue without a union representative present. When I visited this garage, a driver, who had been subject to this strategy, asked a union representative to represent him over a 'customer claim' that was discussed with the manager in the absence of a representative. The driver argued that the manager stated in their meeting that he would be issued with 'advice', albeit he received a letter stating that he was being issued a 'verbal warning' (a more serious punishment). The representative confronted the manager and the punishment was changed to 'advice'. However, it seems that the manager had forgotten the punishment that was originally issued, rather than deliberately issuing a 'verbal warning'.

The CCTV in Dublin Bus buses can cause contention between representatives and drivers. Unions agreed for CCTV to be fitted in the buses for evidence against false customer claims, but the footage cannot be used as evidence against a driver, unless the driver requests for the footage to be played. The footage can be observed by police, if the issue is a 'police issue'. For example, a representative referred to an incident where a driver was stealing money from the company.

Many representatives stated that during incidents without police involvement, they warn drivers not to request the CCTV footage, but some drivers ignore this warning. Cameron, a SIPTU representative, explains:

I went to advise a non-union member one day, a lorry had crashed into the back of him, and he said, look at the camera then. I warned him, no you need to take that back because I could tell from the manager's attitude that there was something on the camera. I warned him again. Then the manager played the DVD and it showed the driver typing on his phone whilst driving, then it went to the back camera showing him driving into different lanes. At the time, driving using a mobile was not serious like it is now.

A couple of representatives stated that they build trust with their members to ensure that they tell them exactly what happened during an incident and if they are happy with the drivers' accounts, they allow them to request for the CCTV footage to be played.

If drivers have engaged in some misdemeanour resulting in no or minor repercussions, representatives warn them that they were lucky this time. I observed a first level disciplinary meeting between a manager and a driver, with a NBRU representative representing, where this

occurred. I also observed representatives telling drivers that they thought their grievance was inappropriate.

Representatives explained that drivers sometimes expect too much from them. However, representatives are under pressure to meet member demands because of intense union rivalry, as Kieran, a SIPTU representative states:

We molly coddle the members really, sometimes we give them too much. There's things with sick pay and rosters, holidays and things like that that they could be sorting out themselves. But having two unions doesn't help that because you have to protect your membership otherwise they will move. (Kieran, SIPTU representative).

Manager-employee relations

Susan, a garage manager, explained that only a few employees in her garage cause problems and that this is not tied to union activity.

90% of the employees are amazing, don't cause any problems, you don't hear anything from them. Maybe every now and then there is a customer complaint, where I have to get them in here and they say yes I did do that and so on. We can deal with that. Then there's 10%, it might not even be that, but there is say 10% that are always causing problems, there is always something with them. Issue after issue. I feel that they are trying to be awkward. But it's not related to union activity really. It's just their mentality, they are just awkward people.

Susan compared her garage to other garages:

From talking to other managers it seems the same in many other garages, again, the problematic drivers aren't keen union activists. But apparently in one garage in particular there are reps who dig their heels in. I think we get on well with the union reps here, we do disagree sometimes, we have our rows, I do shout at them, they shout back, but in general.

This was echoed by Jack, a senior manager:

You get some really down to earth solid guys who want to do the job to the best of their ability and union reps who are looking after their members to the best of their ability, the vast majority are in that bracket. But there are a couple who are in it for their own game, they are in it just to have meetings and to frustrate.

It was unequivocal that several managers prefer to resolve issues in the garage, without escalating issues to head office. A quote by Kyle, a garage manager, bears out this observation:

I prefer sorting things out here, head office don't want to hear from us they have enough to do up there.

However, this largely depends on the manager's personality. Mike, a senior Dublin Bus manager, admits that there are differences in management styles within garages and that this is a key influencing factor. He uses the phrase 'play ball' to refer to how some managers adopt a more informal approach with unions and will adapt to the situation they face rather than clinging rigidly to the rule book.

There would be some managers that would play ball with the trade union reps and there would be some managers who would not, the guy is guilty as whatever and would be straight against him. Whereas another manager would say, look, this guy is guilty but we'll give him another chance or whatever. So it's really down to management styles, everybody has a rule book to actually go by, but they're only guidelines. Some stick rigidly to the guidelines, others don't.

Some issues are referred from garages to head office, usually appeals to a decision made by a garage manager. However, Mike will overturn garage manager decisions, if he perceives them unfair, despite being aware of manager reactions:

A lot of the time if you go against a manager, if you overturn their sanction or whatever, they're not too happy about it.

He admits that this places him in an awkward position, yet explains:

I can see two sides to the argument and I can maybe see something that a manager might not see.

One SIPTU executive stated:

Mike is great. What's wrong is wrong, what's right is right. I phone him and he usually sorts it to the members' satisfaction. That's the most important thing I think, sorting things to the members' satisfaction.

Mike provides a specific example of a decision by a garage manager that he will overturn, relating to the company's attendance control programme.

I've had a letter from SIPTU, we've got a thing called an Attendance Control Programme and once you go over 12 days absence within a 12 month period, you're put in it. This manager put in one of the girls in one of the garages, she had 13 days, so she had just gone over it, but 5 of those days were attributed to an accident that she had. So within the job, some decisions you have to overturn, and a lot of the time they're not too happy about it, they will probably be onto me tomorrow saying why have I done that, but you know, that's the job I have to deal with.

The attendance control programme was introduced in the 1990s in return for an employee pay increase. The non-attendance procedure seems far more lenient in Dublin Bus than London Underground. If Dublin Bus employees go beyond 12 days of absence in 12 months, they are entered into a programme where their attendance is monitored more closely. If employees are not absent for more than three days in three months over a nine month period, they are sent a new letter (example shown to author) and are removed from the programme. Attendance was perceived by managers and representatives as an issue that takes up a high proportion of their time. Both parties admitted that some drivers take advantage of sick-pay.

Some drivers really try it on with sickness. There was a guy who phoned me on his holidays saying that he had to phone in sick. I didn't want to represent him but I had to. It went to a re-appeal, and an extra appeal for people who have special circumstances, like young families etc. He lost that one too. But he was asking for it. (Daniel, NBRU representative)

Absenteeism can occur because drivers do not want to work that particular shift (for example, nights). Many drivers admitted that they dislike working nights, the shift starts around 4:30pm and finishes around 12:00am. Yet, one representative discussed a driver who had asked a garage manager for only night shifts and was given them immediately because of the anti-nights culture. Some drivers take a day off sick just because they want a particular day off. For example, I spoke to one driver who admitted he used to take Sunday off regularly to play football. Drivers are given a bonus for 'good attendance', that is, if they take no more than two days sick in the first six months of the year and another two days in the second six months.

One manager in a smaller garage, Claire, feels that managing in smaller garages is less challenging because everybody knows each other and building interpersonal ties with workers is easier. This helps when dealing with issues, such as attendance because she can better evoke her knowledge of the driver concerned to determine how to proceed with the issue. She has a different conception of the attendance control programme compared to the garage manager Mike refers to above.

The Attendance Control Programme is supposed to be for scattered absences. I won't enter drivers into the programme if they have been absent because of an injury, or illness. Because this is a smaller garage, I hear about the personal issues drivers are going through, this helps a lot.

Another garage manager admitted that since arriving at the garage he has increased the number of drivers entered into the attendance control programme and stressed that he does not allow

drivers who should be entered slip through the net. However, importantly, he is looking for scattered absences, or patterns of non-attendance and uses his knowledge of the driver's personal circumstances to deal with the issue.

Several managers place considerable weight on developing trust in the workplace and, in comparison to London Underground, a higher-trust and more informal atmosphere exists. This climate seems to have fomented from more pronounced give and take social relations between managers and employees (and their representatives) and deeper manager-employee interpersonal relations.

Managers referred to how drivers discuss their personal problems with them.

Richard stated:

Employees ring me with their personal problems, and I try to help them. I'm a counsellor, a shrink, a friend. I think I know when people are genuine or not.

Richard explained that when he first started working at the garage, employees would leave notes on his desk requesting a day off, or similar. He assumed that this was the custom before he arrived, but made it clear that he wanted to speak to drivers directly, not interact through post-it notes. A representative in the garage claimed that the previous manager in Richard's position was not approachable and that Richard is far better.

Similarly, I observed how managers try to accommodate driver requests. For example, a driver requested additional time off during a busy period, because of his wife's pregnancy and the manager wrote in her diary to remind herself that he would need additional leave at some point during this period. Another manager stated that if two drivers wanted the same overtime, he would split it in half. One representative referred to a driver who was unable to work a particular shift for a number of weeks because of personal issues and this was dealt with by the manager to his satisfaction. Additionally, if we recall the situation at London Underground, where managers have become stricter about punctuality, even when drivers are never usually late, a garage manager at Dublin Bus stated:

We had an issue a few weeks ago when a driver who is never late was late bringing the bus back to the depot for the next driver. He came back so apologetic. We were worried that something had happened to him because he is like a watch. I wouldn't discipline him for that, he's never late.

Some managers explained that they sometimes ask representatives to have a word with a particular driver about an issue, because they feel representatives are viewed as role models. In some garages, drivers do not call in at the garage to see the manager on a Thursday for several months, either because they do not want to face a manager, or because they do not want to come in early before their shift. However, managers in a few garages claimed that representatives help to arrange for drivers to come in early before his/her shift to sort any issues. I observed a situation where a representative asked one garage manager, if a driver could finish work before 2.00pm on a particular day and the manager stated that this may well be possible, but he needed to visit another manager about his attendance first and the representative agreed.

Relations between drivers and inspectors warrant some attention. Inspectors are essentially garage supervisors. I observed how some inspectors are based in garages, often organizing spare driver shifts. Inspectors may also walk the streets or drive around Dublin monitoring the bus network and reporting any driver wrongdoing. Finally, inspectors carry out an on-board monitoring practice, introduced in around 1999. Inspectors board the bus in civilian clothes (meaning that the driver is unaware of their presence), and rate the driver 1-4 (1 being the best) based on a specific criteria. Albeit, because of union opposition, drivers working for the company prior to its introduction in around 1999 are monitored by inspectors in uniform, meaning they are aware when an inspector boards the bus. One representative explained that a bad report usually means a day in the driving school, so it is a fairly lenient punishment, unless it is a re-occurring incident.

Managers clearly have authority over inspectors and will exercise that authority in particular contexts. For example, one manager stated that if a driver is marked absent by an inspector, she may change this to 'leave' after speaking to the driver and understanding the reason for not attending work. I sat in a meeting between a garage manager, union representative and driver, which involved an inspector having reported a driver turning his bus scrolls to 'out of service', without contacting the controller to explain why. This is a sackable offence at the company. The driver claimed that his reason for doing so was that he needed the toilet in an emergency. After the meeting the manager explained that he perceived the driver to have an attitude problem and thought the driver was lying, but that he was new and had not committed the offence previously. The manager passed the case on to another garage manager, however, both the representative and the manager who were present at the meeting envisaged that the case would go no further than garage-level. They predicted that the driver would be issued a warning

that turning the scrolls was against company policy. The representative also made it clear to the driver that his actions were unacceptable.

Few inspectors were deemed problematic. One representative claimed that all the inspectors in his garage were ok, but they had had bad ones in the past. For example, he explained that a previous inspector would look after particular employees when organizing spare driver shifts. A representative in another garage claimed that the inspectors in his garage were ok, except from one, who is determined to complete as many driver reports as he can, whereas most would complete the minimum possible.

Representatives and managers at Dublin Bus admitted that employment relations is a game. However, the game is played in a particular way and played differently than at London Underground. Overall, it seems that there is more give and take and interpersonal trust at Dublin Bus than at London Underground. The company embeds a different workplace atmosphere to London Underground. Unitarism is not as intense. Managers are more willing to abdicate some of their control to elicit cooperation, which benefits managers and employees. The frontier of control is positioned more in employee territory at Dublin Bus and confrontations between manager and employee preferences are not as acute as at London Underground.

In the 1980s, strike action was prevalent at the company:

Back in the 1980s drivers wanted to go on strike for anything. If there were no tea bags in the canteen people would be going on strike. (Callum, SIPTU representative)

Now, the situation is significantly different and strike action occurs less often than at London Underground. Negotiation at garage-level between managers and representatives does not escalate to strike action. If it does, the strike is illegal, yet this rarely occurs now. In one garage, a garage-level strike was recently threatened over a schedule change, but the issue was resolved. However, illegal unofficial strike action occurred recently in a couple of garages in sympathy for drivers at Bus Éireann, a second CIÉ bus company. An unofficial strike also occurred at Harristown garage in 2009 over a schedule change for one route. The strike resulted in the sacking of an NBRU representative and many NBRU members changed their membership to SIPTU. Their argument was that NBRU should have provided more support, albeit, NBRU representatives in other garages disagreed with the actions of the Harristown representative.

Unfortunately what he did was wrong, it was an illegal dispute he should have waited. (Jeremy, NBRU representative)

You can't keep beating the drum, you will get nothing out of that. You can play it sometimes, but you can't just keep beating it. This representative was always beating it. (Stuart, NBRU representative)

Dovetailing the previous point and unlike London Underground, individual issues, such as unfair dismissals do not escalate into strike action as they did in the past. Furthermore, one representative stated that it is very difficult to lose a job at Dublin Bus.

Like at London Underground, contradictions are built into employment relationships at Dublin Bus and potential sources of friction inevitably exist, but, these contradictions foment different patterns of concrete behaviour. Managers and representatives are able to elicit cooperation from each other far more easily than at London Underground. This is not to say that they do not disagree at times; I observed such occasions, and both parties admitted that heated arguments occur. Managers and representatives affirmed that neither party are perfect. In many garages there seems to be a mutual understanding that garage-level issues should be sorted at garage-level without escalating them further. In such cases, representatives and managers tend to work together more closely to arrive at an agreement that benefits the driver, manager and representatives, indicating more of a pluralist culture. Official garage disputes do not occur and unofficial garage strikes are very rare. Mike's reference to how some managers 'play ball' with unions (as noted above) illustrates the more informal employment relations dynamics at Dublin Bus. Of course, the extent of co-operation varies from one garage to another. Similarly, at company-level, senior managers appreciate that 'give and take' and providing some flexibility, or 'lee-way', to unions is important. Parties seem to work together more and company-level issues tend to be resolved through negotiation, strike action is less prone at Dublin Bus than London Underground.

Overall, I received more positive comments from employees about the job at Dublin Bus than London Underground. Dublin Bus drivers seem to enjoy the demands of their role more, for example, many enjoy the customer interaction. I did, however, speak to a few individuals who did not enjoy the 'driving' as much, but admitted Dublin Bus is a good company to work for.

I don't like driving but it's a good job. You can't get a job with such good conditions elsewhere. (Harry, driver)

Good working conditions and a feeling of being cared for was mentioned by many interviewees:

It is a good job. There are issues, and every job has issues, but the difference is that we have unions who fight for those issues. So we are heard about as a company with issues because we actually say something. (Gavin, NBRU representative)

They do look after you here. They bend over backwards to help you. (Craig, NBRU representative)

Oh yes definitely, it is a good company to work for. (Sandra, SIPTU executive)

Several important contextual factors stand out. As explained in Chapter 3, Dublin Bus is a far smaller company, carrying less passengers than London Underground. Less hierarchical levels and fewer employees mean that representatives engage much more with senior managers than at London Underground, for example in regular meetings. The cost-cutting climate is also far more salient in London Underground. Like RMT, ASLEF and TSSA at London Underground, SIPTU and NBRU at Dublin Bus argue that government subvention is too low. Garage managers at Dublin Bus said that they monitored their expenses, however, Dublin Bus is in a better financial position than London Underground. Jack a senior manager explains:

Some people look at the public service obligation payment from the NTA and say that's actually an inefficiency payment, that's actually because Dublin Bus can't make money, but it's not. Also, if you look at the public transport utilities across Europe, you will find that many of them have a much higher level of subvention from the government than we do. Our financial position is ok at the moment. The last two or three or four annual reports show we're making a profit. But we always have to be wary of things down the road.

Another important point, as touched upon earlier, is that Dublin Bus managers (including senior managers) tend to be recruited internally. They therefore have years of experience working at the company and are more familiar with the well-established traditions. Additionally, two senior Dublin Bus managers dealing with employment relations issues have both been Dublin Bus drivers themselves, they understand the issues that arise. Yet of course, as pointed out by both managers and representatives, this means that representatives cannot “pull the wool over their eyes” in terms of incidents that have occurred, or agreements that have been made. The intelligence of one these senior managers in particular, was referred to by more than one union representative.

Nonetheless, like at London Underground, relations between managers and representatives have changed over the years. According to representatives one of the main reasons for this change is the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA). Up until 2009, the Department of Transport controlled the regulation and financing of the company. The allocation of government subsidy and other finances, and the direct oversight of the company were the responsibility of Dublin Bus' parent body, Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ). CIÉ delegated responsibilities to Dublin Bus and garage managers. In 2009, the tenor of employment relations at Dublin Bus shifted as these responsibilities were transferred to the NTA, established under the Public Transport Regulation Act (PTA, 2009).

We can't do anything without the approval of the NTA. Even if we want to change a timetable by 5 minutes on a particular route, we have to get their approval on it. To be fair to them, approvals tend to come quickly, it's not like there's a huge bureaucratic chain, but it's something that wasn't there before if you go back 10 years. So they adjudicate what we do in terms of our network and they're actually taking a greater role of that now, because one of the things they have initiated this year is that they are actually doing a network review themselves. Traditionally up to now, we have always done that. We will still have a role in that but they're effectively saying, look, we want to look at the whole network. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Representatives explained that the way control has shifted to the NTA creates tensions at garage-level, because it presents an obstacle for representatives and garage managers who are discussing changes to issues such as scheduling. Since the establishment of the NTA, the company is also under enhanced pressure to meet particular performance targets to retain its public service award contracts, meaning that control over employees has become more intense.

Before there was little competition, the Minister just wrote out the subvention cheques. But now, there's more competition, Dublin Bus get penalized if they don't meet their targets. (Jeremy, NBRU representative)

As referred to above, NTA demands have triggered closer monitoring of absence, individual driver performance, accidents and so forth. These are issues representatives deal with at garage-level.

Before, with no NTA, the government basically used to just issue cheques to cover passenger accident claims and you just had a slap on the hand. But there's so much more to it now, there's a process, lots of forms, it goes on your file.

I observed how managers can use their computer to check that all buses are running on time, including stopping in the bus stop on time and leaving on time.

If I see on my computer that the same buses are late all the time I need to sort it because we have targets to meet for the NTA. It might not be the drivers' fault, it might be that I need to change the schedule. (Conor, garage manager)

There are fears amongst drivers and representatives that the NTA will be taking more and more control over the operation of Dublin Bus services, placing union agreements at risk.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the first research question has been addressed: how do contextual factors in the public transport sectors in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus? The chapter first examined the research question at a country-level by comparing industrial relations history, dispute resolution and employment law in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Empirical evidence suggests that the Republic of Ireland's historical and legal fabric capacitates higher levels of potential union power than the UK. Although social partnership did not have tremendous impact on employee/union power at workplace level, it did not thwart union power like Thatcherism did and UK unions are still suffering because of this.

The existence of the Labour Court in the Republic of Ireland seems to lubricate a more pluralist approach to resolving workplace disputes and in some cases serves as a safety valve preventing strike action. However, Labour Court recommendations are sometimes overturned. Finally, the legal setting in the Republic of Ireland offers mechanisms to potentially facilitate union power and challenge managerial ideology, including Registered Employment Agreements and Sectoral Employment Orders. Additionally, union recognition may not be enforceable in the Republic of Ireland, but the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) provides a mechanism to improve the terms and conditions of employees in non-unionized companies and by-pass anti-union employer postures. This sharply contrasts with the recent Trade Union Act 2016 (Trade Union Act, 2016) in the UK, aiming to curtail employee ability to leverage unions as a form of collective influence.

The chapter then probed the organisational-level and considered job design, union rivalry, union culture, workplace culture and manager-employee relations at London Underground and Dublin Bus respectively. The empirical cross-case study evidence implies that unitarism and

neoliberalism are more intense at London Underground than Dublin Bus. It appears that Dublin Bus embeds more of a pluralist culture and the spirit of informal ‘give and take’ is more prevalent between managers, employees and unions. This is shaped by various internal contextual forces, including London Underground’s weaker financial position, organisational recruitment strategies and managerial approaches. Albeit, at a broader level, the fact that unions in the Republic of Ireland in general seem to have more power than UK unions is likely to have significant bearing. Nonetheless, give and take social relations in both cases have diluted over the years. At Dublin Bus the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) is a key force.

The next chapter turn attention to the second research question: how is union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over organisational restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus? Chapter 5 discusses two recent workplace disputes at London Underground and Chapter 6 unpacks two recent workplace disputes at Dublin Bus.

CHAPTER 5: STRUGGLES OVER ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING AT LONDON UNDERGROUND

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the second research question and explores how union resistance is encouraged and curbed during two workplace disputes over organisational restructuring at London Underground. The first London Underground dispute concerns the closure of ticket offices and a new station staff framework and the second dispute is over the introduction of a Night Tube on Fridays and Saturdays.

London Underground station staff restructuring

Table 5.1 below lists the strikes announced and organized by RMT and TSSA during the first London Underground dispute.

Table 5.1: Strike dates in the London Underground station staff dispute		
Strike Dates	Organized by	Occurred/Deferred
04/02/14-06/02/14	RMT, TSSA	Occurred
11/02/14-13/02/14	RMT, TSSA	Deferred
28/04/14-30/04/14	RMT	Occurred
05/05/14-08/05/14	RMT	Deferred
14/10/14-16/10/14	RMT	Deferred
08/07/15-09/07/15	RMT, TSSA,	Occurred
05/08/15-06/08/15	RMT, TSSA,	Occurred
25/08/15-26-08/15	RMT, TSSA,	Deferred
27/08/15-28/08/15	RMT, TSSA,	Deferred
08/09/15-10/09/15	RMT, TSSA,	Deferred
26/01/16-27/01/16	RMT, TSSA	Deferred
06/02/15-08/02/16	RMT	Deferred
15/02/16-16/02/16	RMT, TSSA,	Deferred
17/02/16-18/02/16	RMT, TSSA,	Deferred

Table 5.2 compares union activity during the dispute.

Table 5.2: Comparing union activity during the London Underground station staff dispute			
Union	Number of strikes involved in	Number of strike announcements made	Total
RMT	4	14	18
TSSA	3	10	13

Management position

The first dispute has noteworthy historical trajectories. In 2007, the former London Mayor, Ken Livingstone announced proposals to axe 40 ticket offices (later reduced to 38). His argument revolved around increases in Oyster payment and lower ticket office sales. These plans were paused before the 2008 election and Boris Johnson pledged to overturn the proposals if he was elected.

Boris actually got elected in 2008 promising to keep ticket offices open. As politicians do, that was just a manifesto pledge, created by ... well popular sentiment stuff rather than reality. Sales in ticket offices have been declining for years because of the universal attractiveness of oyster, the fact that kids travel free, the fact that people over 60, travel free. So the usage had been going down. Boris' opposition in 2008 wasn't inspired by anything other than politics. (George, former senior London Underground manager)

In 2010, London Underground and the Mayor proposed to change the opening hours of ticket offices. A leaked document revealed that London Underground's plans were to actually close some ticket offices, but these plans failed to materialize.

There had been a previous attempt to close ticket offices but it didn't succeed because of political reasons. (George, former senior London Underground manager)

In November 2013, proposals to close ticket offices re-emerged as part of London Underground's station staff restructuring strategy. Mobilizing employees during the dispute was shaped by station staff engagement with London Underground's restructuring discourse. A central element of London Underground's restructuring narrative was its recontextualization of 'modernization' and 'customer service' discourses. Both discourses are underpinned by unitarism, new public management and neo-liberalism.

The modernization strategy was an executive decision because we needed **to enhance the customer offering**. We looked at the effectiveness of ticket offices for example, and in some locations, ticket office staff were in some cases only selling 10 tickets an hour, so how do you justify that? We wanted to create **a model where our staff come closer in contact with our customers**. (Colin, former London Underground senior manager)

‘Customer service’ and ‘modernization’ discourses were also injected into press releases:

In the future therefore, rather than being remote from customers behind closed doors or glass windows, Tube station staff will not be based in ticket offices, but in ticket halls, on gate lines and on platforms, **ready and available to give the best personal and face-to-face service to customers**. (London Underground press release)

Strikes have been called by the leadership of the RMT and TSSA unions over LU's [London Underground's] **plans to modernise and improve customer service**. (London Underground press release)

In interviews, the restructuring proposals were perceived as partly a strategy to save London Underground's reputation:

At the time, London Underground was probably regarded as not changing, fixed in its ways and London Underground used to be the front page in the Evening Standard for the wrong reasons. (Colin, former London Underground senior manager)

A sense of obligation to ‘customers’ was also conveyed:

London Underground has to serve our fare paying customers. (Colin, former London Underground senior manager)

Our customer promise is ‘every journey matters’, everything that everybody does has to live up to that. (Stuart, London Underground marketing spokesperson)

The restructuring narrative re-worked ‘technology’ discourse to highlight changes in customer behaviour and justify the proposals to close ticket offices:

Certainly in terms of **technology**, Oyster has been in operation for a number of years, rather than cash payments. But also in terms of **contactless payment**, it has also enhanced the proposition if you like for those who are travelling on the Underground. They don't buy a ticket, they don't use oyster, they just wave and pay. (Colin, former London Underground senior manager)

London Underground's narrative stressed radical transformation of the station staffing structure by making more staff visible on the gate line to enhance customer service. Yet, the plans also involved almost 900 station staff job losses. Echoes of unitarism were salient, by using metaphors conveying a cherished workforce.

LU staff are and will remain **the operational heart of the station**. (London Underground press release)

Denise, a London Underground senior manager contrasted the 'intellectual perspective' and more 'human perspective':

You're always very mindful that there are things that need to take place from a business perspective, but you're always mindful of what that means for people. There's intellectual responses to the plans which are, well this makes sense because we're not using ticket offices as much as we've done in the past, there's a rise in contactless payment or other forms of travel, actually we can use ticket office space for commercial ventures perhaps, which is important to us because we need to be more self-sufficient. But you also do think, actually what does that mean for the people who are impacted by this, who may have been working and doing the job in the ticket office for 20 years.

Denise also deploys metaphors associated with a journey and progress:

You have to think about **how you look after people on the journey**.

We also had to think about **how do we navigate through** our consultation with our trade unions which then became a dispute, **how do we work through** that process.

Colin, a former London Underground senior manager recognized that the restructuring plans affected employees and evoked unitarism to emphasize that 'bringing employees along' was key. He also recognized union resistance to the strategy and utilized a 'three sacred cows' metaphor to refer to union concerns:

So closing ticket offices, obviously that has an impact on employees **so bringing employees along with you** was an important part of that process. There was resistance, particularly from the trade unions. They sort of have three key... I call them **the three sacred cows**, so the trade unions represent people for job retention, job growth and pensions. They are probably the three top items in what they stand for, so recognizing that we are closing ticket offices, their view was that we were taking jobs away. But our plan was to take them from behind ticket offices, onto the concourse and onto the gate line to help customers. Yes there was a financial benefit, but there was definitely an improvement in customer service.

Union position

Notwithstanding, RMT and TSSA rejected London Underground's argument that customer service would increase because the proposals involved a reduction of 853 station staff. RMT projected a more radical discourse than TSSA, nonetheless, the arguments of both unions had clear moral undercurrents to emphasize how cutting station staff placed employee and passenger well-being at risk. Safety was a key concern for both unions. RMT utilized a metaphor to argue that the proposals would transform the Tube network into a 'mugger's paradise'. Unions argued that low staffing levels would not only be dangerous for employees, the increased pressures of the job would damage their health.

RMT rebuffed London Underground's 'every journey matters' 'customer promise' discussed above and developed a campaign called 'every job matters' to resist job cuts.

We were making a point with 'every job matters' because there are issues with working conditions, pay and stuff like that, but staffing levels are incredibly important. (Michelle, RMT station representative)

The face that they presented to the media was 'what we're going to do is take these staff away from the ticket offices and put them out on the concourse', but it wasn't that simple because there were almost 900 station staff job losses. (Harry, RMT executive member)

Job losses were obscured by discursive emphasis on the voluntary severance packages available. Unitarism was recontextualized to construct a particular social identity for the organization, namely that London Underground cares for its employees and thus would not trigger compulsory redundancies. Ironically, unions had secured a 'job for life' deal at London Underground in 2001, preventing compulsory redundancies. London Underground had the resources to offer attractive severance packages which union officials admitted provided good terms. Mobilizing individuals who had applied for voluntary severance was curbed because employees knew they were leaving and/or by rule mechanisms governing the voluntary severance offer (e.g., the monitoring of absences). A counter-narrative projected by RMT representatives, evoked 'unemployment' discourse to argue that voluntary severance removed jobs from the economy, nonetheless, the voluntary severance appealed to a spectrum of members:

There were people with long service who were touching on what's traditional retirement age and thought, this is a good opportunity for me to get some money and I can also access my pension now. There were other younger people who generally were short of service but could

look at it and think, actually it's a good opportunity to do something else, either do a different kind of role, or go travelling. (Denise, London Underground senior manager)

Unions argued at length that the restructuring strategy was about cost-savings not customer service, because of reductions in government subsidy. Deploying a 'battle' metaphor, Harry, an RMT union executive depicted a war against London Underground and the government:

We certainly saw this dispute very much as **a first battle in a series of battles**, because the amount that they saved on this really is minimal, compared to what they need to save.

Lines of fracture between unitarist and radical stances regarding the marketization of public services were acute. Evoking radical discourse with a distinct moral edge, interviewees emphasized the need for London Underground to be managed as a 'public good' not a business:

London Underground needs to be run as a public service with a public service ethos, not a business with a private sector ethos. It needs proper government funding. (Claire, RMT station representative)

Managers admitted that cuts to government funding did influence the restructuring strategy, yet argued that customer service was the prime driver:

Less public money and public subsidy, how do you square that? You actually derive from it a staffing framework which is as economic as possible. (George, former London Underground senior manager)

The whole concept of closing the ticket offices and developing people was more driven by the customer focus side, but in practice it gave us an opportunity to create a £50 million per annum efficiency pot, so over a period of time, I think it was probably a 7 year period we recognized that the return on investment for us was about £270 million. We knew that there were going to be cuts, and we had to find ways of how we might invest. (Colin, former London Underground senior manager)

The 'modernization strategy' also involved a radical transformation of the station staff structure. Station grades were merged and eliminated.

I think that a lot of the politics and the noise with the trade unions was about the closure of the ticket offices, but in fact it was a plan to change the staffing model in stations. It wasn't ticket office jobs that were being made redundant, the reduction of jobs was supervisory jobs which had been overtaken by a different sort of technological change, because you don't need people sitting there filling in forms and doing rosters. I don't think that anybody from the public got

that, because those people don't make the headlines. (George, former London Underground senior manager)

Roger, a station representative explained how the media masked the complex details of the proposals by foregrounding the ticket office closures, while carving-out details about the station staff restructuring:

What they saw was the ticket office closures, but then the detail which only a few people got was actually the grade changes.

Under the restructuring, some job titles were changed to include 'customer service' and the new job descriptions revolved around providing an enhanced 'customer offering'. Evoking a radical moral discourse, Claire, an RMT station representative explained how focusing heavily on 'customer service' transforms London Underground user identities:

They changed my role from Station Supervisor, to Customer Service Manager. It's all that rubbish of passengers not being passengers anymore, they're customers now. When you treat them as customers, you forget they're passengers. 'Customer service' takes you from, service users as a collective of people who have collective rights for a good service, to customers as individuals who have individual rights to complain about a bad service.

One of the major changes in the staffing structure was the increased managerial responsibility for station supervisors without extra pay, because their grade was merged with the above managerial grade.

Probably one of the most, I guess challenging changes for our trade unions, was that our Station Supervisor role changed to be our Customer Service Manager role, with more emphasis on being a team manager, leading staff and on customer service. So it's managing your team for great customer service whereas with the previous Station Supervisor role, the emphasis was much more around the technical aspects of manning a station. If your frame of reference and your values are, as a Station Supervisor I'm responsible for the safe running of this station and I work with people, I'm not a manager so I never have to tell people off or whatever, then I think that change for those people has been quite difficult. Some people absolutely love it, really embraced it and all the training and support that's gone on with it. (Denise, London Underground senior manager)

Re-working 'careerism' discourse resonated with some employees because of their desires for a 'manager' identity. Employees perceived accepting additional responsibilities as a career stepping stone. For others like Andrew, a 'manager' identity and the 'careerism' discourse were

rejected, yet they accepted the new job role because the only other option was to take a lower paid role:

I'm taking on additional tasks like attendance management, performance management, competence management, all these management tools, basically just a way to make the paperwork look good if you ask me. So I'm meant to do all of these when I've got no time to do it because we have less front line staff now. Secondly, the managers before used to be in offices, separated from the actual operational work and the way they used to interact was sometimes visit the station and have a friendly chat, or a cup of tea. When they had to discipline anyone they would take you to their office. But now I'm working with the same people that I'm expected to discipline. I feel like they want us to be watching staff every minute of their shift. It's uncomfortable, realizing that you're having to, it makes you feel different and not in a positive way.

The way that the restructuring discourse emphasized more visible station staff resonated with some Customer Service Assistants (CSAs), not because it internalized the concept of 'a customer' and regulated interactions between customers and employees, but because it captured their experiences of working on the gate line when supervisors were nowhere to be seen. This hindered their mobilization during the dispute.

There was a lot of bitterness from us on the gate line towards supervisors. We're out there in the cold dealing with customers and they hide in their offices. (Martin, former RMT Customer Service Assistant)

In addition, station staff confidence to resist was low, many felt powerless as Hugh, a station representative explains:

I think, our members are affected by a wider sense in society that it's difficult for trade unions to fight.

No industrial action experiences to reflect on and friends and family who were not members of militant unions (or unions at all), prompted perceptions that members should not be perceived as militant by society, despite feelings of injustice. These perceptions were also steered by media discourse, texturing unitarist discourse to present worker resistance as disruptive, and also by the bargaining weakness of other UK unions. Representative discourse seeking to mobilize station staff was also undermined by different subplots of dominant managerial discourse. For example, letters sent to members by London Underground presenting the restructuring plans as a 'done deal' instilled the idea that negotiations with unions were over.

The counter-mobilizing effects of these letters were challenged by discourse articulated by representatives. Nevertheless, for some members the letters carried more weight because of ideas underpinning managerial authority discourse, fused with reflections on restructuring strategies having succeeded in the past.

It works psychologically, getting the idea into people's heads that it's inevitable. Even if you have an active representative saying, that's not right, the piece of paper can carry a lot more weight. (Mandy, station representative)

Divisions between grades

Divisions between grades and power unbalances within London Underground's organisational structure acted as a powerful break on member mobilization during the station staff dispute. Participant observation illustrated that London Underground's complex organisational structure impedes social interactions between station staff, drivers and engineers during shifts, fomenting inherent splits in the workforce, provoking tensions between 'graded' and 'general' worker identities and damaging reciprocal ties between grades.

Stations and trains are different worlds, there's no real connection there. We don't know enough about their job and they don't know enough about ours. There's little connection between drivers and engineers too. (Les, ASLEF driver)

Even though all-grades were balloted for action in 2014, London Underground's restructuring discourse highlighted changes to 'stations', fuelling perceptions amongst drivers and engineers that the strategy was irrelevant to their work. Station staff feared that other grades would not support and perceived that their role within London Underground's organisational structure lacked the 'disruptive', 'economic' and 'political' power other grades (notably drivers) can potentially exert during strike action. This was exacerbated by an emphasis on the restructuring discourse that stations would be manned during strikes by office staff, as noted in Chapter 4.

RMT communicated a counter-discourse to develop a 'general worker' identity amongst other grades. Austerity discourse was re-woven to argue that the strategy was in reality a cost-cutting exercise and cuts to other grades would follow. The counter-discourse also recontextualized moral discourse to stress how employees should feel a duty to protect each other.

Drivers are not bullet proof – we must fight to defend ourselves and our station colleagues. (EJM Dispute Action Report)

In many contexts, ‘graded worker’ identities undermined ‘general worker’ identities and RMT’s discourse did not resonate. Similarly to station staff, ‘graded worker’ identities amalgamated with ‘consumer’, or ‘parent’ identities, to hinder mobilization:

They think in the short-term about their pay-loss, when we have our own issues to deal with.
(Adam, drivers’ representative)

George, a former senior London Underground manager noted how resistance during the dispute was undermined by the rivalry between ASLEF and RMT:

One of the characteristics of the Tube unions is that they don’t have much harmony together, so ASLEF are not interested in anything that doesn’t involve them, like station staff issues, whereas the RMT use their membership, whether its drivers or station staff, to ballot the largest number of people they can.

During the dispute, RMT lost many drivers to ASLEF. Changing their membership to the rival union was perceived as a legitimate means of avoiding striking, as noted in the preceding chapter. Yet, in some contexts drivers’ long-term concerns outweighed short-term economic concerns, creating conditions of possibility for RMT’s discourse to exert mobilizing effects.

I took action because when they’ve finished on stations, we’ll be next. (Scott, RMT train driver)

Prioritising long-term concerns was in some cases shaped by embodied factors, such as no family commitments and obligations. However, some drivers who did not necessarily support the dispute, feel a sense of injustice, or accept RMT’s discursive arguments about long-term concerns, still refused to cross the picket line. Their individual values, married with the meanings they attach to picket lines prevented them from crossing. A social identity mechanism, the idea that crossing a picket line would not be socially accepted by colleague drivers, also had important effects.

Tensions between ‘general worker’ and ‘graded worker’ identities also moulded engineer mobilization. Engineers were difficult to mobilize because, like drivers, their economic concerns impeded the construction of a ‘general worker’ identity. Another major thwarting force in this context was historical tensions between engineers and station staff, rupturing reciprocal ties:

During the Public Private Partnership (PPP), they would contract us out, so we were banned from the toilets. They gave us grief on stations. When we came back in, there was quite a lot of resentment, not with everyone, but a lot. (Rob, engineering representative)

The majority of engineers eventually offered support due to the meanings engineers (similarly to drivers) attach to picket lines and/or the illegitimacy of strike-breaking within the engineering workforce. However, personal and social identities manifest differently in this context because, conversely to drivers, switching to the minority union UNITE is not common and is thus likely to receive negative reactions from colleagues:

Even though Unite have recognition, their numbers are kind of laughable, about 14 members. People don't switch. (Sam, engineering representative)

The Mayor's role

Management and unions had contrasting views on the mayor's role during the dispute. Unions contended that as chair of Transport for London, Boris Johnson, the former London Mayor, had a moral duty to join negotiations during the dispute. A discussion between Bob Crow and Boris Johnson began on London's Biggest Conversation radio station (LBC radio) before the first strike in February 2014. Bob Crow explained that what RMT and TSSA wanted was for Johnson to listen to their point of view, not to sit down and negotiate. Johnson stated that he could not do that unless strike action was called off.

George, a former senior London Underground manager argued that:

Part of RMT's reason for striking, was because they didn't like the Mayor, because they thought he was a conservative. But one of the characteristics that the trade unions ascribed to the Mayor was completely untrue, it was London Underground management planning to do all this, he supported the management and defended their position. He had to untangle himself from his previous position which was that he was against the closure of ticket offices, but that was his problem not our problem. We knew it was the right thing to do. (George, former London Underground senior manager)

Johnson did not meet with unions during the dispute, yet George, a former London Underground senior manager claimed management had advised him not to:

Boris said to me, why don't I meet these people, and I said the day you meet them we're all redundant. The day you meet them they will never want to meet anybody but you, because you're the bloke in charge. The Mayor shouldn't negotiate, otherwise there is no point employing the management. What can the Mayor do, that the management can't do? The only thing the Mayor could have done was give way.

George explained that Johnson could have demanded the proposals to be stopped because of his authority. However Johnson had already read through the business plan and agreed it, thus he was not in much of a position to do that:

Our point was, if you want us to give way, you tell us before we start, not half way through. We all knew that we would have a dispute, because the RMT always have a dispute. The question is how many days you have and how long it takes. He wouldn't have approved the business plan without us telling him what the likely consequences are.

Resistance outcomes

Despite strike action, members were unable to prevent the closure of ticket offices. All ticket offices at London Underground were closed by January 2016.

It would be easy to say that we were successful, but if you walk down London Underground every ticket office is in the process of closing, or has been closed. We fought a defensive battle, we had no compulsory redundancies, we maintained everybody's wages, we made sure that no one was forced out of the company, we protected the terms and conditions as best as we could, but the fact of the matter is, the ticket offices are closed. It wasn't resolved to our satisfaction. (Harry, RMT executive member)

The new station staff framework was implemented in February 2016, but the effects of the new framework were not fully apparent because station staffing levels had not changed. The negative effects of the new London Underground staffing structure were fully actualized in June 2016 when eight hundred and fifty three employees left with voluntary severance. Employee well-being was damaged by low staffing levels:

Stations are being run on overtime, rosters are all over the place. Staff are exhausted and sickness is hitting the roof. (Darren, station representative)

A key episode during the dispute was a mobilization shift in late 2016. An overtime ban began from mid-November 2016, lasting almost three months. Overtime bans are traditionally poorly supported by station staff. The high-demand service offered by London Underground means that high incomes can be earned from working overtime, members do not want to sacrifice personal/family income. There is also another problem:

They are effective in the places they are built and supported, but company-wide they aren't. Some people have this idea, the only way to be militant is to strike.

However, the overtime ban beginning in November 2016 was strongly supported by station staff. The mobilizing discourse endorsed by RMT resonated well with members and spawned a collective identity, because it encapsulated their experiences of the new staffing framework. London Underground were forced to offer office staff up to £250 a shift for filling in for striking station staff. However, the tendency for London Underground to use replacement staff was not sustainable in this context. The extent of support by station staff for the overtime ban, together with its length meant that London Underground lacked the financial and organisational resources to continue manning stations, resulting in major stations being closed without warning.

Unions argued that management were aware that the framework was a disaster and a leaked document (RMT London Calling, 2016) including the minutes of a middle-managers' meeting at ACAS also suggests this:

Doesn't having Area Managers (£65k) regularly having to personally keep a station open in place of a CSA (£30k) clearly show that Fit for the Future [new framework] was a disaster?

How am I supposed to convince staff to break a strike/overtime ban when I completely agree with many of the issues raised by the RMT?

Roger, a station representative argued that senior managers were also aware of staffing problems on stations:

We've had senior managers now being quite open about it, because their sickness is flying through the roof. Their performance is down.

He also stated that the company were adamant there is nothing they can do because of the lack of funds. Yet his response to this was that something had to be done, the situation could not continue and they needed to provide a professional and safe service.

The crux of the dispute was a station staff only strike in January 2017, which received historic support from station staff and shut down the network. RMT's decision to coordinate the strike with action by train drivers over unfair dismissal is likely to have encouraged station staff mobilization. Yet, only two driver depots were balloted. Much more significant in explaining the historic support were station staff reflections on their working experiences following the complete operationalization of the restructuring strategy. Station staff also knew from discussions with colleagues that action would be strongly supported by station staff across the network because of the widespread feeling of 'enough is enough'.

Even though the company were adamant they could not afford more staff, substantive concessions concerning the new framework were secured, the main one being the reinstatement of three hundred and twenty five jobs. An important point here is that in the 2016 election, Labour MP Sadiq Khan became the new Mayor of London and TFL chairman. While Boris Johnson never met the unions, soon after becoming mayor, Sadiq Khan did. As shown above, George claimed that London Underground managers have high levels of discretion in terms of negotiating with unions and making decisions (reflecting the dominance of managerial prerogative) and representatives claimed that senior managers were fully aware that the new staffing framework was problematic. Notwithstanding, it is unclear to what degree Khan influenced the decision to recruit in 2017, notably when his election pledge included ‘no public transport strikes’. It may very well be that he ensured London Underground had sufficient funds to recruit.

Union newsletters conveyed that a ‘battle’ had been won:

Historic Action by stations shows we will not cave in (RMT newsletter).

Victory for RMT in Stations Dispute (RMT newsletter)

However, members are still experiencing the effects of the new framework, new rosters, new locations and new responsibilities, with considerably fewer employees. A Stations and Revenue Functional Council newsletter warns, despite the victory:

Not everything has been put right....The strike was only suspended.

Thus, battle lines may be redrawn in the future.

The following section discusses the second London Underground dispute between May 2015 and January 2016, over the introduction of a Night Tube on Fridays and Saturdays.

London Underground Night Tube

Table 5.3 lists the strike dates during the Night Tube dispute.

Table 5.3: Strike dates in the London Underground Night Tube dispute		
Strike Date	Organized by	Occurred/Deferred
08/07/15-09/07/15	RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE	Occurred
05/08/15-06/08/15	RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE	Occurred

25/08/15-26-08/15	RMT, TSSA, UNITE	Deferred
27/08/15-28/08/15	RMT, TSSA, UNITE	Deferred
08/09/15-10/09/15	RMT, TSSA, UNITE	Deferred
26/01/16-27/01/16	RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE	Deferred
15/02/16-16/02/16	RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE	Deferred
17/02/16-18/02/16	RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE	Deferred

Table 5.4 compares union activity during the Night Tube dispute.

Table 5.4: Comparing union activity during the London Underground Night Tube dispute			
Union	Number of strikes involved in	Number of strike announcements made	Total
RMT	2	8	10
TSSA	2	8	10
ASLEF	2	5	7
UNITE	2	8	10

Management position

Management emphasized how proposals to run a Night Tube on Fridays and Saturdays was also an executive decision and a segment of London Underground's modernization strategy. Similarly to the station staff restructuring dispute, the unitarist notion of prioritizing customer concerns was employed to justify the Night Tube and legitimize an ideological restructuring mind-set. The Night Tube narrative recontextualized customer service discourse and underscored how London Underground was enhancing the customer offering. In addition, pluralism was employed by illustrating how the Night Tube meets the needs of several London Underground stakeholders.

As part of the modernization strategy, **we started to think about how we could enhance the experience even further for customers, but also local businesses, local communities and stakeholders.** That created the focus around 24 hour Tube running over the weekend, which is now in operation and you don't read too many negative stories about it. (Colin, former senior London Underground manager)

The Night Tube is brilliant. Conceptually, if you could run it 7 days a week every day it would be fabulous, but the proposition once the system was modernized you could have two nights a

week free of engineering and run trains is pretty good actually. There's no downside to it I don't think. (George, former London Underground senior manager)

The Night Tube proposals were announced by Boris Johnson on November 25th 2013, alongside the ticket office closures. The Night Tube was a key feature of the restructuring discourse discussed in the first dispute. The Tube was personified in press releases to emphasize its importance and justify the need to 'take the Tube to the next level':

The Tube has been **the beating heart of London, its tunnels and tracks providing the arteries** that have transported millions of people and helped to drive the development and economic growth of our great city. 'Now it is time to take the Tube to the next level so for the first time in London's history, we will provide a regular 24-hour 'Night Tube' service at weekends. (London Underground Press Release)

In addition, economic discourse was re-worked to emphasize how the Night Tube would enhance the economy and London's reputation, and increase jobs.

This will not just boost jobs and our vibrant night-time economy, it will further cement London's reputation as the best big city on the planet in which to live, work, visit and invest. (London Underground press release)

London Underground had initially proposed for Night Tube shifts to become part of driver, station staff and engineer rosters, triggering a dispute with RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and UNITE. Management affirmed that this dispute was different to the station staff dispute and admitted that union resistance was stronger because ASLEF were also involved. George, a former London Underground senior manager argued that for drivers it was all about pay.

There was stronger resistance during the Night Tube dispute, it was different because it involved ASLEF and the RMT. They were closer together on it and what they were really arguing if you cut away the semantics of their position, was for the maximum amount of money basically. They believed, with some justification, that if they held out long enough management would offer them more than they were prepared to offer otherwise. (George, former London Underground senior manager)

Union position

RMT and ASLEF argued that the Night Tube proposals were announced strategically to sugar-coat the ticket office closures.

We first heard about the Night Tube in November 2013, the same time as the ticket office closures. The reason was that the Night Tube was to act as political cover for the ticket office closures. Boris Johnson had signed a promise, I will not close any ticket offices, so the headline in the Evening Standard that day was ‘Night Tube service to run’, and quite deliberately done as a piece of new spin. At the time they had no details planned about the Night Tube whatsoever, no idea of how it’s going to operate. (Gary, ASLEF official)

ASLEF, RMT and TSSA were not against the principle of the Night Tube, providing it was implemented in the correct manner.

ASLEF are not opposed to extra services, but there are big questions that will need to be answered. (ASLEF press release)

We’ve never been against the Night Tube. We can’t really put any kind of argument against it, but if you’re going to do it, do it properly. (Edward, TSSA station representative)

There were mixed feelings among members. Some were in favour:

If you think of the classic film ‘The field of dreams’, if you build it, they will come. If you build the Night Tube, they will come, and it will get bigger. So we might have 6 Night Tube drivers, but we’ll eventually get 16 drivers. We’ll probably end up with 24 and a full service. That will mean a lot more people being employed doing the same job. (Bob, train driver)

Others were not necessarily against, albeit had concerns:

Usually, trains are out for a maximum 7 hours before they go in and need maintenance. Now with the weekend working, there are some trains that come out 4pm Friday and they won’t go back until 6am the next day. There’s a danger that we will get a lot of defective trains. (Gregg, ASLEF drivers’ representative)

Many argued that London Underground would lose revenue and applied a ‘vanity project’ metaphor to characterize the Mayor’s plans:

Most people have got an Oyster card, so if you buy a day ticket on Friday morning, it’s valid until 4 o clock the following morning. So there’s no actual revenue coming in. They don’t even charge extra. (Hugh, RMT engineering representative)

It’s not cost effective, you’re not going to get extra revenue out of it because basically if you look at monthly passes, they will still be able to use it. The infrastructure is costing us a lot because maintenance now has to hire extra people, we have to hire extra cleaning staff, extra drivers. A lot of people actually considered it to be **a vanity project** because we thought to ourselves, his [Boris Johnson’s] bicycle scheme didn’t really work, his airport scheme didn’t

happen, so he was thinking ‘what mark have I left when I leave’? (Gregg, ASLEF drivers’ representative)

Representative and union discourse mainly evoked a radical moral discourse and work-life balance discourse to contend that a work-life balance was an employee right and that incorporating Night Tube shifts into existing rosters would detriment the well-being of all employees. Within stations and trains employees work four different shift patterns, earlies, middles, lates and nights.

Station staff follow a roster. You might be working earlies one week, middles the next week, then earlies again, then lates, then a week of nights. So it’s all on a roster. If you create more night shifts, under normal circumstances, even if you increase the number of full time workers, that would mean everyone doing nights more often, which is anti-social. (Michelle, station staff representative)

Within the driver grade, rosters are organized differently. Some drivers follow a roster, others are part of an informal custom and practice arrangement known as the ‘mafia’.

We have a system which the company allows called the ‘mafia’. In the guidelines it’s called a syndicate. Rather than have every driver wanting to change their duties with someone, the ‘mafia’ man takes a request from everyone of what they would prefer to do, earlies, lates, whatever and then he will just swap them around to suit. You can also request particular rest days. All depots I know have one. But some operate by different rules. (Gregg, ASLEF drivers’ representative)

The ‘mafia’ man could be one or two drivers who either organize the shifts in their spare time, or are released from their duty to organize the shifts.

One driver explains how the ‘mafia’ custom and practice has changed historically.

You used to pay for it. When I first came on this job, I remember the ‘mafia’ man asking me ‘how much are you going to give me at Xmas then?’ I said, ‘well what’s the average, £5, £10, £100?’ ‘Oh no, it’s what you feel’ he said. So I gave him £20, and I got £20 worth and it wasn’t much believe me. Some people would give a bottle of scotch, or £100 to get what they wanted. But it doesn’t work like that now, no money, no gifts, nothing. He just says, I’ll do the best that I can. (Bob, ASLEF train driver)

Bob, a train driver explained that the informal custom and practice is in the interest of managers and employees:

Without the ‘mafia’ it would be, you’ve got lates, I’ve got earlies, we want to swap, so we get the form, we write out all the bits and pieces, sign it off, take it down stairs to the admin staff and then they adjust that. But then the driver has to work out who he/she needs to swap with every shift and admin have to continuously adjust things on top of everything else. So it works out better for everyone.

Moreover, one representative explained that in his depot, where manager-employee reciprocal relations are weak, the ‘mafia’ man sometimes asks drivers to change their shift at short-notice (e.g., because of staff-shortages), in return for a future favour. Notwithstanding, there are waiting lists for different types of shifts. Additionally, in some contexts, one person organizes shifts for more than one depot, drivers are then less likely to get the shifts they want. Another drawback is that ‘mafia’ members receive much less notice of the shifts they will be working. Drivers do not usually know the exact times of their shifts and which days are their rest days until the preceding week. On the foot of the Night Tube proposals, even members who were part of a ‘mafia’ feared that they would be forced to work night shifts. Members also envisaged that to facilitate the Night Tube, late shifts would extend later, or early shifts would begin earlier, meaning that people who usually worked lates, or earlies could be severely affected.

Driver concerns varied. Some depots were completely opposed:

Other depots in our line do night shifts, but our depot doesn’t and nobody wanted to either, so for me mobilization was straight forward. (Libby, drivers’ representative)

In some depots, particularly where employees work night shifts anyway, for example to spray de-icing fluid on the tracks in bad weather, there were some who were happy to work on the Night Tube, but only for appropriate compensation. They wanted fair compensation to run a passenger service during the night, because of differences in terms of safety and job demands. Initially, London Underground offered drivers a £200 bonus per night shift, albeit only for a limited time. The short-term element did not satisfy employee demands as Malcom, an ASLEF drivers’ representative elucidates:

The majority of drivers didn’t want to do it, even those who worked nights, because the extra payment that we were going to get, was only going to last a year. After that it would just become part of their contract, so eventually you would be doing it for nothing extra.

Malcom, who was close to retirement, explained how protecting future drivers is also important:

When I'm gone, other drivers after me would have it in their contract to do night shifts.

Engineers were also opposed to the Night Tube.

They wanted to impose a roster on our night staff. Move them from Monday to Friday to Sunday to Thursday, without any consultation or anything. The reality is, people build their life around the shift that they work. (Rob, RMT engineering representative)

Resistance outcomes

Robust strike action over the Night Tube in July and August 2015 from all four unions closed down the network. Collective action was strategically combined with action over the stations dispute discussed above to encourage station staff resistance over the job cuts and new staffing framework. Notwithstanding, even though some concessions regarding the station staff dispute were won, the concessions mainly related to the Night Tube dispute. Unbalanced power relations between grades were significant here: the Night Tube was a prime concern to ASLEF and RMT drivers, who have greater disruptive power. Additionally, political social pressures to implement the Night Tube had prominent effects. Boris Johnson had announced in September 2014 that the Night Tube would commence in September 2015, yet strike action and negotiations with unions delayed this by almost a year. George, a former London Underground senior manager explained why giving a date was a bad idea:

The Night Tube was delayed because, the trade unions I'm pretty sure were not interested in presenting Boris with the satisfaction of seeing it done in his time in office. From the management point of view, it was a shame it wasn't done earlier because it could have been, but it wasn't catastrophic. But, you never want to impose a timescale, in fact I think that's one of the things we did wrong with the Night Tube, we allowed the Mayor to forecast when it might start, so immediately the trade unions set out to prove him wrong.

The dispute was resolved because London Underground announced they would employ part-time workers to work Night Tube shifts on trains and stations. All employees on Night Tube lines also received a bonus of £500. Unions and London Underground agreed an 'oil and water' agreement, meaning that new part-time Night Tube workers can only work part-time Night Tube shifts. Management wanted this, however, unions were also keen to implement the agreement because of the no-overtime policy:

We were concerned about Night Tube drivers being offered to work extra shifts as overtime to earn a bit of extra money. If unions allowed rest day working and overtime, it costs jobs. We

could reduce the staffing numbers by about half a dozen to a dozen, at one depot alone. Our position is that they should employ extra people instead. (David, ASLEF executive member)

Albeit, since this agreement has been implemented, there have been some issues.

It didn't happen until last weekend, but a manager used a Night Tube driver to cover a full-time driver who called in sick. (Gregg, ASLEF drivers' representative)

James, a train manager, gave a managerial perspective on this:

Rule book 5 section 4, as a train manager I have the power to suspend a duty and or trains and either cancel or reform it to an emergency duty as I deem fit according to the situation. A manager could use this to put a Night Tube driver on an ordinary train. Now in the spirit of it, I would understand because of the relationship I have with my reps and would not put the driver in an uncomfortable position. But, if I really had an emergency situation, like a driver came up to me the other day, showed me a text from his wife, threatening to take the kids and run away, he had to go immediately. Luckily I had a full-time driver to cover his duty, but what if I didn't?

In addition, some union members had concerns about employing part-time drivers externally. They feared that this threatened the union agreement to recruit drivers internally. Others were influenced by dominant assumptions amongst drivers about part-time workers:

A lot of reps in both unions are very suspicious of part time workers. This goes back years, they think they'll be a strike breaking workforce. The argument they put forward is, I don't subscribe to it, they think it's predominantly women who come to work, they work for pit money and therefore they won't support the unions and they will come into work on strike days. (George, RMT drivers' representative)

Since the Night Tube commenced on August 19th 2016, several issues have emerged on trains worth noting. In 2016, New Year's Eve fell on a Saturday night, a shift Night Tube drivers are contracted to work. The firmly-established practice was that London Underground ran an all-night service on New Year's Eve, full-time drivers volunteered to work and received a bonus of between £300 and £400. The arrangements for 2016 were a point of contention between ASLEF and RMT, because the Night Tube was now running. ASLEF felt that all Night Tube drivers should be booked off and if they wanted to work they could be entered on the volunteering list like full-time drivers. RMT on the other hand argued that because Night Tube drivers only work part-time hours and are contracted to work Saturday nights, they should not be booked off. London Underground agreed with RMT, yet stated that Night Tube drivers would not be paid the additional enhancements New Year's Eve drivers usually receive. More

trains run on New Year's Eve compared to a normal Night-Tube service, thus, if London Underground's solution was implemented, Night Tube drivers would have received the flat rate, while working alongside full-time drivers receiving a bonus. RMT and ASLEF argued against this and threatened strike action. In the end unions secured the concession that all drivers working New Year's Eve would receive the enhancements.

Another dispute occurred between unions and London Underground over the career progression of Night Tube drivers. Unions argued that Night Tube drivers should be eligible to apply for full-time driver positions before 18 months of working at London Underground, like staff in other grades. Strike action was organized albeit deferred because London Underground agreed to change the career progression arrangements. Safety concerns have also been raised by unions after a Night Tube driver was recently assaulted by a group of 'graffiti artists' at 4:30am in Stanmore depot.

Since the Night Tube commenced, retaining part-time Night Tube drivers has proved challenging. Some drivers did not anticipate working Friday and Saturday nights would be as tiring. Others disliked being isolated in a Tube cab for hours. Furthermore, some station staff decided to apply for a Night Tube job, but preferred the passenger interaction on stations and thus returned to their previous role. London Underground are forced to continue recruiting for Night Tube drivers, but this is a costly process, particularly when funds are low.

During the Night Tube dispute, unions also won the concession to trial a 4-day week for drivers. This would be voluntary and the idea appeals to some drivers, for example if they live far away as Stephen, a driver, explains:

I definitely want to work a 4-day week because I live 1.5 hours away. I would prefer to work longer shifts to get an extra day off. It would be voluntary, many drivers in my depot do not want it, it depends on individual circumstances.

Those who were against working a 4-day week did not want longer shifts isolated in their cab. A 4-day week was trialled on the Jubilee line. The trial involved changing driver working parameters, the maximum drivers could drive without a break increased from 4.15 hours to 4.45 hours. RMT were strongly against changing working parameters because of driver exhaustion and because it is a well-established framework agreement. Nonetheless, members voted to trial the arrangements. In September 2017, ASLEF announced strike action because of a lack of progress with the 4-day week. This was deferred after progress in talks. Discussions are still underway.

On stations, the Night Tube was deemed running ok, but understaffed.

I think the Night Tube has been brought in without any detriment. Except the fact, as usual, like everything in London Underground, it is understaffed. You've got a station I can think of, Chancery Lane, where there's one supervisor and one Customer Service Assistant on all night. It sounds like a sleepy station, but go there on Friday and Saturday nights, or ask the police for a map of violent incidents in that area on Friday and Saturday nights. There's loads of night clubs there, including dodgy ones. Staff basically spend all night, restarting stopped escalators, calling one of the cleaners to mop up vomit and trying to wake someone up who's lying in a pool of their own vomit. (Michelle, station representative)

RMT secured the concession that engineers would not be forced to change their rosters, instead, engineers on Night Tube lines were re-deployed to lines where the Night Tube is not running. They also received a one-off payment of £500. Sam an RMT engineering representative explained how engineering representatives sacrificed a higher bonus, because they felt a moral duty to support the driving grade:

At one point we got offered more than the train drivers, but we took the view that you negotiate for everyone so we took a step back and didn't really negotiate anything until the train drivers were sorted. Train drivers in particular were in difficulties because the reality was they didn't really want to drive nights and London Underground never really had enough money to invest to compensate them. So we took a step back and then in the end London Underground said we'll just leave you alone, so that's when we settled for the £500.

Rob another engineering representative warns:

It's not a long term solution, because more lines will go Night Tube. So ultimately when all the lines are Night Tube there will be nowhere to redeploy the resources. So at that point we will be back in dispute I assume.

This chapter has addressed the second research question by examining how union resistance is enabled and constrained during two workplace disputes over organisational restructuring at London Underground. London Underground re-worked 'customer service' and 'modernization' discourses during both disputes to legitimate station staff restructuring and the introduction of a Night Tube. During the first dispute, the dominance of the restructuring discourse, together with divides between grades, severely curtailed station staff resistance. Yet, a mobilization shift occurred in late 2016 after station staff experienced the full effects of the proposals. During the Night Tube dispute worker resistance was stronger because the proposals affected London Underground's most powerful grade, drivers, and both unions, RMT and

ASLEF worked closely together to resist. Notwithstanding, antagonism has emerged around the employment of part-time Night Tube drivers since the dispute was settled. The following chapter turns to two recent workplace disputes over organisational restructuring and pay at Dublin Bus.

CHAPTER 6: STRUGGLES OVER ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING AND PAY AT DUBLIN BUS

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to addressing the second research question, focusing on how union resistance is enabled and constrained at Dublin Bus during two workplace disputes. The first dispute is over the competitive tendering of Dublin Bus services between November 2013 and May 2015. The second dispute between June 2016 and October 2016 is over a pay claim for Dublin Bus employees.

Dublin Bus competitive tendering dispute

Table 6.1 maps out the strikes announced and organized by both unions during the tendering dispute between November 2013 and June 2015.

Table 6.1: Strike dates in the competitive tendering dispute		
Strike dates	Union involved	Occurred/Deferred
1/05/15-02/05/15	SIPTU NBRU	Occurred
15/05/15-16/05/15	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
29/05/15-31/05/15	NBRU	Deferred

Table 6.2 compares union activity during the dispute.

Table 6.2: Comparing union activity during the competitive tendering dispute			
Union	Number of strikes involved in	Number of strike announcements made	Total
SIPTU	1	2	3
NBRU	1	3	4

Resistance background

Like the London Underground station staff dispute, the Irish tendering dispute has important historical facets. In August 2000 the new institutional framework for public transport,

published by the Irish Department of Public Enterprise, featured proposals to franchise Dublin Bus services. SIPTU and NBRU engaged in a struggle against government to resist market mechanisms. Tripartite social partnership between employers, unions and government had been present in the Republic of Ireland since 1987, yet collapsed in 2009. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Dublin Bus workers possess high levels of industrial power because of high union membership levels and the potentially disruptive effects of their resistance. Accordingly, national social partnership agreements fixing wage increases were not that beneficial for Dublin Bus employees. Workers had the potential muscle to win higher pay rates through striking and this occurred in 2000, as previously noted in Chapter 4. However, the ethical values underpinning social partnership, such as that government had a duty to formally discuss the proposals with all social partners, shaped the outcome of the struggle and enabled unions to delay the tendering. A noteworthy contextual factor here is that SIPTU is the largest union in the Republic of Ireland and was therefore a prominent social partner at the time, as previously mentioned.

Because of social partnership, a widespread consensus existed that government had a responsibility to discuss the proposals in a formal partnership transport forum. (George, SIPTU representative)

The struggle re-surfaced in 2002, when former Minister of Transport, Séamus Brennan, announced proposals to franchise 25% of bus routes with annual progress thereafter. Unions re-engaged in a struggle to oppose the franchising proposals, yet plans were halted after government intervention and a cabinet reshuffle.

The struggle was less salient between 2003 and 2007. The tendering plans stalled as the Republic of Ireland and Dublin Bus experienced a period of significant growth. However, the financial crisis in 2008 and subsequent recession in 2009 hit the company hard, and passenger numbers significantly dropped. It was explained in Chapter 4 that employment relations dynamics at Dublin Bus shifted in 2009 due to the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) in line with the 2009 Public Transport Regulation Act (PTA, 2009). In November 2013 the NTA proposed for twenty three Dublin Bus routes (10%) to be ‘competitively tendered’. Dublin Bus was permitted to bid against private operators for the routes.

Tendering Dublin Bus services

Free-market discourse and new public management (NPM) discourse, two unitarist sub-plots, were the ‘nodal’, or main discourses, around which the competitive tendering strategy pivoted. The restructuring discourse used to articulate the strategy did not recontextualize customer service discourse to the same extent as at London Underground. Instead, in line with unitarist, free-market and NPM assumptions, the restructuring narrative highlighted the necessity of marketizing public bus services, to benchmark services, and to provide the best value for money to the tax payer. Similarly to London Underground, the NTA used words, such as ‘obliged’, to create the impression that it had no choice other than opening up the bus market. In-line with NPM assumptions, prioritizing the concerns of service users was also highlighted, yet interestingly, they were referred to as ‘the travelling public’ not ‘customers’, as is the case in London Underground press releases.

We are **obliged to ensure that the taxpayer is getting the best possible value** for this considerable spend **and the travelling public deserves the highest possible standards in its bus services.** By allowing 10% of these routes to be publicly tendered, we will have a good comparator to assess the value that the taxpayer is obtaining from the overall expenditure on subsidised bus services. (NTA press release)

Employees

Dublin Bus drivers adopted a radical stance on public service marketization and argued that bus services should not be tendered. The NTA’s announcement resulted in grave concerns regarding the possible transfer of employees to a private operator, if Dublin Bus lost its existing routes. Driver perceptions were influenced by moral discourse and their moral economy which constitutes a web of values relating to rights, commitments and obligations. The proposals affected the seven garages to different extents. For example, in the largest garage visited, losing 10% of bus routes would affect around 150 drivers, while in another garage, 4 drivers were at risk. Drivers in garages that were less affected by the proposals felt it was their duty to support less affected garages. Within garages, drivers who did not work on the routes at risk felt an obligation to shield employees who did. At one level, the loyalty towards colleagues created dense solidarity bonds both within and between garages. Solidarity networks emanated from pre-existing relationships with colleagues, including ‘occupational relationships’, ‘friendships’, and even ‘family relations’. Drivers care about one another and sought to prevent the tendering from damaging relationships with colleagues.

At another level, resisting during disputes is shaped by different components of drivers' personal identities. Drivers reflect on memories of successful disputes, meanings they attach to picket lines/strike breakers, and individual experiences of supporting or being supported by colleagues in the workplace. Workers help each other day-to-day in different ways (e.g., swapping shifts), creating 'give and take' relations and establishing reciprocal ties. Similarly to London Underground, personal identity is intermeshed with social identity, the idea that drivers do not want to be perceived by colleagues as violating their moral duty to support others. This could curtail their well-being by thwarting respect from colleagues.

A fundamental factor was that drivers did not want their identities to shift from 'public service workers' to 'private sector workers'. Driver concerns were shaped by the zones of contention between public sector and private sector discourse. Public and private sectors were perceived as embedding contradicting normative understandings of what employees are and what employment should offer, creating different effects on employee well-being. Drivers argued that private sector companies assume workers are 'profit makers' not 'service providers'. A widespread consensus existed regarding the poor working conditions typifying private bus companies that deter employee well-being. This consensus did not only relate to low pay, but other working conditions, such as pensions, holidays, trust relations and union representation. The shared assumption was that Dublin Bus, though not perfect, offered significantly 'thicker' employment relationships than private operators.

Even though Dublin Bus is not perfect, we need unions. But it offers good working conditions, private companies would not. (Duncan, driver)

Unions and members also had moral concerns about the thickness of employment relationships throughout the bus industry, that is, the extent to which employment relationships meet multiple human needs. They argued that competitive tendering and goals to increase profit margins embedded within dominant market ideology would stimulate a 'race to the bottom' in terms of pay, terms and conditions for all drivers in the entire bus industry, not only for Dublin Bus workers.

Representatives used a radical mobilizing discourse with a pronounced moral flavour to counter dominant market ideology and build feelings of mutual solidarity. The 'union clinics' on Thursdays permitted discussions with members, yet discourse was also projected by representatives during their shifts on other days and online. Some employees had previously

worked at private bus companies and thus reflected on their experiences and shared this with colleagues.

Kyle, a garage manager, stated:

Drivers who have worked in other companies appreciate the conditions we have here. Some have even left, thinking the grass may be greener on the other side and then realised it's definitely not.

Other employees knew family and friends who were private sector bus drivers and reflected on their stories.

The NTA argued that, if Dublin Bus did lose the routes, employees would be legally covered by Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) regulations. However, reflections on the effects of TUPE in other work contexts fashioned negative moral evaluations and convinced drivers that TUPE would not provide sufficient protection. The feelings of some workers were mediated by representative discourse, thus educating members about the dangers of TUPE.

At another level, there were also intense concerns that the proposals would affect more, if not all, Dublin Bus employees in the future. Unions argued that if the routes were lost, Dublin Bus could suffer legacy costs of up to €43m. Members feared that their terms and conditions at Dublin Bus (not only pay) may be affected, thus hampering well-being. Moreover, members shared concerns that the tendering proposals could escalate into further privatization in the future. Members reflected on the privatization of other Irish companies (e.g., Greyhound recycling) and the dominance of 'market' ideology.

Thus, while workers who were not at risk of being transferred to private companies supported their colleagues, they also resisted the proposals to protect their own future well-being. Drivers evaluated the importance of this argument by considering their own individual circumstances. For drivers close to retirement, this would not be as prominent, albeit for drivers at the beginning or middle of their working life, this facet was prime. Additionally, similar to representatives at London Underground, some drivers with long service records felt obliged to protect future generations of drivers.

I don't have that long left here really, but you've got to think about drivers that get employed after you. I don't want everybody having to go and work for private bus companies. (Paul, NBRU representative)

Workers also reflected on their identities as ‘parents’, ‘carers’, ‘husbands’, ‘wives’ and how forced transfer to private companies would contradict their moral duties and obligations tied to those identities.

If you get transferred to a private company, god knows what type of shifts you would be working. (Callum, SIPTU driver)

Passengers

As at London Underground, the radical moral discourse shaping driver attitudes also produced predisposition towards protecting the travelling public and their well-being. As discussed, I observed the extent of customer interaction Dublin Bus drivers engage with in the Republic of Ireland’s busy capital city. Drivers working on one particular route often develop strong bonds with regular customers. Drivers who have no set route may be less likely to develop such bonds, but this is context dependent. Furthermore, driver-customer relations are not always positive. Drivers discussed routes that are more prone to difficult passengers, with one driver referring to another driver who was recently assaulted by a passenger.

Employees were overwhelmingly concerned about the quality of service delivered to passengers if the routes were transferred from the hands of the public to the private sector. Dovetailing a previous point, these feelings were also shaped by discursive ideas related to ‘public sector’ and ‘private sector’ discourse. Drivers shared an assumption that public and private sector companies embed contradicting normative understandings of service user identities and what services should offer them. Drivers perceived that profit-seeking private bus companies would transform ‘passenger’ identities into ‘customers’. Drivers shared moral concerns that if routes were transferred to a private operator, unprofitable routes would be removed, even though some passengers rely on them (particularly the elderly). Drivers also envisaged routes being restructured to stop at busier main roads, rather than at ring roads, enhancing cost-efficiency, yet increasing danger for the elderly and children. Another perception was that bus fleet quality is lower in private companies, posing risks for passengers and drivers. The nature of the job is significant here, time spent on the road foments high levels of pride amongst drivers towards their bus (or ‘car’ in driver terms).

Passenger economic preferences were also a concern. Unions countered the tendering discourse, couched around the market principle of value for money, by arguing that tax payers would pay more, rather than less, if routes were tendered. UK bus privatization was often mentioned:

We don't want to be like the UK, the privatization of buses over there has been a disaster, tax payers are paying more and more. (Sean, SIPTU representative)

Of course, this would also affect the drivers themselves as tax payers. Moreover, evoking knowledge of arrangements in other profit-seeking private companies, union members feared that a private operator may not offer free-travel schemes for senior citizens. Individual drivers related to the above moral arguments in varied ways. Moral evaluations by some drivers were shaped by their own experiences using privatized services, including bus services. Some reflected on relationships they had established with passengers and felt moral obligations towards them and/or, felt a duty to protect friends and family who use the service.

Overall, there was a wide-ranging concern that:

Public transport should be public transport. Greater subsidies, quality and safe services for passengers. (Mark, NBRU representative)

Management position

Management explained the complexity of their position regarding the tendering. Karl, a senior Dublin Bus manager, uses two idioms to capture management experiences of the dispute.

We were cut between a rock and a hard place. No, we didn't want to lose the routes and that's why we're working hard to put forward our best bid to compete against the private operators. But at the end of the day, the government is our shareholder, so **you don't bite the hand that feeds you.** We have to work with them too, we have the Department of Transport, we have the government and we have the National Transport Authority and we're in close contact with them all the time. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

We're cooperating with them, our whole modus operandi is the NTA ultimately control all our funding, they decide how much money they're going to give us at the end of the year, in terms of meeting the difference between cost and revenue. (Jack, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Management stated that the organisation is operating an efficient service, yet recognized the dominance of the private sector and the opposition to public services in society.

We would see ourselves as being good performers. We have had a number of reports in recent years, again they would have been from outside, it's not just us saying how good we are. If you look at Europe and you look at bus operation and dependence on government, in relation to the subvention they operate at, we would be one of the least, and still are one of the least subvented transport operators in the EU. So we always benchmark ourselves, but there will always be

someone on the outside saying no, we don't know that, that's what you're telling us, and that's what the independent examination tells us. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Management recognized that the fact private operators pay employees less, places Dublin Bus at risk of losing its routes, however, they also argued that private operators would need to pay a sensible hourly rate.

A private operator will probably undercut our bid because they wouldn't have to pay the same rates of pay as us. But in saying that, you're not going to pay a driver 10 euros an hour driving around the city, when they can come over to Dublin Bus and get 15, they won't keep their staff. They would have to be fairly competitive with regards to wages. So we could be lucky. (Mike, senior Dublin Bus manager)

You can't tell a potential bidder, you can't offer a lower rate of pay than Dublin Bus are. The only rate we have fixed in this country is the minimum wage. But my own gut feeling is that any sensible operator won't be coming in and pitching their rates of pay too low because they certainly won't be able to retain it. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Mike, a Dublin Bus senior manager, used an idiom to argue that a UK based company tendering for the routes would be dealing with a different union culture to the UK because Irish unions are comparatively more powerful:

They have 4 bids including ours. They had 5 bids I believe, one of them pulled out. There's probably a couple of English companies that are interested, god help them dealing with the trade unions over here, **that's a different kettle of fish** to what they are dealing with across the water.

Yet Karl, a senior Dublin Bus manager, also explained that Dublin Bus had a degree of influence on the routes to be tendered and used idioms to explain that the Dublin Bus tendering proposals were not as heavily marketized as UK bus privatization:

If you look at the selection of routes, they're outer orbital routes **so there's no head to head direct competition**, it's not the same as what would have happened in the UK. The UK would have **been head to head competition or corridor**, which basically achieved very little, it meant, **dog eat dog out there** and in the end you had a dominant operator...so that would have been our influence.

Management also explained its difficult position during the negotiations because their guarantees were contingent on NTA assurances.

The unions came to us saying well you're our direct employer, what are you going to do to protect our terms and conditions? Some issues I could deal with, but others were beyond my remit and depended on the NTA and the Department of Transport. The big question being asked was about transfer and undertakings. Our Dublin Bus employees didn't want to be transferred over to another operator. But I could not give people guarantees, other than we would engage and we would continue to engage and we would always try to find a way out of it that would be amenable to all. It was a shady area because if we did lose the routes and the NTA and the Department of Transport said we are not going to pay you, the employees would have to transfer over. So it went through that stage of discussion, there were no solid responses being given. Unions decided to remove themselves from those discussions and ballot for industrial action. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Resistance outcomes

The tendering proposals fuelled strong resistance. Workers and unions engaged in a struggle to protect a public bus service, employees and passengers. SIPTU and NBRU lobbied and campaigned to oppose the tendering, but members could not strike over the proposed tendering. This is because the proposals were attributed to the NTA and political strikes are illegal. However, alongside the lobbying and campaigning, workers organized industrial action for 48 hours in May 2015 over the consequences for employees and passengers, if Dublin Bus routes were transferred to a private operator. Dates for further industrial action were announced, but suspended following progress in negotiations. Unions secured several substantive concessions. As the Labour Relations Commission, 'Terms of Settlement' document stipulates, the Minister of Transport, Sport and Tourism, the NTA and Dublin Bus committed to assurances that:

No employee will have to transfer on a compulsory basis to another operator...

...any legacy cost, if any, which may arise from the tendering of bus services will not be borne by the employees [of Dublin Bus]....

These assurances were formally registered in a legally binding Registered Employment Agreement (REA) between Dublin Bus and unions. The establishment of an REA was permitted by the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015), as discussed in Chapter 4. The agreement evidently favoured employees, tipping the balance of power more towards workers. Unions also secured the concession that, if employees wish to transfer to a private operator, their terms and conditions will be protected. This is important because some employees may not be opposed to the transfer, despite widespread negativity towards private companies:

There may be a small minority who want to transfer. The shifts may suit them better, or they may seek part-time work, employee situations can change. (David, SIPTU representative)

Furthermore, unions secured a commitment from the Minister of Transport, Sport and Tourism and the NTA that they do not seek to move towards the full privatization of bus services. Unions suspended further industrial action after securing the above concessions relating to employee and passenger well-being. Finally, unions secured a concession that, if Dublin Bus lose the routes, 'growth' within the company would be facilitated. 'Growth' is an issue representatives and employees feel strongly about, demonstrating they care about the success of the company.

Yet, strike action has only been deferred, pending that the NTA, the Minister and the company meet their moral duties and responsibilities. In August 2017, the successful tendering firm, Go Ahead (UK based) was announced and is due to commence services in late 2018, provided the company has established a depot. An executive from NBRU claimed that the union seeks to represent Go Ahead drivers, albeit SIPTU are also keen to do this.

Unions also secured assurances from Dublin Bus management that they would work with them to seek the establishment of a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO), as discussed in Chapter 4. By stipulating legally enforceable working conditions and pay at industry level, SEOs would nurture the well-being of drivers throughout the sector. Discussions have already taken place regarding this aim.

There's no sectoral agreement that legislates for bus driver operation, but it is something we are discussing with unions. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

However, there are several obstacles when establishing a SEO. Keith, a senior Labour Court spokesperson explains some of the hurdles:

The requirements for a Sectoral Employment Order are difficult to achieve. The unions have to establish that they are substantially representative of all of the workers in the sector and the employers the same. They may have no difficulty establishing that they are substantially representative employers and unions of a particular company, but of all the companies, that's challenging.

Another restriction envisaged by Keith, is resistance from private sector bus operators who are permitted a voice during the establishment of a SEO.

It's argued, whether it's true or not, that one of the competitive factors that some of these private bus companies enjoy, or try to employ, is the rate they pay and the terms of conditions they

offer to the workforce. Therefore, anything that will seek to level that playing pitch and remove that leg of competition, would be resisted.

A further important point is that SEOs are established by the Minister, not the Labour Court itself, as Keith explains:

We don't make Sectoral Employment Orders in the court, the Minister does. All we can do is make recommendations to the Minister. The Minister is empowered by the constitution to get the ball running and make Sectoral Employment Orders. The court is not, so that's the constitutional patch.

The following section turns to the second dispute in the Republic of Ireland over a pay claim for all Dublin Bus employees between June and October 2016.

Dublin Bus pay dispute

Table 6.3 lists the strikes announced and organized by both unions during the pay dispute.

Table 6.3: Strike dates in the Dublin Bus pay dispute		
Strike dates	Union involved	Occurred/Deferred
08/09/2016-09/09/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Occurred
15/09/2016-16/09/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Occurred
23-09/2016-24/09/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Occurred
27/09/2016-28/09/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
05/10/09/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
07/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
10/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
12/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
14/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
18/10/2016-19/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
24/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
26/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred
29/10/2016	SIPTU NBRU	Deferred

Table 6.4 compares union activity during the dispute.

Table 6.4: Comparing union activity during the Dublin Bus pay dispute			
Union	Number of strikes	Number of strike announcements made	Total
SIPTU	3	10	13
NBRU	3	10	13

Union position

Unions and members pushed for a pay increase in 2016 on the grounds that Dublin Bus employees had not been awarded a pay increase since the 2008 financial crisis. As discussed in the previous dispute, Dublin Bus suffered during the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent 2009 recession. Jack, a senior manager, stated that:

Figures would show that we lost somewhere around 22%-23% of our passenger base which is hugely significant.

Dublin Bus employees were due a pay rise at the time, but understood that the company could not afford it. There was a feeling amongst workers that the financial problems Dublin Bus suffered were outside the company's control and accommodation was required from workers to safeguard the company's future.

Karl complimented unions for their behaviour at the time:

We did agree that we would review in 12 months, based on the company's finances at that point in time. 2010 came, and 2011, 2012, 2013 and things were just getting worse and worse instead of better. **In fairness, nobody never knocked the door down** and said we want a pay increase because we were engaged in all of this cost reduction. I don't think them or us were expecting the company to be hit for so long.

Since then employees have been involved in three restructuring plans which enabled the company to secure major cost savings. Jack explains:

We made a few fundamental changes to the way we operated our service. One of the biggest changes was that we introduced more cross city routes, we also cut our cake accordingly, so if we had a bus every 8 minutes, we looked at passenger numbers and felt that we could live with a bus every 10 minutes. By doing these things we actually took a significant amount of resource out of the equation. We decreased the number of drivers through voluntary redundancy.

More stable finances through restructuring, increases in passenger numbers and fares enabled Dublin Bus to return to profitability in late 2014. In terms of the latter, Jack explained:

The NTA decide our fares. They actually over a period of 4-5 years, allowed our cash fare to go up fairly significantly as a kind of acknowledgement that there was a need to not only look at the cost side of it, but to look at the revenue side too.

By 2016 the company was in a more comfortable position, and unions and employees argued that a pay increase was now due.

Under the social partnership model in 2007-2008, there had been two opposed pay increases which equalled to 6% in total, due under those agreements at that time. They were deferred because the company was in financial difficulties. So when we were looking for this increase over 3 years, we were also looking for some kind of back pay for the payment that was deferred. (Declan, SIPTU official)

We had to go in and get two cost reduction plans, over a short period of time, just to address the financial issues. At the time that we negotiated that cost reduction plan in 2009 our employees were due a pay increase under the national pay rule, and we had to forfeit that, the company couldn't afford to pay it. We had also taken a lot of costs out of the organization and that negatively impacted on employees. We had to reduce premium payments and other pay measures, just to get us back into a safe place where we could actually conduct our business and continue to roll (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Even though pay increases would meet economic preferences, the fact that workers were promised a pay increase, when the company was in a better financial position lent a moral cast to union arguments. Unions and members evoked a radical discourse with a clear moral tinge to highlight that their demands revolved around employee well-being.

Employees have to deal with the costs of living going up, but our wages stayed the same. It's not just about supporting ourselves, but also our families. We were demanding that the company kept to their promise, which was to give us a pay increase when the company got back on its feet. (Sandra, SIPTU executive member)

In the recession drivers knew if we wanted to keep the show on the road we had to tighten our belts, but we said we will do it for a fixed period of time, then when things get better we want it back. (Gavin, NBRU representative)

Like at London Underground, metaphors were applied by union representatives to convey the sense of 'battle' between unions and management:

We were saying **it is fight back time**, we wanted to be re-paid for our sacrifices. **We were fighting** for a fair wage. (Jordan, SIPTU representative)

In addition, a key factor was that drivers working for one of Dublin Bus' competitors, the Luas, had secured a pay increase in June 2016 of between 3.5-4% over a four year period. Luas is a tram/light rail service also operating in Dublin.

Luas is a different animal. When the company was established, the state did not want CIÉ to run the Luas, they didn't want competing unions in there, because they saw the competition

between NBRU and SIPTU, what that had done. SIPTU had a pre-employment agreement, a closed shop agreement, everybody had to join SIPTU. We had conscripts not volunteers from the start and that left a really bad taste in the workers' mouths. We also had a no strike clause for the first 5 years. Workers went through 14 days of industrial action, we ended up negotiating between a 3.75% and 4% pay increase over a three year period. (Arthur, former SIPTU official)

Dublin Bus drivers compared the nature of their job with that of Luas drivers. I observed how Luas drivers are similar to Tube drivers, they have no customer interaction and do not need to navigate around traffic. Dublin Bus drivers were determined to secure at least the same pay increase in line with Luas drivers.

Drivers here were looking over the fence and thinking if they can get that kind of increase, then we deserve it too. (Andy, NBRU executive member)

After the recession cost-cutting exercises were also implemented in the clerical grades. For example, flexi-time was cut and clerical workers were forced to work two extra hours a week for no additional pay. No pay increases since 2008, together with their experiences of cost-cutting, mobilized clerical workers to also take strike action. Furthermore, clerical staff in depots were even easier to mobilize because of social identity pressures, they did not want to be seen crossing a picket line.

Management position

Management understood why workers were seeking a pay rise and used particular idioms to convey this:

They went through all the cost reduction with us and they engaged with us through that process. I give due recognition to the trade unions, they were responsible, they said we don't like what you're doing, we'll object, which they did, they objected through industrial action, but we got on with it. Rightly so, **when they see a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel**, and **there's a few green shoots in the economy**, and people are talking up to the economy, they're thinking, well now is our opportunity to go back in and get a pay increase. (Karl, senior Dublin Bus manager)

From a management point of view, yeah absolutely they deserved it, there's no doubt about it. They were 7, 8 years without a pay rise, they well deserved it. They had gone through a couple of cost cutting plans, to be fair, they really supported the company. They knew it was hard times back then and the company was in a bad state. (Mike, senior Dublin Bus manager)

Before strike action in 2016, both parties visited the Labour Court where a 2.75% pay increase over three years was recommended. Unions rejected the recommendation and industrial action was organized. Karl, a Dublin Bus senior manager, felt that the offer recommended by the Labour Court constituted a decent pay rise:

I would have thought, a 2.75% pay increase was a good pay increase and I think if you ask the trade unions themselves, they would vigilantly say, we didn't expect to get that but we were always going to look for more and we were always going to pursue it.

Karl attributed the rejection of the Labour Court recommendation to the recent pay dispute at Luas:

Prior to that we had a dispute on the tram network, Luas, and that went on for a number of months, and it lead to a similar type of pay increase over there. If one operator gets it, then it's free for all. If the Labour Court pay award had been offered, possibly 6 months earlier, before the Luas award, I would say that it would have been accepted.

Another garage manager had similar views:

I tried to tell them they're looking out of the window at some big turnip and you're happy, but you've noticed that the garden next door has bigger turnips.

The penalties the company faces during industrial action were also mentioned by Karl:

The loss of revenue imposes a penalty. So if you're looking for a pay increase because the company is in profit, the logic of having industrial disputes, sort of undermines the potential to solve the pay increase issue. You're taking revenue out of your organization, from day one. It was hard to get that message out to employees, but when you look back on the history of it, over the 8 years, you can understand why people chose to take the action they chose and pursue what they believed to be a legitimate cause. If somebody asked me in 2009, do you honestly believe that employees will not get a pay increase until 2016, I would have said no, they will have a pay increase in 2010.

Resistance outcomes

Dublin Bus drivers were only on strike for three days, yet still won a 3.75% pay increase over three years, in line with the pay increase Luas drivers secured after a long-running dispute. Strike action was well supported by drivers and no clerical workers from the garages or head office went to work either, as Mike, a senior manager, explained:

There was only a few [employees] here in head office. There would be about 10 people I suppose.

Both unions worked together and took action.

Despite all the rivalry, we just went in there together and decided this is for the best. (Andy, NBRU executive member)

The Global Nurses United Conference was held in Dublin in September 2016. During the strike on September 23rd 2016, more than 70 nurses from 12 different countries joined drivers on the picket line of one garage.

Nicola, a garage manager explained the situation in the depots:

Managers have to be in the garage in case somebody comes into work. But if anybody does come in, we wouldn't let them go out on the road by themselves. We wouldn't give them a shift. It may have been different if it went on for weeks and weeks. We may have had to just shut shop, but then, drivers may have been more likely to come in because of the pay loss.

Negotiating managers who perceived that a pay increase was deserved were under pressure from the board of directors, illustrating how managers must balance competing tensions:

You're negotiating but you're being told by your board, you have 2.5%, don't go over that. You have to go down and negotiate on those grounds. At the end of the day, they're our bosses. But we weren't getting anywhere with it, so we had to put a system in place to show the board that over the next 3 years, we would be able to save. We said different things like a new attendance control programme, or a new scheduling process, lean management. We reckon that we'll save the 1% or whatever over what the Labour Court recommended. (Mike, Dublin Bus senior manager)

One of the strategies planned by management to save money involves re-structuring the schedules so that drivers are behind the wheel for an average of 7.38 hours a day each week. As discussed in Chapter 4, scheduling is very important for Dublin Bus drivers. Representatives explained that drivers have opposed this change due to not wanting to work additional minutes and change custom and practice, albeit, representatives are unable to intervene on their behalf. While representatives can negotiate how schedules are changed, they cannot oppose the number of hours they are paid to work, which is 7.38 hours.

Jack, a senior manager, warned that the company are going to face difficulties over the next three years because of the pay increase:

Wages account for about 50% of our costs because we have a lot of staff and we need a lot of staff. During the pay dispute we agreed over the next three years to increase wages for everybody which is close to double what has been the industry norm for the last couple of years. Our costs are going to go up by a fairly significant amount. Making a profit will be harder.

As part of the pay deal unions also secured a guarantee that management would co-operate with unions to compare the job demands of Luas drivers and Dublin Bus drivers:

Luas are better paid than Dublin Bus drivers now and they have better conditions. We have a commitment within that pay deal that the bus drivers, and the tram drivers will be evaluated to see just who is doing a harder days' work when it comes to public transport. Going forward, it's our intention to get us up there with them. (Andy, NBRU executive)

One of the topics of discussion at the moment is, we're trying to measure the role of a tram driver, and the responsibility of a tram driver, and the role of a bus driver, and the responsibility of a bus driver. (Karl, Dublin Bus senior manager)

Managers agreed with Dublin Bus drivers on the issue of differences in responsibility between bus and tram drivers:

We have a tram driver here in Dublin, who's getting paid significantly higher to a bus driver. The responsibility the bus driver takes on, far outweighs the responsibility of the tram driver. I'm not diminishing the tram driver's job, but if you just look at a bus driver, they have all these additions to deal with, there's a direct interaction between our bus drivers and every member of the public that gets on the bus, in relation to fare transactions, information. Then the minute you close the door of that bus, you've got all that interaction with all the other traffic, that doesn't happen on a Luas line. (Karl, Dublin Bus senior manager)

Notwithstanding, Nicola, a garage manager, also argued that the Luas pay agreement was misinterpreted:

The thing is with the Luas dispute, everybody in the company didn't get the pay rise that is being quoted. The drivers that had been there the most did, but not the ones at the bottom. Our drivers here didn't look into things like that, they just thought that everyone had it. Their pay rise was structured in Luas.

Conclusion

Focusing on the second research question, this chapter unpicks how union resistance is enabled and constrained at Dublin Bus during two workplace disputes, one over organisational restructuring and one over pay. During the first dispute, the competitive tendering discourse

disseminated by the NTA was resisted by a radical moral discourse projected by drivers and their unions. The discourse opposed the marketization of public services, embedding values of commitment towards a public bus service. The discourse pivoted around the rights and responsibilities of Dublin Bus employees, Dublin Bus management, the NTA and passengers. Strike action was robust and unions secured significant concessions. During the second dispute, employee resistance was underpinned by moral claims around a 'promised' pay rise. Dublin Bus management explained the complexity of their position during both disputes and how they sought to balance competing pressures. During the first dispute, management did not want to lose the routes, yet depend on the NTA for funding and therefore felt unable to challenge the decision. During the second dispute, management were pressurized by the board of directors to negotiate particular terms, however, one manager felt that the recommendation issued by the Labour Court constituted a fair pay rise. Nevertheless, managers also understood union members' point of view. The following chapter summarizes the findings discussed in the three empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) by drawing upon previous literature. The final chapter also pin-points the theoretical, methodological and policy implications of the thesis, annotates the limitations and outlines possible avenues of future research.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

As noted in Chapter 1, since union power reached its apogee in the 1960s and 1970s there has been a decline in strike activity in many advanced economies. Yet, this study illustrates that workplace conflict still exists (Currie et al., 2017; Teague et al., 2015; Van den Broek and Dundon, 2012). Conflict, or ‘structured antagonism’ (Edwards, 1986), is inherent within the employment relationship, but foments varying patterns of concrete workplace behaviours. Such patterns can involve observable conflict, but not always (Edwards, 2014, 2015a:b, 2017; Fleetwood, 2013). The main task of this study has been to critically analyse comparative patterns of employment relations and workplace struggle in two case study organizations, and identify the multi-dimensional contextual forces shaping patterns of concrete behaviour in the organizations studied.

The two case study organizations focused on in the thesis are London Underground in the United Kingdom and Dublin Bus in the Republic of Ireland. Comparing a case in the UK with the Republic of Ireland is fruitful for two main reasons. First, both countries have distinct historical backgrounds. As previously stressed, Thatcherism left an enduring negative stamp on employment relations by promoting an intense neo-liberal employment relations model (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018; Emmott, 2015; Smith, 2009; Smith and Morton, 2001, 2006). Between 1987 and 2009, the Republic of Ireland embarked on a different path by implementing tripartite social partnership between employers, unions and government (Geary, 2006; Johnston and Regan, 2016; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; O’Sullivan et al., 2017). Social partnership was less confrontational than Thatcherism, but the level of ‘real’ influence it provided to employees at workplace-level is unclear and has been challenged (Allen 2000, 2003; Begg, 2008; Kitchin et al., 2012). Second, a reoccurring argument in the literature is that since the breakdown of social partnership in 2009, the Republic of Ireland’s political economy has shifted towards neoliberalism (e.g. Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Regan, 2012a). By comparing cases in both countries, the study has evaluated the extent of this neo-liberal shift, specifically in the context of employment relations and workplace conflict.

Evidence has been gathered from archival documents, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Multi-level inference has been applied in the three-fold sense Gerring (2017) describes to better capture the trilateral relationship between employers, employees and

their representatives. First, the study has applied a cross-case analysis by comparing patterns of employment relations and struggle at London Underground with Dublin Bus in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. A cross-case analysis will also be employed in this chapter by linking the findings to extant employment relations case studies (e.g., Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Edwards and Whitston, 1989, 1993; Terry and Edwards, 1988). Second, a longitudinal analysis has been employed by revealing how employment relations in both companies have shifted over time and elucidating the historical dimensions of the four specific workplace struggles focused on. Finally, a within-case analysis has been conducted by contrasting the concrete experiences and perspectives of employees, managers and union representatives.

A multi-level analysis has been employed in another sense. The focus has first been on country-level, comparing employment relations history, dispute resolution, and employment law in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The analysis has then turned to the organisational-level, unpicking employment relations and workplace conflict based on five themes: job design, union rivalry, union culture, workplace cultures and manager-employee relations. Finally, the thesis has added flesh to the analysis and explored employment relations patterns in both organizations at a more specific level, by unpicking four recent workplace struggles, two in the UK and two in the Republic of Ireland. The focus here has been on manager and union positions during the struggles, and how employee (union) resistance was produced and constrained.

Moreover, as explained in Chapters 1 and 2, previous scholars have identified a lack of employment relations studies focusing on concepts of rhetoric, discourse and ideology (Hamilton, 2001; Kirkbride, 1986). This study contributes to rectifying this empirical gap by building on Fleming and Spicer (2007) and uncovering the discursive struggle between employment relationship actors at London Underground and Dublin Bus. The findings confirm the observations of previous organization studies research (e.g., Bamber et al., 2009; Colling, 1995; Craig and Amernic, 2004; Erkama and Vaara, 2010; Mäkelä, 2012; Vaara and Tienari, 2008; Williams and Adams, 2013), that discourse and rhetoric are utilized to legitimate and justify organisational restructuring.

The study does not conduct a ‘flat’ micro-level text analysis, focusing purely on the rhetorical devices used (Brimeyer et al., 2004; Symon, 2005). Instead, it contributes to extant literature by linking a micro-level analysis (identifying the rhetorical devices used, including metaphors and idioms) to the macro-level (focusing on discourses and context). In line with previous

research, metaphors were regularly utilized as “ideology-creators” (Craig and Amernic, 2004: 44) and as an argumentative advantage (Beelitz and Merkl-Davies, 2012; Burnes, 2011; Brennan and Merkl-Davies, 2014; Musolff, 2012). A range of discourses were also evoked, and recontextualized including the three employment relations frames of reference, unitarism, pluralism and radicalism (Fox, 1966, 1974, Heery, 2015, 2016) and broader discourses, including neoliberalism, new public management, moral discourse and modernization. By situating language used by union representatives, employees and managers in their broader contexts and placing a particular emphasis on discourses, the study effectively builds on Batstone et al.’s (1978) valuable analysis of the social organization of strikes.

Key evidence from the analysis is summarized below and evaluated against prior knowledge in the literature. The remainder of the chapter discusses the theoretical, methodological and policy implications of the study, explains the limitations and outlines possible areas of future empirical enquiry.

Summary of findings

The findings relate to the following two research questions:

RQ1: How do comparative contextual factors in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ2: How is trade union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

RQ 1 is answered by focusing on country and organization levels of analysis as outlined above, and involves mapping the similarities and differences in both cases. RQ 2 is addressed by unpicking four specific workplace disputes, two at London Underground over organisational restructuring and two at Dublin Bus over organisational restructuring and pay.

Employment relations and workplace disputes at country-level

The decrease in union power since Thatcherism was a reoccurring feature of interviews at London Underground (Emmott, 2015; Smith, 2009, Smith and Morton, 2001, 2006). Transport unions like RMT and ASLEF are among the few relatively strong unions remaining in the UK. Moreover, they challenge the UK *status quo*, because their radical values conflict with

dominant neoliberal principles that have intensified since Thatcher left Downing Street. Two particular metaphors from the findings stand out. First, a representative explained how “the balance of class forces are pitched against us”, ‘us’ being all workers in society, and another representative explained how management are not ‘folding’ like they did years ago. Lack of union power in society as a whole, coupled with augmented neoliberalism, has translated into sterner management stances at London Underground. The frontier of control (Batstone, 1988; Goodrich, 1920; Hughes et al., 2018) is now positioned more in employers’ favour.

Social partnership between 1987 and 2009 in the Republic of Ireland was deemed more consensual than Thatcherism by interviewees. The neo-liberal anti-union ideology emphasized in the UK was not explicitly articulated in the Republic of Ireland (Kitchen et al., 2012). Contrary to Thatcher’s claims of a non-existent society, a Dublin Bus representative referred to how society was ‘real’, individuals from all areas of work were given a ‘voice’. Yet as interviewees in the Dublin Bus case pointed out, ‘voice’ rarely equated to ‘real’ influence over organisational decisions. This implies social partnership embedded a rhetoric-reality gap (Legge, 2005). It relates to scepticism in the literature about social partnership and the argument put forward by many scholars that national and workplace voice governance was disconnected (Dobbins, 2010; O’Sullivan and Gunnigle, 2008; Roche et al., 2014). Furthermore, as workers possessing high levels of industrial power, Dublin Bus employees felt they could have secured higher pay rises under free collective bargaining, rather than through national social partnership wage agreements. Indeed, strike action was organized in 2000 as a sharp illustration of these feelings.

To some extent, this highlights why a pluralist frame of reference is problematic (Budd and Bhavé, 2008; Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Fox, 1974, 1979). Social partnership was depicted as a pluralist employment relations model where agreements are negotiated between government, employers and unions to balance the preferences and power of employers and employees. As Fox (1979) highlights, normatively the idea of pluralism is sound, but in the real world it is unrealistic in terms of practical implementation, because power imbalances are too deeply entrenched structurally in favour of status quo elite interests.

Nonetheless, interviewees affirmed that union power would be far weaker in the Republic of Ireland now, if a Thatcherite model firmly grounded in unitarism and neoliberalism had been implemented rather than more pluralistic social partnership. Moreover, union representatives explained how the ethical values underpinning social partnership, that is, that government had

a moral responsibility (Sayer, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2017) to discuss any restructuring proposals in a formal partnership forum, were a resource of union power. These ideas shaped the frontier of control in the context of the Dublin Bus tendering dispute focused on in Chapter 6 and enabled unions to resist the bus franchising proposals in 2000. Even in 2002, when Séamus Brennan sought to franchise initially 25% of bus routes, it seems probable that the government reshuffle and the removal of Brennan from his position as Minister of Transport was partly a by-product of the social partnership climate. This is where a radical pluralism perspective (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2014, 2015a:b) is insightful because it adopts a more critical stance on the thrust of ‘partnership’ than pluralist frames of reference, by recognizing that outcomes are variable, multi-faceted and context dependent. This distinct strand of radical thought encourages a multi-level analysis to uncover deeper contextual forces.

The Irish Labour Court plays an important role in many Dublin Bus workplace disputes, including the pay dispute and the tendering dispute focused on in the study. The Labour Court has prevented strike action at Dublin Bus in the past through issuing recommendations. However, Dublin Bus workers have also vetoed Labour Court recommendations perceiving them unfair, as in the pay dispute discussed in Chapter 6. This also adds weight to the radical pluralist frame which acknowledges the importance of employment relations institutions (e.g., the Labour Court), yet also recognizes that workplace conflict structurally extends deeper than such institutions. Overall, interviewee impressions of the Labour Court were fairly positive. It undeniably enables employers and employee representatives in the Republic of Ireland to promote a more pluralist approach to resolving workplace disputes than in the UK.

Additionally, employment law in the Republic of Ireland seems to offer a stronger safety net to protect employees and facilitate union power than UK employment law which tends to buttress employer ‘power-over’ workplace decisions (Sisson, 2008, 2012). For example, under the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) in the Republic of Ireland, Registered Employment Agreements (REAs) and Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs) are mechanisms of potential union power that may be utilized to improve and fortify employee working conditions, as demonstrated during the tendering dispute in this study. REAs and SEOs can potentially force employers to retreat their frontier of control to some extent (Batstone, 1988; Goodrich, 1920) and play a role in balancing the concerns of employers and employees. Again, a radical pluralist perspective is important here to recognize that outcomes are more complex because REAs are dependent on employers and unions agreeing on their

content and establishment, and, as previously discussed, the barriers for establishing SEOs are high.

The UK does not offer REAs and SEOs, but has instead recently introduced the Trade Union Act (2016), which decreases union power and inhibits union capacity to protect and improve employee working conditions. In contrast to the UK, union recognition is not compulsory in the Republic of Ireland, yet under the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015), it is potentially possible for unions and employees at non-unionized companies to transcend an employer's anti-union stance and use the Labour Court to leverage influence over their working conditions. Again, the outcomes of this process are contingent on context, but it is arguably a better situation than in the UK, where union recognition does not indicate union influence in decision making (Dundon et al., 2017).

Employment relations and workplace disputes at organization-level

Job design

At London Underground, the main focus has been on station staff and drivers, albeit engineers are briefly touched upon. In stations a high level of passenger and employee interaction exists. Safety is imperative because of previous terror attacks. Notwithstanding, station staff work experiences vary depending on the station(s) at which they are based, station size being an influencing factor. As elaborated on below, 'size' combines with other forces to shape manager-labour relations (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). For example, larger stations provide greater opportunities to interact with passengers and build reciprocal relations with colleagues (Gouldner, 1960), thereby reducing loneliness and isolation.

The driver's role is significantly different from that of station staff. Most of a driver's shift is spent isolated from passengers and fellow drivers in the cab of a tube train. The role is monotonous and potentially alienating. As Heery (2016) notes, deskilling empties a job of content. The job does not imbue a sense of fulfilment individuals need to flourish. (Sayer, 2005, 2007), which can reduce the level of employee moral involvement in organisational objectives (Fox, 1974). Many drivers feel trapped in the role because finding another job with a comparatively high wage (the most positive aspect of their job) would be extremely difficult, especially for drivers without qualifications (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). London Underground workers have more power than many other professions in the UK, however marked power imbalances exist within the staffing framework. The position of drivers and

station staff at the point of service delivery means that the former have potential to wield more power than the latter (Batstone, 1988).

At Dublin Bus the focus has been solely on bus drivers. In sharp contrast to London Underground drivers, the role of Dublin Bus drivers involves constant passenger interaction and traffic navigation. Although more demanding, meeting new people and using decision-making skills to deal with situations around Dublin is more likely to break up the monotony of driving and mitigate boredom. Furthermore, in contrast to Tube drivers driving automatic trains, all Dublin Bus drivers drive manually, technology has not restricted their opportunities to actualize their skills. Job design at Dublin Bus is arguably more likely to promote human flourishing than at London Underground (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Bolton et al., 2012, Bolton et al., 2016; Sayer, 2005, 2007). This can potentially yield higher levels of employee moral involvement (Fox, 1974). Similarly to London Underground workers, Dublin Bus drivers have potential to exert high levels of power because of their position at the point of service delivery (Batstone, 1988).

Union rivalry

Union rivalry is highlighted in other studies (e.g., Darlington, 2001; Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Reaney and Cullinane, 2017) and is present at London Underground and Dublin Bus. Rivalry is largely driven by conflicting union identities (Hodder and Edwards, 2015). At London Underground, lines of demarcation exist between the TSSA and RMT, but RMT are far more powerful because of their membership majority. ‘Zones of contention’ (Heery, 2016) are clearly evident between the moderate/more pluralist discourse projected by the TSSA and the more radical discourse disseminated by RMT. More intense lines of division exist in the driving grade between the majority union ASLEF and RMT, and active ‘zones of contention’ between their two sets of values are apparent. RMT emphasize unity between grades as a source of power to contest managerial ideology and the frontier of control. An RMT representative depicted different London Underground staffing grades as “cogs” and explained that all “cogs” must work effectively for the wheels to turn. ASLEF argue that union power is “watered down” unless specialized employee representation is offered. ASLEF representatives affirm that this attracts drivers to join ASLEF, rather than RMT.

Evidently, union identities constitute various layers and workers engage with them in variable and multi-dimensional ways (Hodder and Edwards, 2015). As noted, London Underground members do not necessarily join a union because of its fundamental principles and values. They

may join because of its majority in their particular depot, because of representative attitudes, or to avoid striking. In the driving grade, constant switching occurs and some employees are known as regulars for switching. One drivers' representative explained that such drivers are described as "rumbling the hares and the hounds". How union relations play out at depot-level varies from one depot to another. For example, a drivers' representative admitted that he "takes his hat off" to ASLEF drivers on his line who respect RMT picket lines.

At Dublin Bus, rivalry between SIPTU and NBRU is arguably more intense, but this varies from one depot to another. One NBRU executive used a sport analogy to highlight the hostility between unions, by comparing them to "Celtic and Rangers" football teams and by noting that the traditions of both unions are "black and white". Two main factors stand out. First, the fact that NBRU is a breakaway union from SIPTU means that deep historical tensions continue to influence relations today. Second, the power imbalances between SIPTU and NBRU are less pronounced than between ASLEF and RMT. 'Zones of contention' (Heery, 2016) between the discourses disseminated by both unions are clear. Similarly to London Underground, conflict exists between all-grades (SIPTU) and specialized (NBRU) union representation. However, the fact that NBRU is not affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is a prime differentiator. Unlike London Underground, dual membership at Dublin Bus is unthinkable, yet there is also no call for it. The vast majority of strike action occurs at company-level with both unions striking together and executives from both unions feel this is important.

One third of interviewees in the London Underground case referred to the "divide and conquer" idiom to explain how rivalry nourishes managerial control. This chimes with Stone's (1974) analysis of the American Steel industry, and his observation of how employers have a keen interest in dividing the workforce to repress possibilities of solidarity against their authority. However, at Dublin Bus, managers placed emphasis on how rivalry between unions is problematic for management and how addressing employment relations issues would be far easier without union rivalry. One manager compares his experiences of dealing with the conflict between unions as "stepping on eggshells". This feeling was not expressed to the same degree by London Underground managers. However, the fact that rivalry restricted employee opposition (in management's favour) during the station staff dispute was pointed out.

Union culture

Both London Underground and Dublin Bus are highly unionized, albeit union density at Dublin Bus is higher. Moreover, an imperative point is that Dublin Bus employment contracts stipulate

that joining a union is compulsory, resulting in a ‘closed shop’. Senior managers strongly support this ingrained tradition, illustrating a more pluralist attitude towards employment relations. This somewhat overlaps Fox’s (1985) point that some managers view unions as a vehicle of ‘bureaucratic administration’, helping them deal with the complex patterns of working arrangements and as a means of enhancing consent amongst employees by legitimizing rules and procedures. Compulsory union membership is an example of a ‘representative rule’ that Dublin Bus management, employees and unions uphold and benefit from (Gouldner, 1954; Terry and Edwards, 1988). Around 100 employees in the company are not unionized. Managers have attempted to challenge this, but are constrained by ‘mock rules’ (Gouldner, 1954) outlined in employment legislation.

London Underground management, would possibly prefer non-unionized employees. Senior London Underground managers distinguished between unions. RMT was clearly viewed as a problematic union, “duty bound” to reject any change in line with unitarist assumptions (Fox, 1966, 1974; Heery, 2016, Siebert et al., 2015). In Dublin Bus, senior management did not have a marked preference for any of the two unions. At garage-level, managers referred to problematic representatives on some occasions, yet this was attributed to their individual personality, rather than to their union affiliation.

Workplace cultures

At London Underground, stations are far less militant than train depots. The lower levels of potential power station staff wield and station staff unfamiliarity with taking strike action are two prime contributory factors. Additionally, there is also the issue of how station staff are fragmented across the network in small groups, retarding representative ability to establish a collective identity within the grade (Darlington, 2001). Station staff mainly participate in all-grade strike action rather than station staff only strikes, yet they can occur.

A more militant culture is apparent in London Underground depots. Reciprocal obligations are inherent between drivers (Gouldner, 1960). One garage manager uses a “tribe” metaphor to describe the drivers’ culture. Several factors are highlighted in Chapter 4 shaping depot solidarity, including job design and the fact that drivers are based in depots with higher numbers of fellow drivers compared to stations (Darlington, 2001). Notwithstanding, as radical pluralism and ‘structured antagonism’ (Edwards, 1986) highlight, activism fomented because of contextual circumstances (Batstone, 1988; Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 1986, Edwards and Scullion, 1982). Several drivers’ representatives claimed they would prefer more

union activists. One representative used the metaphor of an “insurance policy” to explain the reality of union membership at London Underground. Furthermore, drivers can be fairly fragmented day-to-day, with some choosing not to interact with colleagues during their shift. Cultures vary by depot, yet can be relatively similar by line. Chapter 4 discusses the historically more militant Piccadilly line and the Bakerloo line where visiting a different depot to have their break is customary practice amongst drivers.

Similarly, at Dublin Bus, garages are not overflowing with union activists. However, during disputes, action is vigorously supported. Reciprocal relations between drivers are firmly established (Gouldner, 1960). As noted, far fewer drivers visit garages on Thursdays to receive union updates from representatives. This is largely due to advancements in technology. First, because most drivers now receive electronic payments instead of cash, and second because there is no need for drivers to come into the garage at the end of their shift with their machine reading. Yet, I observed how larger garages in particular are still relatively busy on ‘union day’. The fact that both management and employees have maintained this firmly-established custom of every Thursday being ‘union day’ is another indication of a more pluralist culture. Having a set day to meet with employees over issues such as attendance or accidents benefits managers and representatives, illustrating how the concerns of both parties can in some contexts converge (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Scullion, 1982).

Like at London Underground, at Dublin Bus cultures vary by garage. Relationships are generally more close-knit in smaller garages. In larger garages the workforce tends to be more fragmented, embedding different “cliques”. Garage-level agreements brokered between management and union representatives have significant bearing on garage cultures. For example, as noted, Harristown garage has its own canteen and drivers will start, finish and have their breaks at the garage. Scheduling and issues around the practicalities of driving particular routes (for example, manoeuvring into a bus stop) are regular issues arising at Dublin Bus, yet seldom at London Underground, because drivers do not navigate around traffic and schedules are changed less often. In both cases, union representatives play a key role on the shop floor dealing with individual or collective issues. Like at London Underground, at Dublin Bus SIPTU and NBRU representatives admitted that some drivers take advantage of union representation and depend on their representatives too much. A SIPTU representative described members as being “molly coddled”.

Manager-employee relations

In both London Underground and Dublin Bus, employment relations patterns vary by garage/depot/station and at different points in time. Assuming that conclusions are universal across both sites would be futile and naive. Nevertheless, the thesis offers critical analysis of how patterns of employment relations and struggle compare generally across time, organizations and countries.

Recalling Fox's (1985) analysis of low and high-trust patterns, higher-trust patterns exist at Dublin Bus compared to London Underground. Crucially, Fox (1985: 46) does not refer to 'trust' manifest in personal attitudes and personal relationships, but 'institutionalized' trust embedded in the "roles, rules, and structured relations which we apply to others and have applied to ourselves". It cannot be too strongly emphasized that relations at Dublin Bus cannot be considered 'high-trust' based on Fox's (1985) typology. A feeling of 'us and them' still exists and both managers and representatives admitted to a high frequency of heated debates. Characteristics of Fox's (1985) low-trust relations are present, two prominent examples being power manoeuvring and gamesmanship, sharply demonstrated by how interviewees depicted employment relations as a 'game'.

Yet, arguably, a sense of gamesmanship, power manoeuvring and distrust are inevitable in organizations because of 'structured antagonism' (Edwards, 1986) and hierarchies built into all capitalist employment relationships. Therefore, a pure 'high-trust' organization would undoubtedly be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify. This links to Fox's (1985) key argument that organizations may be perceived as offering employment relationships based on mutual trust and respect from the outside. Albeit, because of unequal employer-employee power relations, such perceptions need to be empirically investigated. For example, a medium sized organization where no strike action occurs and where few employees are unionized, may be perceived as a workplace embedding high-trust patterns. Notwithstanding, if employees and managers in this organization had equal levels of power, or even if employees mobilized themselves collectively to increase their power, would they be satisfied with the same number of rights, privileges, obligations and respect? Probably not.

Three arguments follow from the above observations. First, relations can embed a combination of trust and distrust depending on the contextual setting and specific point in time (Fells and Prowse, 2016). However, organizations will gravitate towards higher or lower degrees of trust and distrust and the extent of both will vary dramatically between organizations. Second, an

employment relations ‘game’ is being played in all organizations, yet companies are differentiated in the way the game materializes and how parties play the game (Burawoy, 1979). Third, Edwards and Scullion (1982) make an imperative comment that defining ‘good employment relations’ is incredibly challenging (because of inherent ‘structured antagonism’), nonetheless, particular workplace settings are more conducive to trust relations than others.

Relations at Dublin Bus are arguably more cooperative and less hostile than at London Underground. Give and take relations between managers and representatives are far more diffused at Dublin Bus compared to London Underground. What is more a more pluralist atmosphere exists and co-operative relations with unions are more advanced. The moral norm of ‘reciprocity’ (Gouldner, 1960) is more widely shared throughout the company, softening the edges of conflictual manager-employee relations. Also relations are less structured and more informal than at London Underground. Finally, patterns of non-specific mutual obligations are more prominent at Dublin Bus compared to London Underground (Fox, 1985).

At London Underground, unitarism and neo-liberalism are more intense than at Dublin Bus. The moral norm of reciprocity between managers and employees is far less wide-ranging (Gouldner, 1960), relations are more contractual and arms-length. There is very little feeling of trust leading to low-trust responses from employees and a lack of moral involvement in London Underground’s objectives (Fox, 1985; Godard, 2011). In interviews, employees claimed that London Underground used to be a good company to work for in previous years, but that this has changed. Employees feel ‘used’ and reciprocal relations have diluted to the extent that very few managers are willing to engage in the spirit of give and take. Nevertheless, arguing that no London Underground manager applies the spirit of give and take would be wrong. As explained in Chapter 4, rare ‘old school’ managers are likely to permit somewhat more worker autonomy in particular contexts to secure employee co-operation. Yet, such managers are now thinly spread across the company and have little discretion with respect to certain performance issues, such as attendance and punctuality.

‘Moral involvement’ from employees towards the company and its objectives seems apparent to larger degrees at Dublin Bus, compared to London Underground. A NBRU representative’s comment that the company “bends over backwards” to help employees stands out. Another NBRU representative stated that Dublin Bus is a good company to work for, but that, like in all other organizations, unions are essential. This point seems to crystallise the overall attitude of representatives and employees. In addition, employees and representatives strongly-felt that

if Dublin Bus lost routes, securing ‘growth’ in the company by introducing new routes was important. This is clearly in line with company objectives.

Numerous scholars have highlighted the importance of unwrapping different layers of context when studying workplace relations and conflict (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Dundon et al., 2017; Edwards, 1986) and the centrality of linking meanings to context (Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Erkama and Vaara, 2010; Fairclough, 2005). The diffuse set of circumstantial influences shaping employment relations discussed in Chapter 4, is important for establishing the parameters of employee influence/control in both workplaces. Relations between employers and employees at London Underground and Dublin Bus are not ‘free-floating’, but are located in a particular contextual setting, time and place (Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Scullion, 1982).

With 17,000 employees, London Underground is significantly larger than Dublin Bus. However as highlighted above, size itself is not the key variable. Company size shapes employment relations, yet other factors need analysing to explain how ‘size’ shapes patterns of concrete behaviour (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). For example, larger size may correlate with bureaucracy and sterner attitudes towards formal rules (Gouldner, 1954). ‘Punishment centered rules’, about matters such as attendance and performance, have proliferated in both organizations (Edwards and Whitston, 1989, 1993). This partly sprang from ‘mock rules’ (Gouldner, 1954) stipulated by external parties; for example, government restrictions on TFL funding and NTA performance targets.

According to Edwards and Scullion (1982), organization rules are only a small segment of the negotiation of order. It is more crucial how managers interpret these rules. Some London Underground managers apply more flexible orientations to rules in some contexts, as discussed in Chapter 4. For example, one train manager explains how she uses a more informal approach to deal with driver attitudes by asking a union representative to have a quiet word. Furthermore, a train driver refers to an “old school” manager who understands reciprocity between managers and employees, and who applies it in the interest of both parties. However, crucially, another manager in the depot stated that his unique managerial style is rare. Overall, bureaucratization is more fully developed at London Underground (Gouldner, 1954).

One London Underground train manager suggested there is pressure to wear a “company mask”. This relates to Goffman’s (1959) concept of the ‘front stage’ and ‘backstage’ self. London Underground employees acknowledged that managers’ hands are tied to some extent from above, but felt that more give and take and co-operation could still be applied to fulfil the

concerns of both parties and improve employee morale. This links to Edwards and Whitston's (1989) observations on how tighter discipline decreased morale at British Rail. Dublin Bus managers seem to be less constrained by the "company mask" and are able to apply a more flexible approach or 'leeway function' when dealing with unions compared to London Underground (Armstrong and Goodman, 1979; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 2012; Edwards and Whitston, 1989). In such contexts, sticking rigidly to rules is perceived inexpedient, in the sense that Dublin Bus manager ability to meet company objectives would be constrained. What is more, sticking to the rules is perceived morally inappropriate, for example, for several Dublin Bus managers including senior managers, it is custom and practice that injuries and illnesses are excluded from the attendance control programme, because they are legitimate reasons to be absent from work (Gouldner, 1954).

A senior Dublin Bus manager stressed that it is not a case of "you scratch my back I scratch yours", but that "leeway", or flexibility between managers and unions is extremely important. This can involve managers being more flexible with formal rules and applying specific knowledge about the garage or driver(s) when applying rules. A senior manager stated that the rule book provides "guidelines" only. However, he also affirmed that some garage managers stick rigidly to the guidelines, demonstrating that manager-employee relations varies by garage. Moreover, if garage-level issues are referred to head office, senior managers seem to understand this 'flexibility' and overturn manager decisions they perceive as unfair, even when they know managers will disagree with their decision. A senior manager referred to an example where a garage manager had interpreted the Attendance Control Programme unfairly and stated that he would overturn their decision.

The Dublin Bus attendance policy seems more lenient compared to London Underground's. Dublin Bus workers are permitted 13 days of scattered non-attendance in 12 months, whereas the London Underground policy stipulates that more than 2 items of non-attendance in 13 weeks (just over 3 months) is unsatisfactory. A Dublin Bus garage manager stated that he would not punish a punctual driver who is late once, while London Underground employees claimed that drivers who are late once in a blue moon are still booked. The more flexible orientation to rules at Dublin Bus can prevent potential sources of conflict between managers, employees and representatives erupting. Other situations concerning individual drivers may be more conflictual. For example, when drivers are found to have acted out of line, Dublin Bus managers are more likely than London Underground managers to give the driver another chance without letting it escalate further. Applying the notion of give and take at garage level

and being more flexible with rules can be a strategy to ‘play ball’ with representatives and secure support for collective matters such as work scheduling, or to gain individual driver co-operation (Edwards and Whitston, 1989). This concurs with the idea of bargaining chips (Burawoy, 1979; Gouldner, 1954) and exemplifies how managers and representatives attempt to balance contradictory forces relating to control, conflict and co-operation in an increasingly disconnected contemporary capitalist system (Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Thompson, 2013). Even if disagreements or strenuous debates occur at garage-level, they do not lead to official strike action at Dublin Bus and unofficial strike action is rare. Another interesting finding is that Dublin Bus seeks to cement positive behaviour by bestowing bonuses for attendance and safe driving.

The difference in company size also means that a higher proportion of London Underground managers and employees need to engage in give and take for relations at the company as a whole to improve. Rebuilding trust relations at London Underground would call for a company-wide approach: one manager in one station, or all managers in one depot, cannot sufficiently enhance and root the spirit of give and take. Again, the key variables here are degrees of give and take and managerial styles, not company ‘size’. This is an important reason why the employment relations climate is better (not perfect) at Dublin Bus. Though not universal, a mutual understanding of the conflict-cooperation duality (and that the latter is essential), is more widespread across Dublin Bus and is also more entrenched at senior-level.

In addition and dovetailing the previous point, the situation is different at London Underground because more new managers are being recruited externally. A train manager referred to how London Underground values external corporate experience and one representative argued that managers are being brought in from the outside to turn a public transport system, into “a money making machine”. This transformation is influenced by new public management discourse, which highlights the benefits of making a public service more business orientated (Lorenz, 2012). The extent of external recruitment risks damaging firmly established informal customs and practices. It is also more probable that externally employed managers will apply dominant neo-liberal principles based on their prior experiences in other companies. Notwithstanding of course, managerial styles do vary, as emphasized. The shift in employment relations patterns at London Underground echoes Gouldner’s (1954) study of a gypsum mine. He discusses how a deep-grooved workplace indulgency pattern constituting informal and reciprocal relations was eroded by a new externally recruited plant manager, who implemented a more bureaucratic management style.

More internal recruitment at Dublin Bus, particularly at senior-level, helps to maintain employment relations traditions, such as adopting a more co-operative style with unions, Thursdays being ‘union day’ and compulsory union membership. This is closely tied to Edwards’ (1986) comment that the capital-labour relation develops a distinct logic in a specific workplace, influencing future interactions between managers and employees and shaping how both parties interpret the struggle between capital and labour. Established patterns of custom and practice are not as disturbed through internal recruitment and the logic that has developed is enshrined. Managers are more committed to the “traditional ways of doing things” (Edwards and Scullion, 1982: 205). As noted, two Dublin Bus senior managers dealing with employment relations issues have previously been drivers and have deeper understanding of the issues that arise at company or garage-level. Dublin Bus managers and union representatives stated that “wool cannot be pulled over their eyes” because as one Dublin Bus senior manager claimed, “I’ve been there, done that, worn the t-shirt”. Likewise, London Underground employees referred to how previous London Underground managers had a ‘broad umbrella of knowledge’. One London Underground union representative explained that because managerial knowledge was so advanced it was impossible to ‘con’ a manager about what had occurred. This means that the current situation at London Underground is significantly different from that at Dublin Bus.

The intensity of discontent at London Underground owes a great deal to its financial position, which is far weaker than at Dublin Bus. The cost-cutting climate has undeniably shaped organisational strategies and pressurizes managers to apply tighter control. London Underground managers explained how cost-saving challenges mean that ‘reasonable’ loan applications through salary advancement are now far less likely to be approved and every minute of overtime must be carefully accounted for. London Underground workers recognize how firmer stances on rules such as attendance are shaped by budgetary limitations (Edwards and Whitston, 1989, 1993) and aired their concerns over how the situation will become far worse if TFL’s general grant is removed.

At Dublin Bus, workers agreed to “tighten their belts” when the company was struck by the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession. Employees accepted and accommodated the company’s justification for not awarding a pay-rise and recognized that was the only way of safeguarding the company’s future. Of course, at the time, many people throughout the country were suffering financially after the 2008 crisis, but the response from Dublin Bus employees was partly shaped by a certain degree of trust that had been built. At London Underground, the

fact that employees showed little readiness to accept ‘financial circumstances’ as a justification for deterring working conditions, reveals the depth of distrust. Employees were adamant money could be saved in other areas (for example managerial bonuses and bringing subcontracted services back in house). They also felt that company representatives, such as Sadiq Khan, the current London Mayor, need to push for more government subvention.

Patterns of control

Employment relations unrest often extends deep beneath surface-level issues such as wages, to demands for control, or the morality of subordination to discipline (Goodrich, 1920). The case study evidence of employment relations and struggle at London Underground and Dublin Bus illustrates the ‘frontier of control’ concept (Batstone, 1988; Goodrich, 1920). At a general level, managerial control at London Underground is tighter than at Dublin Bus and has become even tighter in recent years, negatively affecting social relations between managers and employees. This point is partly illustrated in how one London Underground train manager states that employees are fed up with managers “finger wagging when they can’t even put their hand up if they make a mistake”. Another London Underground train manager states that the company is “gradually shifting towards an ‘I don’t give a crap position’”. 100% of London Underground employees interviewed suggested that the company is already at this stage.

London Underground managers are less willing now to cede detailed control to employees and unions at the point of service delivery. Notwithstanding, the findings paint variable control patterns shaped by a myriad of internal and external contextual forces, echoing the assumptions underpinning the ‘frontier of control’ literature (Batstone, 1988; Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Scullion, 1982; Goodrich, 1920). Neither managers nor employees follow clear strategies, and rationales concerning control and autonomy can shift (Edwards, 1986). Lines of difference exist between managers and management styles, creating variations around control trends. For instance, rare ‘old school’ London Underground managers are likely to push out the boundaries of worker autonomy in particular contexts to elicit employee co-operation. This demonstrates that all labour processes embed some degree of co-operation to get the job done (Edwards, 1986; Edwards and Whitston, 1989).

In addition, instead of placing ‘control’ and ‘worker resistance’ into two opposed categories, if we think of ‘control’ as a form of work regulation constituting informal and formal customs and practices, as Edwards (1986) suggests, less obvious patterns of control emerge, including patterns of control which are mutually embraced by managers and employees. For instance, at

London Underground, the more informal custom and practice known as the 'mafia' regulates the terms of the labour process. It is an unofficial system of worker job control drivers help to develop and re-produce (Terry and Edwards, 1988). This is not to deny that there are disadvantages attached to this informal custom; for example not knowing your exact shifts until the week before and waiting lists to join. The point is that the operation of a 'mafia' system is a representative rule mutually enforced at London Underground and benefits both parties (Gouldner, 1954; Terry and Edwards, 1988). However, this 'mafia' system seems only available to London Underground drivers, not all employees.

At Dublin Bus, the regulation of work shifts is also achieved through a system drivers re-develop and reinforce. Available routes are displayed on garage notice boards and drivers apply for the routes. This is a regular practice regulating the terms of the labour process and routes become available every 6-8 weeks. Routes are awarded based on seniority. This means that manager favouritism is not applied and if it were the case, drivers would soon realize. Regulating working arrangements in this way foments varying levels of detailed control within the workforce. Junior drivers have less control than senior drivers and 'spare drivers' have even less. Yet, this system did not seem to create divisions between drivers, as regulating working arrangements based on seniority and authority is considered a workplace norm. Differences in driver control parameters also manifest in other contexts at Dublin Bus. For example, senior drivers who started working at the company before the introduction of electronic payment have control over whether they are paid electronically or not. Furthermore, another key differentiator is that Dublin Bus inspectors monitoring the performance of senior drivers wear an explicit uniform, whereas more junior Dublin Bus drivers are monitored by 'undercover' inspectors in civilian clothes.

In both cases patterns of control can be re-defined after struggles (Edwards, 1986) as unions attempt to stake out the boundaries between worker and managerial control. Both London Underground and Dublin Bus management have retreated control over particular elements of the labour process after strike action, or the threat of action, pushing the frontier of control slightly in employee favour. However, the London Underground case demonstrates how collective influence can be uneven and 'patchy' depending on the workers' position at the point of service delivery (Batstone, 1988).

In both companies, unions have enforced punishment-centered rules on management during disputes (Gouldner, 1954), for example, rules concerning staffing levels during recent London

Underground Night Tube and station staff disputes. As Batstone (1988) argues, how workers collectively re-position and re-cast the frontier of control is contingent on contextual conditions. During the station staff dispute, robust action from historically weaker station staff and a recognition amongst management that the framework had more than ‘teething problems’ are noteworthy. During the London Underground Night Tube dispute, the company was forced to abdicate some detailed control over how the Night Tube is staffed. At Dublin Bus, employees utilized strike action during the pay dispute to exert detailed control over wages and shift the effort-reward bargain, and during the tendering dispute to mitigate the effects of the tendering. London Underground drivers claimed that a driver’s job is the easiest job to lose at London Underground. When London Underground driver dismissal occurs, or is threatened, strike action is often organized. In such cases, there are several examples of employees advancing their frontier of control which entail the driver being awarded their job back. Whereas at Dublin Bus, being dismissed is perceived as very unlikely.

More struggles at London Underground lead to strike action than at Dublin Bus, because both unions and managers are more often in deadlock and negotiation makes little headway. Conflict is more likely to be institutionalized and contained at Dublin Bus. Company-wide issues between union representatives and Dublin Bus often arise, yet even though heated debates occur, they tend to be resolved without strike action. This is not always the case, as shown in this thesis; nonetheless, industrial action is less frequent than at London Underground. At Dublin Bus there is more evidence of managers and representatives adopting what Fox (1985) calls a ‘problem solving approach’ to resolve issues. However, fundamentally, the approach is far from being pure problem solving because it fails to fully integrate union representatives and employees. They do not assume a unity of interests between them and management. Notwithstanding, similarly to ‘high-trust’ patterns, in view of power imbalances and ‘structured antagonism’, pure problem solving relationships are likely to be at best, extremely thin on the ground.

The chances of managers surrendering some detailed control to unions before strike action occurs is more likely at Dublin Bus. There seems to be more of an understanding in Dublin Bus at garage and senior level that allowing unions to secure some detailed control and applying a more co-operative approach will benefit all parties. The empirical evidence suggests that viewing power as a positive-sum ‘power to’ concept, rather than a dominating ‘power over’ concept (Sisson, 2008, 2012), is more evident at Dublin Bus than London Underground. Furthermore, managers conceding some level of detailed control after strike action and

managers choosing to share some control before strike action, have different effects on workplace relations. For example, recurrent strike action is likely to create a vicious circle whereby trust relations are weakened following a strike. The fractured trust relations then impact day-to-day shop floor interactions between managers and employees, and eventually another dispute unfolds. Paradoxically, it may also be argued that Dublin Bus managers are enhancing their ‘general control’ by conceding somewhat more ‘detailed control’ to employees, but this would be difficult to measure (Edwards, 1986).

The frontier of control at Dublin Bus has evidently changed over the years. Attendance programmes, accident recording, and performance reports, are now commonplace and constitute sources of potential conflict. There has been a gravitation towards unitarism and neo-liberalism in Dublin Bus since the collapse of social partnership in 2009 and the establishment of the NTA. This links to literature discussing how the Republic of Ireland has shifted from its ‘hybrid’ position within the LMEs-CMEs typology (Hall and Soskice, 2001) towards the liberal market economy category (e.g., Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Regan, 2012a), and the argument from McDonough and Dundon (2010) that neo-liberal principles have gained ideological currency in the Republic of Ireland in recent years.

At Dublin Bus, the NTA is taking more control over the company’s operations and union representatives discussed how this negatively impacts their ability to negotiate with managers. The NTA was the architect of the tendering proposals explored in this study. The emphasis in its proposals was on cost-efficiency and value for money. The fact that unions had the power to mitigate the effects of the tendering proposals, anchored by unitarism and free-market principles, is highly significant, however they were unable to prevent it. The altered control patterns in both cases adds weight to Thompson’s (2013) argument that in the midst of spiralling financialization and neoliberalization in liberal market economies, local managers are handicapped when negotiating explicit/implicit working arrangements. Yet, it appears that echoes of unitarism and neo-liberalism are not as profound in Dublin Bus as at London Underground, reflecting different wider political economy contexts in the respective countries and different internal workplace contexts in both organizations.

The findings support and add some weight to remarks made by Edwards and Scullion (1982) and Edwards and Whitston (1989, 1993) about absenteeism and managerial control. As noted, attendance is an issue that representatives and managers in both companies spend a great

amount of time dealing with. Some radical scholars (usually of a more Marxist orientation) tend to draw too close a link between absenteeism and managerial control. Notwithstanding oversimplification, the main thrust of their argument being that the former is an expression of challenging the latter. This type of argument needs treating with caution. At Dublin Bus it seems that casual absenteeism was more about having the ability to take a day off, rather than using non-attendance to protest against managerial prerogative. In other words, it appears, as Edwards and Scullion (1982) observed, that employees take the norms of regular attendance for granted and representatives admitted this. The attendance control programme at Dublin Bus is also fairly lenient, as discussed. In line with Edwards and Whitston's (1989) findings on the moral order of attendance amongst British Rail train drivers, Dublin Bus drivers were happy to discuss their attendance with fellow drivers.

At London Underground, the situation is slightly different. Similarly to at Dublin Bus, employees take a day off because they can, a cultural norm of absence exists and workers discuss their attendance with colleagues. For instance, one London Underground manager stated that some drivers plan sickness leave together. Nevertheless, considering that the attendance programme at London Underground is less lenient and managers are adopting a firmer stance on it, it may not be too implausible to suggest that employees are less likely to take a day off just because they can. Interviewees pointed to how sickness is currently sky-high and higher than in previous years when relations between management and employees were not as hostile, and managerial control was softer. Representatives referred to deep and wide-ranging employee discontents regarding the cost-cutting climate and low-trust atmosphere, and argued that this has significant bearing on attendance levels.

Yet, whether employees at London Underground would explicitly define their actions as resisting systems of managerial control and challenging managerial prerogative would need further investigation. For example, absence is not in line with managerial preferences, notwithstanding, in the case of London Underground drivers, their rosters include specific 'spare driver' shifts, that is, shifts covering absence and holidays. The policy is that depots must have one spare driver to cover every five drivers who book on shift. Therefore, driver absence would not have much effect and drivers know this. After saying that, there are occasions where depots lack spare drivers and absence causes inconvenience.

In the context of the first London Underground station staff dispute, some staff were absent due to illness or exhaustion because of the impact of the new staffing framework. This was

seen by some as a way of resisting the new framework. But the majority of these employees were primarily off work because of genuine illness or exhaustion, not to challenge managerial control. Instead of claiming that absence indicates employees applying a clear strategy to directly challenge managerial control and through this, grossly oversimplifying the nuances of employment relationships, a more plausible argument is that absence signifies a conflict of interest, yet does not push that conflict into the open (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). As Edwards and Scullion (1982) lay particular emphasis on how non-attendance needs to be scrutinized in relation to the organization of work in a specific setting, the individual circumstances of all London Underground and Dublin Bus employees would need unpicking for a detailed analysis here. ‘Absence’ and ‘absenteeism’ are interpreted differently by individual employees and managers (Edwards and Whitston, 1989).

Accidents have also been classed as an index of conflict and employee protest against managerial control (Hill and Trist, 1953, 1955; Paterson, 1960). This position is not adopted here. At Dublin Bus, interviewees explained how accidents occur because of job design, including the navigation around traffic and pedestrians. Some employees stated that junior drivers are more likely to have an accident because of lack of experience, but it can happen to any driver because of particular circumstances. There was no indication whatsoever that accidents were a form of resistance to managerial control, or an expression of conflict, confirming the findings of Edwards and Scullion (1982).

Worker consciousness

What the study tells us about worker consciousness warrants comment. The study discusses worker resistance, primarily in the context of four specific workplace disputes, two at London Underground and two at Dublin Bus. In all cases, and in line with a radical pluralist perspective on employment relations (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2014; Heery, 2016), worker solidarity had ‘relative autonomy’ from external macro forces (Edwards, 1986).

Beynon (1973: 98) tells us that worker consciousness is factory-based, not class-based and that class relationships are understood “in terms of their direct manifestation in conflict between the bosses and the workers within the factory”. References to a factory-based consciousness are also made by Batstone et al. (1978). This is an appealing argument and the existence of a workplace-based consciousness could be reasonably justified in the context of the London Underground Night Tube dispute and the Dublin Bus pay dispute. However, the findings support the more convincing argument by Edwards and Scullion (1982) that a term such as

‘factory-based’ (or workplace-based) does not adequately capture demarcations within the factory, or workplace. This includes divisions in terms of union membership, age, race, gender, length of service, individual concerns and a variety of other factors. Worker consciousness is therefore at best ‘sectional’.

During the Dublin Bus tendering dispute and the London Underground restructuring dispute, employees challenged broader issues beyond their workplace and the specific reward-effort bargain they engage in (Baldamus, 1961). Yet, the evidence does not point to a ‘class-consciousness’, pivoted around fragile class interests (Fleming, 2017), or to workers pursuing industrial democracy as an end in itself (Goodrich, 1920). The empirical evidence therefore calls for more fine-grained and nuanced conceptualization of worker consciousness, to encapsulate its manifestation at workplace level *and* beyond. As emphasized, recurrent patterns of argument during the workplace disputes focused on in the thesis hinged on the issue of ‘morality’ (Sayer, 2011). Unions articulated a discourse with a distinct moral tinge and employee concerns had clear moral undercurrents.

It may then be argued that the Dublin Bus tendering dispute fomented a ‘moral consciousness’ amongst drivers, centred on the ‘public good’, the reward-effort bargain of workers *throughout society* and the rights of travellers to public transport. A similar, albeit not as far-reaching picture is painted during the first London Underground dispute over the new staffing framework. Here, ‘a moral consciousness’ emerged pivoting on the notion of London Underground as a ‘public good’ and the rights of London Underground workers and London Underground passengers. In short, the general argument then is that the relationship between workplace struggles and broader class action must be proven empirically rather than assumed (Edwards and Scullion, 1982), and that the complex overtones and different levels of ‘worker consciousness’ during workplace struggles, may be best captured by the term ‘moral consciousness’.

Workplace struggles over organisational restructuring and pay

The second research question is: *How is union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?* To address this question the thesis discusses four high profile employment relations disputes, two at London Underground and two at Dublin Bus. Three of the disputes are over organisational restructuring and one is over pay.

London Underground

During the first London Underground dispute, the attractive ‘modernization’ metaphor emphasized in manager interviews and press releases was a velvet glove to justify and present the closure of ticket offices and job cuts (Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Du Gay, 2003). The recontextualization of ‘customer service’ discourse to justify the proposals bears out the dominant effects of new public management discourse (Lorenz, 2012). NPM discourse encourages public sector services to implement private sector models and practices, including the prioritisation of service users/consumers and focusing on ‘customer service’. The ‘every journey matters’ slogan was strategically devised to gain public support and allegedly constituted a ‘customer promise’.

Another legitimization strategy involved stressing that changes to customer behaviour influenced the decision to close ticket offices and technology discourse was utilized to buttress this argument. Financial numbers were also evoked to highlight the cost-savings produced by the proposals (Williams and Adams, 2013) and how these savings would be invested in the network. For example, London Underground argued that the proposals produced a “£50 million per annum efficiency pot” and a return on investment of around £270 million over 7 years.

Connecting to previous research on the unitarist frame of reference (e.g., Brown, 2000; Heery, 2016, Kirkbride, 1985, 1986; Mäkelä, 2012) and Fox’s (1966) observations that ‘team’ and ‘family’ metaphors are often applied by employers to convey a harmonious organization, London Underground press releases emphasize the important role employees play. For instance, staff were depicted as “the operational heart of the station.” A senior London Underground manager stressed that she considered the “human perspective” of the restructuring proposals in addition to the business orientated “intellectual perspective”. This links to the quote by a British Airways CEO, highlighted in Colling (1995: 23), “people are our most important asset.....everything depends on how they work as part of a team”.

The first London Underground dispute highlights how lines of division within a workforce constrain resistance (Edwards and Scullion, 1982) and links to previous comments about the ‘divide and rule’ strategy which facilitates subtle power processes to fortify managerial preferences. When proposals to cut station staff, close ticket offices and introduce a new station staffing framework were announced, mobilizing London Underground drivers and engineers to resist was challenging. To gain driver support, a RMT newsletter highlighted that drivers are not “bullet-proof”, thus they must “fight”. RMT often utilizes battle-related metaphors to create

the impression of the union being at war against London Underground/the government. The majority of engineers did offer support in the end, yet the majority of drivers, the most powerful grade, did not. Supporting station staff was not perceived as a 'moral obligation' and reciprocal bonds had not been built (Gouldner, 1960). Awareness of the divisions between grades and the lack of driver support curbed station staff dissent by thwarting confidence and power.

The media was also an important force exercising invisible power (Lukes, 2005) by shaping employee and public opinion surrounding the restructuring dispute. Interviewees at London Underground referred to how station staff read anti-union articles about plans to strike in 'The Evening Standard'. This ties back to previous literature emphasizing that newspapers often tend to diffuse dominant unitarist, neo-liberal, and anti-union ideology (Clarke and O'Neill, 2001; Manning, 2001; Milner, 2011). This also relates to Thompson's (1983) critique of Burawoy's (1979) argument that workplace relations are not influenced by externally imported consciousness. Thompson (1983) contends that experiences outside of work shape worker behaviour. For example, station staff awareness that the anti-union stance dominant in the newspapers is absorbed by the majority of the public, and that UK union power has dwindled, dampened their capacity to resist. Yet, the findings are more closely tied to Edwards' (1986) well-known argument that the effects of external factors and experiences varies from one context to another, and are mediated by internal factors, including the dynamics of the capital-labour relation. For instance, because of their power and well-established traditions of solidarity, invisible power exerted by the media and the dominant perspective of unions and striking workers in society does not shape driver decisions to take strike action to the same extent as station staff.

The London Underground restructuring discourse grounded in unitarism and neo-liberalism resonated with some London Underground station staff because of several reasons, further dividing the workforce. First the discourse emphasized the voluntary severance packages available to station staff. Second, the job descriptions included more managerial responsibility, without extra pay, yet some employees saw this as a step-up on the career ladder (Batstone et al., 1978). Finally, there was some degree of resentment between Customer Service Assistants and supervisors. The restructuring discourse highlighted more visible staff on the gate line and this was read by Customer Service Assistants as a staffing structure forcing supervisors to change their behaviour.

London Underground ticket offices were closed and the new staffing framework was introduced in 2016. After hundreds of London Underground station staff left through voluntary severance, staffing levels were severely low, damaging employee morale. Station staff experiences of the new framework fostered a collective identity within the grade and prompted a renewed impetus to resist. Early 2017 saw historic support from station staff and significant concessions were won relating to staffing levels. The structure of the situation affected the concessions won here (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). For example, representatives claimed senior managers were fully aware that the new staffing framework was a disaster.

The language used by union representatives and in union documents is also important. As noted, union arguments during this dispute at London Underground had clear moral underpinnings. Interviewees stressed how cutting staffing numbers would endanger the well-being of passengers and staff by creating a dangerous environment. A powerful “mugger’s paradise” metaphor featured in RMT press releases to depict stations under the proposals. Employee concerns extended beyond exploitation and equality to assumptions about the ‘public good’, or, the well-being, needs and survival of ‘people’ as a collective (Fleming, 2017; Sayer, 2000). Strong feelings existed around how marketizing London Underground, a public service, severely contradicted the idea of a ‘public good’ and public service ethos. One union representative explained how ‘passengers’ with collective rights have been mutated into ‘customers’ with individual rights. Unions also strategically reformulated London Underground’s ‘every journey matters’ and devised an alternative ‘every job matters’ slogan.

Similarly, the night tube strategy was also couched around the rhetoric of ‘modernization’ (Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Du Gay, 2003). It was justified to the public by conveying a pluralist organization seeking to balance the preferences of its stakeholders (Fox, 1966, Heery, 2016), including customers, local businesses and local communities. Highlighting the Tube’s key role in London was important here. For instance, it was referred to as “the beating heart of London” in a London Underground press release.

As London Underground senior management admitted, the workforce was united during the second dispute over the introduction of a Night Tube and opposition was stronger. The issues in the dispute affected all employees (station staff, engineers and drivers) and all unions, RMT, ASLEF, TSSA and UNITE, fading the lines of division between the grades. The discourse unions projected during this dispute also had a moral hue by emphasizing that work-life balance is a right for all workers. London Underground’s original proposals for Night Tube shifts to

become part of driver, engineer and station-staff rosters was perceived by unions and members as employee unfriendly flexible working practices (Fleetwood, 2007). Some employees were prepared to work on the Night Tube, but wanted increased compensation. In line with the effort-bargain principle (Baldamus, 1961), they sought to sustain the ratio of reward to effort (Armstrong et al., 1981). During this dispute, unions (particularly RMT) characterized the venture as the “Mayor’s vanity project”. Their argument being that Boris Johnson needed a legacy before he left his position as Mayor of London.

All four unions took joint strike action in July and August 2016 over Night Tube staffing. The dispute was resolved when London Underground conceded to employ part-time drivers and station staff to staff the night tube, and permitted engineer displacement to non-Night Tube lines. Unions delayed the Night Tube by a year, despite Boris Johnson’s promise it would commence in September 2015. An RMT representative referred to the negative perceptions of ‘part-time’ workers amongst drivers. In some ways this relates to the ‘flexibility stigma’ concept, whereby workers resent co-workers who want flexible working arrangements (Prowse and Prowse, 2015). However, the perception amongst drivers was not that part-time drivers would be less committed to the job, but that they would be less committed to the union. The term “oil and water” helps illustrate how the agreement made between representatives and London Underground fomented fragmentation between full-time drivers and part-time Night Tube drivers. Since the Night Tube commenced in August 2016, RMT, ASLEF and London Underground have engaged in disputes over the marginalisation of part-time Night Tube drivers, in the context of their career development and pay enhancements on New Year’s Eve. The latter issue also fomented tensions between ASLEF and RMT.

Dublin Bus

The first Dublin Bus dispute was over the tendering of bus routes, initiated by the National Transport Authority. During the dispute, the NTA’s justification for opening up the market was couched around free-market principles and the “rhetoric of market competition” (Bell, 1992: 338). Again, this links to the tenets of NPM and the idea of importing private sector principles into the public sector. For example, press releases stressed the need for “benchmarking” and ensuring that “best value for money” was being provided. Interestingly, as shown in a quote featured in Chapter 6, the NTA referred to service users as the “travelling public” not ‘customers’ in a press release. This implies, to some extent, that the transformation of service users to ‘customers’ at Dublin Bus is not as explicit as in London Underground and relates to

an argument by some scholars that NPM discourse has not penetrated the Republic of Ireland to the same degree as the UK (Hardiman and MacCarthaig, 2010; Hardiman and Scott, 2010; Lorenz, 2012).

Idioms were utilized to convey the position of Dublin Bus management during the dispute. They were “cut between a rock and a hard place” and as union representatives stated, managers were opposed to the tendering to the same degree as employees and unions. Yet on the other hand, as a senior Dublin Bus manager emphasized, they could not “bite the hand that feeds them”. Idioms were used to explain how tendering at Dublin Bus would not be as severe as in the UK, where it’s “dog eat dog”, because the company had power over the routes being tendered. Dublin Bus management highlighted that the tendered routes were orbital, curtailing “head to head direct competition”. Mike, a Dublin Bus senior manager used an idiom to make an important point when discussing the companies bidding for the tendered bus routes. He made it clear that unions in the Republic of Ireland “are a different kettle of fish” to generally weaker UK unions.

During the tendering dispute at Dublin Bus, dimensions of the drivers’ shared ‘moral economy’ were salient. In this context, drivers shared a moral economy of strong commitment to a publicly-owned bus service and the well-being of providers and passengers. Public service work is often linked to the concept of ‘commodification’, where the market encroaches on an increasing number of human activities (Heery, 2016). The tendering proposals sought to commodify labour (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; Polanyi, 1957, 1968) by forcing employees to transfer to a private operator if Dublin Bus lost the routes. Drivers felt obliged to protect drivers at risk, producing mutual solidarity bonds. An ‘ethics of care’ existed; drivers are part of pre-existing caring relationships (attending to the material and emotional needs of others with an element of involvement) (Bolton and Skountridaki, 2017).

Major concerns emerged around Dublin Bus driver identities being mutated into ‘private sector workers’. Employees used language to convey a sharp contrast between the working conditions of public and private companies. Drivers shared an assumption that private operators offer significantly ‘thinner’ and lower-trust employment relationships than Dublin Bus (Fox, 1985). Such concerns were not only economically driven, they also centred on other social ingredients for a flourishing life including: dignity, security, safety, friendships, holidays, trust and working conditions (Hodson, 2001; Sayer, 2007). Free-market ideology, private sector discourse and their underlying principles of competitiveness and profit were assumed to

contradict moral values, deny human flourishing and embrace contrasting normative understandings of the nature of meaningful work. A garage manager used an idiom to explain that some Dublin Bus drivers move to private bus companies, perceiving the “grass to be greener on the other side”, yet soon realize that is not the case.

Unions at Dublin Bus played an essential role in maintaining a struggle that contested market ideology and private sector discourse, to define quality work as a right to all drivers (Bolton et al., 2016; Hodson, 2001). The saying “race to the bottom” was regularly applied to convey how the Dublin Bus tendering would push working terms and conditions down throughout the industry while strengthening managerial ideology. Financial numbers were used to highlight the realities of the tendering; for example that the company could suffer legacy costs of up to €43m. The drivers’ shared moral economy also encompassed commitment towards passengers. Discursive ideas relating to ‘private sector discourse’ fomented concerns surrounding the service quality offered to passengers if routes were lost. Drivers feared that bus routes would be restructured and unprofitable routes removed, damaging passenger well-being.

Employment law prevented political strikes over competitive tendering implementation. Instead, unions campaigned, lobbied and used any other legal forum possible to oppose the plans. Solid strike action in May 2015 over the consequences of competitive tendering, combined with threats of further industrial action, led to substantial concessions. A noteworthy factor here was the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (ISB, 2015) and its re-introduction of Registered Employment Agreements (REAs), as previously discussed.

During the Dublin Bus pay dispute drivers argued that the company had a moral obligation to award them a pay increase, because they were promised a pay rise when the company returned to profit. Not awarding a pay rise would be a breach of trust (Fox, 1985). Employees used idioms to explain how they accommodated the company’s poor financial position during the financial crisis and recession. They “tightened their belts” because they knew this was the only way “to keep the show on the road”. Emphasis was placed on how the company was now “back on its feet”, thus a pay increase was due. Similarly to London Underground, a metaphor of ‘fighting’ was applied to indicate that it was “fight-back time”. A senior manager used an idiom to compliment union attitudes in 2008. He stated that when the company was struggling financially, nobody “knocked the door down” demanding a pay rise. Likewise, idioms were used by managers to justify why employees had sought a pay rise in 2016. They understood

that employees had “seen a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel” and “a few green shoots in the economy”.

The Labour Court was not successful in resolving this dispute and the pay recommendation was rejected by drivers, yet this is likely to have been influenced by the pay increase Luas workers received a few months prior. Management strongly believed that the Luas pay dispute steered employee demands. One garage manager used a metaphor to explain how he had sought to persuade drivers not to think about bigger “turnips in the garden next door”. Dublin Bus employees admitted they used the pay rise received by Luas workers as a bargaining touchstone for their demands. For example, a NBRU union executive used an idiom to explain how drivers had “looked over the fence” at Luas and strongly felt they deserved the same, if not higher increases. This demonstrates how the effort-bargain principle (Baldamus, 1961) influences workplace struggles in multi-dimensional ways. Dublin Bus employees evaluated the effort they expend in their role and the wage they receive, against the effort Luas workers expend and their recent pay increase. Employees are concerned about distributional justice and therefore compare the rewards received by others to their own (Fox, 1985; Sayer, 2005, 2007). After robust company-wide strike action, drivers secured a 3.75% pay increase over three years, almost identical to the pay award secured by Luas drivers.

Conclusion

Theoretical contribution

Little is known about how employment relations in the UK and the Republic of Ireland compare today, given the different historical trajectories. The thesis helps to redress this deficiency by focusing on two case study organizations, Dublin Bus (the Republic of Ireland) and London Underground (UK). It adds weight to a key debate in the literature around the neo-liberalization of the Republic of Ireland’s economy since the collapse of social partnership (e.g., Dobbins and Dundon, 2017; Hardiman and Regan, 2013; McDonough and Dundon, 2010; Regan, 2012a). In addressing the first research question, the thesis concludes that despite shifting patterns of workplace struggle in both organizations, due to multiple contextual forces, neoliberalism is more intense at London Underground. This implies that broader political economy forces in both countries operate differently, but further research is required to put flesh on these assumptions.

The second research question is important for shedding light on the dynamics of specific workplace disputes. In addressing this question, the thesis extends knowledge on the forces

promoting or inhibiting employee resistance and contributes to literature on the (de)legitimization of organisational change. Whilst most studies focus on the legitimization of organisational change by employers, or the (de)legitimization of organisational change by employees (Bamber et al., 2009; Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Du Gay, 2003), more understanding is required about the discursive struggle between employers, employees and unions to paint a ‘fuller picture’ of how workplace relations unfold. The study contributes towards extending knowledge in this area and also adds an additional analytical layer to the few studies examining discursive struggles during workplace disputes (e.g., Fleming and Spicer, 2007), by focusing on two comparative country contexts.

Through addressing both research questions, the thesis enters a dialogue with researchers on the three frames of reference on employment relations struggles, unitarism, pluralism and radicalism (Fox, 1974, 1979), illustrating empirically and theoretically how they are still applicable for critically analysing workplace dynamics today. The study refines frames of reference theory by arguing that radical pluralism (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2014; Fox, 1979; Heery, 2015, 2016) provides the most finely honed tools for uncovering the deep-rooted complexities of employment relations. Although alternative frames of reference render interesting insights, they present incomplete analytical backbones for intensive research, because their fundamental assumptions are problematic and fall short. This study aims to encourage future researcher to draw upon radical pluralism as a theoretical apparatus for future studies, to better understand how workplace social relations and struggle unfold. In addition, the findings advance the theoretical conceptualization of ‘structured antagonism’ (Edwards, 1986) and the conflict-cooperation dialectic, by demonstrating the complexity of their manifestation in two workplaces, and pin pointing the contextual forces shaping their operation (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 1986).

Methodological contribution

The study makes an innovative methodological contribution to knowledge by proposing a data collection and analysis approach which highlights interrelated workplace relations linkages across multiple levels of analysis, to evaluate two comparative contexts. Some studies integrate the concept of ‘multi-levels’ into their methodology to a certain extent, but I am not aware of studies that apply it in the same way as in this thesis. First, the study uses a ‘triangulation’ approach combining data from archival documents, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The study shows the benefits and richness of ethnography research which added vivid colour to the accounts of interviewees and archival document data. While

conducting semi-structured interviews in qualitative research is common, combining interviews with non-participant observation is less common. Of course, gaining access for ethnography is not easy and I learnt from my experience that building trust with interviewees is crucial in this regard.

The thematic analysis approach adopted to analyse the data had a unique flavour by paying particular attention to the use of discourses, and connecting the micro-level: rhetorical devices employed in the language used by social actors (e.g., metaphors, similes), to the macro-level: employment relations discourses of unitarism, pluralism and radicalism and broader discourses (e.g., neoliberalism, new public management, customer service, modernization and moral discourse). A multi-level analysis is also applied in three other ways. First, the study compares cross-case, longitudinal and within-case observations (Gerring, 2017), which I found crucial to conduct a fine-grained analysis. Second, the first research question focuses on two levels, country and organisational, while the second research question is situated at another level again by critically analysing four specific workplace disputes. Finally, the study embeds micro interactions between managers, employees and union representatives at workplace level, in their broader macro contexts. A similar methodology and data analysis strategy highlighting discourse and applying a multi-level framework can be adapted to fit a variety of different contexts. The multi-level methodology employed aims to trigger implications for future research, to better capture employment relations patterns and workplace struggle at different levels.

Policy and practical implications

In light of the study's findings, the thesis argues that a pressing need exists for policy action to establish more pluralist workplace practices and deepen employee influence, notably in the UK. It calls for legislative counterweights to shift the frontier of control more in employee favour and promote workplace partnerships. In the face of intense structural constraints including fierce competition, globalization, financialization and an uncertain political economy (e.g., Brexit), managers are clearly under pressure when implementing control strategies. However, organisational conflict (both observable and more overt) stemming from intense managerial control, is likely to aggravate the competing tensions, not help balance them. Moreover, in today's unstable climate, mere compliance to managerial strategies is unlikely to be sufficient; co-operation and trust is vital to produce positive mutual gains outcomes.

Notwithstanding, co-operation and trust must be earned and built through action, not assumed (Fells and Prowse, 2016).

The precise nature of appropriate practices and legislation would require further investigation and, in-line with radical pluralist thinking, their ability to deepen employee influence would be conditioned by multiple contextual forces. As Fox (1966: 16) notes, engineering workplace co-operation is an active and uncertain process. What is more, to institutionalize a more pluralist culture, any new government interventions need to improve the working terms and conditions of all workers, including the rapidly expanding and diverse ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2011).

Some may argue that the UK and the Republic of Ireland already has a pluralist mechanism for promoting employee voice, known as the Information and Consultation Directive (ICD, 2004). The Directive stipulates that managers must implement mechanisms to inform and consult employees about an organization’s economic situation and organisational reform. However, there are limitations to the Information and Consultation Directive, for example, it only applies in organizations with more than 50 employees and 10% of an organization’s workforce must formally ‘trigger’ the establishment of these mechanisms in writing, a prospect that many employees are likely to perceive risky and daunting. Employers can choose whether to count a part-time worker as half an employee or not and casual/agency workers are excluded.

More importantly, the impact of the Information and Consultation Directive is underexplored (Butler et al., 2018). But extant research presents a downbeat perspective. Empirical evidence suggests that it has had little effect on deepening employee influence, has sparked little momentum for workplace partnership and is a light-touch form of regulation, providing managers with significant latitude around the implementation of information and consultation mechanisms, even if they are triggered (e.g., Dundon et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2011). The recent Taylor Review (2017) features proposals to adjust the Directive’s conditions somewhat. First, the report proposes to lower the 10% threshold so that only 2% of an organization’s workforce must ‘trigger’ voice mechanisms. Second, the report proposes to include all non-standard employees (e.g., casual, agency, part-time) in the 2%.

Furthermore, the legal setting in the Republic of Ireland seems to offer scope for greater employee influence and positive collaborative mutuality, for example, through the Labour Court, Registered Employment Agreements and Sectoral Employment Orders. Introducing such mechanisms in the UK could potentially deepen employee influence. Notwithstanding, there are as discussed, limitations to these mechanisms, for instance, private sector companies

capturing the regulatory space for a Sectoral Employment Order. If the Republic of Ireland continues to converge towards the UK's political economy, further legislation is likely to be essential for protecting employee working conditions and constrain ideological preferences for a more intense neo-liberal model.

A final issue worth considering here is whether the curriculum taught to 'future managers' in UK and Irish business schools is promoting socially unsustainable work practices. Dundon and Rafferty (2018) make the valid argument that a typical business school is unlikely to encourage students to look beyond pro-market orientations and investor returns, or reflect critically on the current state of employment relations in terms of employee well-being, equality, dignity and respect. Yet, although the rebellion from some academics critiquing the market managerialism taught by business schools is a significant step forward (Parker, 2015), this critique has become so institutionalised it often passes unremarked (Parker, 2018).

Limitations

There are three main limitations to the evidence presented in the thesis. As discussed in Chapter 3, a case study research design may have some weaknesses (Gerring, 2017). The main pitfall of the thesis is that the generalizability of the findings is questionable. The thesis cannot offer general conclusions about contextual patterns of struggle in the UK and the Republic of Ireland because of its limited focus on two case study organizations, London Underground and Dublin Bus. Moreover, it may be argued that the organizations studied are relatively unique compared to many other organizations in both countries, because they are highly unionized transport sector organizations. However, the study offers a robust theoretical foundation which may be built upon in future studies about employment relations and struggle in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. In the context of the conclusions reached by other studies the findings of this thesis may well have broader application. The relatively small, non-probability sample of respondents used is another limitation of the study. I sought to overcome this limitation by avoiding broad-brush statements and emphasizing that conclusions are not universal across both sites and that there will always be variations around trends. The purpose of the thesis was to paint a general picture of employment relations and struggle in both organizations. Third, despite discussing how job role and location can shape the concrete experiences of employees in work, the study does not offer insights into how worker gender and race impinged on workplace dynamics and struggle.

Future research

Turning to potential areas of future research, critically analysing patterns of ‘structured antagonism’ between employers and employees continues to be a valuable avenue of enquiry. As strike activity and union density decline in the majority of countries and industries, this area warrants special attention to emphasize how conflict still exists within the employment relationship, albeit in a variety of different, often more overt forms (Currie et al., 2017; Hughes and Dundon, 2018; Van den Broek and Dundon, 2012). Furthermore, as pressure from external forces such as competition, neoliberalism, globalization and financialization intensify (Cushen and Thompson, 2016; Thompson, 2013), more intellectual understanding is required about how managers attempt to balance competing employment relationship tensions, and how employees and their unions respond to managerial strategies.

Radical pluralism provides a strong theoretical scaffold to anchor such analytical research (Dundon and Dobbins, 2015; Edwards, 2014, 2015a:b). Moreover, rich qualitative methods should be our main source of guidance for analysing context-specific variations in patterns of employment relations, including in-depth case studies, ethnography and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative methods that dominate much mainstream HRM/employment relations literature, yet are too detached from context, are unlikely to fully capture the dynamics and complexities of conflict, control, co-operation, reciprocity and trust relations. Although the study contributes to knowledge about the extent of the Republic of Ireland’s convergence towards the UK’s harder neoliberal model, considerable ambiguity remains. Exploring multiple cases within each country would be a fruitful avenue of empirically grounded future research to further enrich knowledge in this area. Such research could also critically evaluate the extent country-level differences impinge on employment relations at workplace-level, and how varied internal factors produce different outcomes on the shop-floor (Edwards and Scullion, 1982).

For example, CIÉ, Dublin Bus’ parent body constitutes two other transport organizations, represented by the same unions as Dublin Bus, which could be compared using a comparative case study approach, to uncover similarities and differences in patterns of employment relations and struggle. Though access may be challenging, exploring employee perceptions of degrees of reciprocity and trust in organizations where unions are less active/powerful, or not recognized, would help widen and deepen our knowledge base on workplace dynamics. Finally, comparing patterns of workplace employment relations in countries where systems of employment relations sharply contrast, for example, the UK and Sweden, merits investigation.

To conclude, the thesis has explored the complexity of employment relations and conflict at Dublin Bus and London Underground, but more research is needed to better understand the multi-layered dynamics of workplace struggle under contemporary capitalism.

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Appendix 1

Bangor Business School Ethics Declaration (Students)

Student Name: Emma Hughes Banner ID: 500250391 User ID: abp58f

Tentative title of dissertation Delving Deeper into contemporary workplace struggles: The case of London Underground and Irish buses

Degree

PhD	MPhil	Master by Research	Master Taught	Undergraduate
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**You may NOT collect any data until this form has been approved by
your supervisor (case A) and/or Ethics Officer (case B or C).**

Original hard copy MUST be bound together with the dissertation. Failure to comply with university policy, which stipulates that students must secure the appropriate ethics permissions for their dissertation research, will result in the research data being destroyed. In these circumstances, data cannot be reported.

Prior to undertaking any research projects, students should familiarise themselves with the University's Research Ethics Policy:

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ar/ro/recordsmanagement/REF.php>

In the context of the Ethics Policy, **projects entailing no risk** are those that do not entail the collection of primary data; such projects **do not** have to be approved by the Ethics Committee. Examples of **no risk** projects include:

1. Statistical analyses of time series data published by the Office of National Statistics.
2. Investigations of interlocking membership on executive boards and executive remuneration committees in not-for-profit social enterprise companies, conducted using data obtained from government agencies, commercial databases and other public records.
3. Investigation of the British Crime Survey data to examine why some police authorities appear to be more efficient than others.

The following research activities would normally be considered as **involving more than minimal risk** and would **require review** by the College Ethics Committee:

1. Research involving vulnerable groups – for example, children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship.
2. Research involving sensitive topics – for example, participants' sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health, or their gender or ethnic status.
3. Research involving groups where permission of a gatekeeper is normally required for initial access to members.
4. Research necessarily involving deception or which is conducted without participants' full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.
5. Research involving access to records of personal or confidential information, including genetic, other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals, gender, race, religion, blood donation, and blood types.
6. Research that would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain.
7. Research involving intrusive interventions – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy.

**Provide a BRIEF DESCRIPTION of the fieldwork,
including the main research question, data to be collected, sample characteristics and method**

The study applies a qualitative comparative cross-country case study approach to investigate employment relations at two public transport organizations, London Underground in the UK and Dublin Bus in the Republic of Ireland. The data collection methods include collecting archival documents (including press releases, newspaper articles and company reports) conducting semi-structured interviews mainly with employees, managers and trade union officials and non-participant observation of workers at work and in union meetings.

The main research questions are:

How do comparative contextual factors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland public transport sectors shape employment relations and workplace disputes at London Underground and Dublin Bus?

How is trade union resistance enabled and constrained during workplace disputes over restructuring and pay in the comparative case contexts of London Underground and Dublin Bus?

Initially, a generic purposive sampling technique will be employed and a small number of participants who occupy a position relevant to answering the research question will be contacted by using publically available e-mail/phone contacts. In order to broaden the scope of the research, snowball sampling will then be applied by asking the initial sample units for access to further relevant respondents. The sampling process will continue until the researcher reaches a data saturation point where no new insights emerge from the data.

Specify Data Source

Database to which Bangor University provides access

☐

Name of database (specify which):

Period of study:

Variables:

Data collected by student (be succinct - one word per entry)



Specify method (questionnaire, interview, archival, etc):

1) semi-structured interviews

2) archival

3) ethnography

Sample, group or informant:

1) employees, managers, union officials

2) press releases, newspaper articles, company documents, newsletters.

Period and location during which the data will be collected: September 2016-December 2016 in London and January to September 2017 in Dublin

Data for which copyright is required but not currently held by Bangor University



Name of database (specify which):

Period of study:

Variables:

(Attach evidence of lawful acquisition – e.g. invoice, contra details of the provider, etc.)

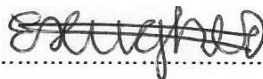

Other (describe in a separate document and attach)



Provide evidence of lawful acquisition of data (e.g. invoice, contact details)

Declaration

Tick	Specification	Action
A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Project entails no risk, minimal risk or will progress based on the analysis of published data (without requiring participation by vulnerable groups).	No need to be referred to the Ethics Committee
	I certify that I have read the University Research Ethics Policy.	

	<p>(Sd)  Date August 2nd 2016 Candidate (NAME): Emma Hughes</p> <p>I agree with the declaration above</p> <p>(Sd)  Date August 2nd 2016 Supervisor (NAME): Prof. Tony Dobbins</p>	
<p>B</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>BBS Internal Review - The discussion between supervisor and candidate was unable to determine whether this project entails minimal or no risk.</p> <p>A copy of the research proposal and a document explaining any potential risk should be emailed to BBS Ethics Officer (Dr Rasha Alsakka r.alsakka@bangor.ac.uk) for BBS internal review</p> <p><u>BBS Recommendations:</u></p> <p>Go to Point A <input type="checkbox"/> Go to Point C <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):</p> <p>(Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):</p> <p>Signed by two members: BBS ethics officer, and UG dissertation coordinator, UG director, PG director, Director of the doctoral programme, College Director of Research, Deputy HoS OR HoS.</p>	
<p>C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>BBS External Review – The project entails more than minimal risk</p> <p>Needs to be referred to the Collage Ethics Committee (Allow at least 4 weeks for review)</p> <p>This should be accompanied by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of the research proposal detailing any risk as defined in the University's Ethics Policy. 2. Copies of relevant supporting documentation (for example, letters of invitation to study participants, participant information sheets and consent forms). <p>Data Protection</p> <p>If the research involves the collection of data from private individuals, consent forms and information sheets should be completed and copies lodged with the secretary of the College Ethics Committee. Researchers need to ensure that they meet the legal requirement of the Criminal Records Bureau in these regards.</p> <p>Declaration</p>	

The declaration must be accompanied by the research proposal and relevant supporting documentation. It should be signed by the student and then counter-signed by the supervisor.

I certify that I have read the University Research Ethics Policy. The issues raised there that are relevant for this research project are described in the attached research proposal.

Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):

(Sd)..... Date..... (NAME):