SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

Abstract

The impact of neoliberal policies has increased since the 1980s. This situation has created radical changes in labour relations. This process was quite painful and the trade unions entered a crisis. Especially in the mid 80s and early 90s in Brazil, South Africa, Philippines and Argentina in such as countries, increased the labor movement bringing together social opposition, and they formed the unity of a common struggle. This movement have occurred on an axis mainly of neoliberal policies against poverty and unemployment under the leadership of the working class, with the support of social opposition movement consisting. These workers movements that Integrated social opposition is called “Social Movement Unionism”. Zonguldak Miners’ Strike and March (1990) and Tekel Workers Resistance (2009) are important examples about Social Movement Unionism in Turkey.

Keywords: Social Movement Unionism, Neoliberal Policies, Struggle of Trade Union

TOPLUMSAL HAREKET SENDIKACILIĞI VE NEOLIBERALIZM

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplumsal hareket sendikacılığı, Neoliberal politikalar, Sendikal mücadele

**Introduction**

From the last quarter of the 20th century, many changes in the field, especially political, social and economic, have become difficult to follow. Especially after the 1980s, the application of neoliberal policies, abandoned from the interventionist state model, which gained weight after the Second World War, has brought about radical changes in working relations. This process has confronted unions with a structural renewal obligation. It is inevitable for the trade unions to enter the process of this restructuring which is quite painful. The initiative that dragged the tradition of trade unionism to the cruel and liquidation point unfortunately did not come from the workers' movement. This development is largely a result of the new liberal program of the capital (Özuğurlu, 2008:57)

The current trade union crisis is rooted in the fact that the mass union concept that takes its roots from the industrial revolution is in a static structure because it is difficult to adapt to changing conditions in terms of both the organization form and the mass it covers in the new period. In the face of the transformation of capitalism, this stagnation in the labor movement has caused unions to enter a recession. The unions are almost alone in the face of neoliberal policies. In the mid-80s and early 90s, labor movements increased in developing countries such as Brazil, South Africa, the Philippines and Argentina, triggering social opposition and bringing together a common struggle coalition. This movement, led by the working class and supported by the social opposition, has mainly been an axis against poverty and unemployment created by neoliberal policies. These workers' movements integrated with social opposition are called "Social Movement Union (SMU)."

The social movement advocates the need for trade unionism to move beyond the clash of classical labor-capitalism, at a time when neoliberal politics is increasing its influence. It is also seeking solutions to the problems arising from this approach by approaching on its social axis. This approach, which suggests that the trade union movement should not be confined to only the workplaces, reflects a sense of organization that envisages a struggle involving a wide range of social groups such as employees, the unemployed, the poor, and the students.

In our country, the analysis of Zonguldak Mine Worker's Strike and Walk (1990) and the Monopoly Worker's Resistance (2009) in terms of SMU is important at what point these worker movements look like or different from SMU.

1. **Development of Social Movement Unionism**

The fact that unions and trade unionism have been in a crisis as a whole for the last thirty years has been accepted as a phenomenon in all circles, rather than a debate. The most important factors of this crisis are the neoliberal policies which are almost the same as the crisis of life, and the economic globalization which depends on this policy.

Unions facing the deadlock they are in, they have sought a solution to the crisis to get out of the least harm. At this point, in the mid-80s and early 90's trade union movements in some countries like South Africa, Brazil, Philippines, South Korea, Argentina have been a hope for the union's
search for this solution. The name of this hope is the Social Movement Unionism, which opens up new struggles for unionism, introduces new tasks, and advocates that unions should have a much broader perspective.

Unions have provided very different solutions and "new" suggestions. Some of the proposals look at the countries where trade unions are still strong (such as Sweden, Finland, Denmark) and the trade union movement (countries like South Korea, South Africa, Brazil, Philippines) where the struggle is quite alive, produce. Social Movement Unionism is also emerging as unionism as a result of such observations (Akkaya, 2004:2)

It is difficult to make a universal definition because SMU carries the unique characteristics of the regions and countries in which it emerges. Authors conducting research on SMU can also make different definitions according to events or countries they have studied. Along with the different characteristics of living SMU experiences, these experiences unite at some basic points and form a common ground.

The most similar aspect of these experiences is that they have emerged as increasing rifts with neoliberal policies and globalization and as a revolt against poverty. Another important common feature is not just neoliberal politics, but a direct stance towards the capitalist system. The aim here is not to make the system viable by correcting the problems of the system, but to change itself directly. In other words, the SMU rejects a reformist notion of unionism.

In South Africa, one of the most important centers of the SMU, the most famous slogan is "Capitalism Disease" in the "People Before the Profit" campaign, which was launched by the South African Congress of Trade Unions (COSATU) this is no coincidence. (Naidoo, 2001:5)

It is different from the SMU party leadership and collective bargaining unionism and includes less ideological and political tendency than broad direction. It does not carry the structural and legal characteristics of the trade union or trade union. This unionism involves rebellion against capitalist globalization. It opposes co-operation and bureaucratic leadership (Moody, 1997:52-57)

The social movement unionism has manifested itself as a reaction to the collaborative and passive attitudes of the unions in Europe and the United States in the face of the attack of neoliberal policies. In the face of neoliberal policies, it was recognized that classical trade union organizations were helpless, and in some southern countries such as South Africa, Brazil, the Philippines and South Korea, the social movement unionism started with its own actions.

The social movement unionism, in terms of the regions it has emerged, is a critique of the unionism concept of the "North" as well as the features of the "South" (Watermen, 2001:315-317) The North's trade unionism, criticized by the South, is a plain unionism, largely an economic character, focused on a narrow area, free of political activity (Fairbrother, 2008:213)

SMU is an objection to the outcome of the co-operative trade unionism of Europe after World War II and the workplace that the United States has watched and the limited wage / collective bargaining unionism (Akkaya, 2004:3)

The most important element that enables SMU to present itself as a solution to the desperate labor movement in the face of neoliberal policies that distinguish it from other forms of unionism is that SMU does not only serve workers' interests. SMU maintains a classical trade union struggle such as wage and collective bargaining, but it also has a much wider struggle
perspective, such as poverty, unemployment, discrimination, racism, environmental pollution, all of which concern the whole society.

For this reason, SMU cooperates with all other organizations that are struggling with problems such as themselves. In doing this, neither the party nor the organization under its control nor the organization under its control. Here, SMU is a center for combating problems, bringing together social opposition. In other words, SMU is the center of social opposition. The social movement unionism involves being the locomotive of the struggle by leading the social movements in society. (Aganon & Serrano & Certeza 2009: 41)

The main features of the SMU, which have emerged in different countries, but have common elements, can be listed more systematically as follows: (Naido, 2001:4-6; Aganon & Serrano & Certeza 2009: 41-46)

- SMU is a powerful tool to face / fight the globalization of capital (with neoliberal policies).
- SMU appears to be a cruel solution to unions.
- In SMU unions enter into solidarity with not only union solidarity but all other social groups. Political parties, democratic mass organizations, student unions, etc.
- In SMU trade unions lead organizations that are cooperating. But there is no structural union or pressure. Cooperating organizations act on equal terms.
- SMU does not need any party leadership. Any opinion refuses to go under the domination of ideology.
- The problems addressed in the SMU are diverse. It is beyond the problems of working life. Poverty, income distribution inequality, unemployment, etc.
- SMU is an ideal organization to protect the most urgent needy groups for protection, such as weak social classes, unregistered workers, precarious workers, child workers.
- SMU requires extensive international solidarity. Because the problems they struggle have to transcend local boundaries.
- All SMU's cooperating organizations can use a variety of forms of action. Demonstration walks, protests, building occupations or more radical actions.

New features can be added to the characteristics of the SMU, which are considered to be actions that are not due to a particular theory or ideology, but which originate in practice. In South Africa, SMU has taken shape with radical actions, known as the Kilusung Maya Uno (KMU) movements in the Philippines, while it is shaped by the anti-apartheid movement, an anti-racist struggle (Aganon & Serrano & Certeza, 2009:49).

There was no direct SMU experience in Turkey. However, some workers' movements, the elements they carry, and the dynamics they contain have SMU-like features. These movements, which reflect the basic features of the SMU, are the Zonguldak Mining Strike and Walking (1990). Another important worker movement in this respect is the Tekel Worker's Resistance (2009).
2. Evaluation of Zonguldak Strike And Tekel Resistance In The Framework Of Social Movement Unionism

2.1. SMU and Zonguldak Mine Workers Strike

The great strike, initiated by the mining workers of Zonguldak and distinctive to the Turkish workers' movement, started in the last month of 1990 and ended in the first month of 1991. This important worker movement records are referred to as "Zonguldak Great Mining Strike and Walk". In terms of the Social Movement Uniononism (SMU), this strike in Zonguldak has a separate set of workers' movements in terms of its beginning, development and impact.

The strike decision was made by GMİS on 30 November 1990 with the result of the dispute between the General Mining Work Union (GMİS) organized in the Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises (TTK) and Mineral Research and Exploration (MTA) establishments in Zonguldak and the employers' (Yükselen, 1998:550).

The agenda of the strike country is on the agenda and discussions by all parties have begun to debate the cause and effect of the strike. What is important here in terms of SMU is that the discussions made are based on the criticism of neoliberal policies, which are still new for that period. Here, our antagonism is "the means of combating neoliberal policies," which constitutes the most fundamental characteristic of SMU experiences. At the same time, this is an indication that the demands of the workers are not only economic but also political.

The course and results of the Zonguldak strike would have been a model in terms of neoliberal policies being implemented since 1980. The tie-up of the problem here led to the struggle to overcome the economic dimension and gain a political dimension (Yükselen, 1998:551).

Experiences experienced during the strikes and walks are another element of SMU's "being the center of social opposition". During the strike and march, GMİS president Şemsi Denizer has been very good at keeping the pulse of the workers and the social opposition.

The strike began on 30 November 1990, with a large part of the public opinion being close to 10 political parties, numerous trade union democratic mass organizations, professional associations, student associations, student unions, hurdles, women's organizations and many other associations and foundations. They also supported workers from international trade unions. All the organizations that supported the greeting and the march acted according to the attitude of GMİS. This is one of the best examples of collecting blanket trucks, after walking, explaining that workers need blanket to protect from cold. GMİS was at the center of social opposition (Özen, 1998:553-554; Yükselen, 1998: 550-551).

This movement in Zonguldak is similar in many respects to SMU experiences, but it shows some differences in some aspects. These differences are; we can enumerate, as a general rule, the absence of a trade union crisis debate, the failure of SMU to be a trade union crime solution, and the absence of a direct capitalist system opposition, as opposed to neoliberal politics. Despite these differences, however, Zonguldak Great Mining Strike and Walk is an important example for our country in terms of SMU.
2.2. SMU and Tekel Worker Resistance

Tekel Worker's Resistance or Tekel Resistance is a tough resistance that started on December 14, 2009, when the monopoly workers from all over Turkey gathered in Ankara for 78 days. The Tek Food-İş Trade Union took action decision on December 14, 2009 against the obligation of working with a status of 4 / C, which causes nearly 12 Tekel workers to suffer serious loss of rights in working conditions.

After Zonguldak Great Mining Strike, this great worker movement in Turkey has become a breath of life for a long, silent labor movement. In the beginning, the resistance, which is not considered very important by the government, has gained an unexpected dimension by establishing a tent and continuity of resistance in Sakarya avenue, the center of Ankara. This challenging resistance for 78 days also has important features in terms of SMU.

In terms of SMU, the most distinctive feature of Monopoly Resistance is a clear rebellion against the neoliberal politics that has been practiced for almost 30 years, and a mere wage bargain. The resistance developed not as a simple wage bargain but as a right struggle aimed at direct neoliberal politics. For this reason, the demands were not simply trapped in the working life. The elimination of poverty, the elimination of unemployment and the demands of the whole society, such as human life, were mentioned (Bürkev, 2010: 27). Another important characteristic of the Monopoly Resistance for the SMU is the emergence of an anti-capitalist opposition, under the influence of the hard reaction to neoliberal politics.

The social support provided by Monopoly Resistance is a good example to show for SMU experiences. Throughout the resistance, many small and large organizations, such as student associations, from political parties of democratic mass organizations, gave uninterrupted support to many workers and civil servant unions. In addition, support for resistance throughout the country, especially the people of Ankara and shopkeepers, has increased day by day. Throughout the resistance, the social opposition was thrown into the hearts of resistance tents. The union has managed to successfully manage the resistance and to keep the organizations that support the resistance together. Shortly after it began, this resistance, which emerged from the peculiarity of the monopoly workers and found general public support, became a breath of life in the short term of the social opposition.

The most important feature that distinguishes the Monopoly Resistance from the workers' movement in Zonguldak in terms of SMU is that it raised the voice of the "trade union crime solution" debate. The resistance of the resistance to the trade union movement and the success of bringing the social opposition together has exacerbated the debate as to whether it would be an alternative to the crisis of the unions.

It is impossible to say that Monopoly Resistance is a pure SMU example, even though it contains features very similar to SMU experiences. The fact that the ending of the resistance without any concrete success, in particular, cannot be separated from the traditional bureaucratic union structure, and the fact that the union cannot maintain its position as the "center of social opposition" throughout the resistance, makes this movement a pure SMU.

Conclusion

Both Zonguldak Great Mining Strike and Tekel Worker Resistance, SMU in terms of creating a beautiful example on behalf of our country, along with important lessons to be removed.
Similar characteristics to SMU, which emerged in both workers' movements, occurred within the framework of reactions from the moment. For this reason, when these workers' movements end, the structure similar to that of the SMU examples also stands out. It is not the case that unions, trade unionists, workers and all other organizations are consciously gathered in the SMU framework.

Under what circumstances SMU experience has shown that it is necessary to cooperate with social opposition in order to make the unions stronger and weaker in the face of neoliberal policies. Because neoliberal policies threaten not only the unions but the whole society.

While capitalism produces new policies in its new era, struggles with these new policies, with the support of the unions and the society, may be a hope for the new era to overcome the trade union crisis.

REFERENCES


