Chapter 21

Labor Unions and Economic Geography

Andrew Herod

Issues of labor have long been central to understanding the location of economic activities – Weber's (1929 [1909]) locational model, for example, was based, in part, on the geography of labor costs. However, for most of the twentieth century, economic geographers have tended to see labor purely in terms of its costs to capital and how these impacted firms' locational decision-making processes. Only recently has this begun to change as economic geographers have sought to unpack the monolithic category of "labor" to understand how geographic context makes a difference to how workers behave and what this means for understanding how economic landscapes are made (Peck, this volume; Walker and Storper, 1981; Storper and Walker, 1983). Part of this unpacking has involved studying the spatial aspects of labor unionism. In this chapter I outline the principal issues involved in this project. The first section provides a brief overview of several major themes that emerged in the late 1980s and blossomed in the 1990s with regard to studying geographical aspects of workers' and unions' behavior. Its goal is to highlight why understanding the spatial context within which unions operate, together with the impacts unions' activities have on the landscape, is crucial if we are to more fully comprehend not only how the geography of capitalism is currently made but also how it can be made in a more progressive fashion. The second section examines some of the theoretical debates that have shaped the study by geographers of unions and their activities. The third section ponders how some recent developments in the way capitalism is organized geographically may affect unions.

Themes in the Geographic Study of Labor Unions[1]

In the mid-1980s, a number of economic geographers began to study how the geographic context within which labor unions find themselves affects how they operate. Several themes emerged, including how unions were organized geographically; how the state regulates spatially the activities of labor unions; how unions and workers have shaped the evolution of economic landscapes; how new geographical relationships between work and home are affecting the geography of labor

organization; how new work arrangements such as the rise of just-in-time (JIT) production and the explosion of service sector employment are forcing unions to adopt different models of organizing; how workers' lives are structured geographically and what this means for unions' abilities to organize; and how workers' "senses of place" shape, and are shaped by, local or regional cultural practices and contexts. Elsewhere (Herod, 1998a) I have suggested that four principal and overlapping foci of research have emerged: the geography of labor union regulation; the relationship between unionism and the economic geography of capitalism; political geographies of union organizing; and how place and local context shape processes of union organizing.

Geographies of labor union regulation

All modes of social regulation have specific, and sometimes unintended, geographic consequences. A concern with the geographic impacts of systems of social regulation, such as labor law, formed the basis for much work within economic geography on labor unions beginning in the mid-1980s. In particular, this research argued that it was important to understand the geographical assumptions built into the laws governing unions if the dynamics of a country's labor unionism were to be understood. Such ideas were taken up in Gordon Clark's work on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in the USA.[2] Principally, Clark sought to show that the geographical assumptions behind US labor regulation affected unions' political and organizational possibilities. He argued, for example, that US labor law has privileged local traditions and social practices, suggesting that while this may allow for collective bargaining and organizing that are sensitive to local conditions, it has also hindered unions in developing national agreements and labor standards (Clark, 1989). As corporations have increasingly become multi-locational they have been able to use variations in labor law and collective bargaining practices in different parts of the USA to extract concessions from labor, a practice that would be considerably harder if national norms prevailed. Similarly, Johnston (1986) examined how the Uniform Commercial Code and the Commerce Clause of the US Constitution encouraged the establishment of a national market for goods, while the local focus of labor law created a spatially heterogeneous set of rules concerning collective bargaining. The result of this has been to give capital great opportunities to engage in "whip-sawing," in which workers are played against each other on the basis of variations in wages, collective bargaining agreements, working conditions, and the like. Clark also showed how new working arrangements such as the growth of "flexible production" and "teamwork" were forcing the NLRB to adapt new models of labor regulation, together with how the Board's varying interpretations of labor law (over time and between places) could shape the evolution of the industrial landscape (Clark, 1986, 1988).

Several other authors have also looked at the ways in which labor law has structured the geography of labor unionism and, in turn, the evolution of economic geographies. Herod (1997a, 1997b) showed how decisions by the NLRB and law courts affected the geography of dual unionism and work location in the East Coast longshoring industry, while Finch and Nagel (1983) illustrated how a change in the regulatory environment concerning teachers in Connecticut led to a greater

standardization of contracts across the state. Relatedly, in comparing the strategies typically adopted by unions operating under the National Labor Relations Act with those operating under the Railroad Labor Act (RLA), Baruffalo (1996) has highlighted how different regulatory systems can shape unions' geographical practices. He suggests that whereas the former group of unions often attempts to develop national strikes as a way of pressuring employers, railroad unions frequently attempt to keep strikes local because, under the terms of the RLA, a national shutdown of rail traffic may invite congressional intervention into their industry. Providing a British comparison, Blomley's (1994) analysis of the 1984–85 British coal miners' strike highlighted how the Conservative government used the law to prevent striking miners from traveling between coal fields and so developing solidarity across space. All of these works, in various ways, have illustrated the interconnections between the regulatory environment within which unions must operate and the implications this has for how economic landscapes are made.

Unions and the economic geography of capitalism

A second line of investigation has studied how the geography of labor unionism has shaped the economic geography of capitalism more immediately (as opposed to through the nexus of the regulatory system). An early study by Peet (1983), for example, argued that what he called "the geography of class struggle" had fundamentally determined the way in which the US national economy has developed geographically as high levels of union membership, wages, and strikes (which Peet took to indicate a high level of class struggle) in northeastern states have encouraged the migration of capital to the southern and southwestern states where union membership levels, wages, and strikes have been lower. More recent research questions some of these empirical findings (see Herod, 1997c), but the conceptual argument that labor unions can affect the economic landscape by repelling capital is important for theorizing both how the geography of capitalism is made and labor's role in that process. Other examples include Gordon's (1978) analysis of the historical geography of urbanization in the USA, in which he argued that much of the impetus for the suburbanization of manufacturing in northern industrial regions has been the result of companies' desire to escape unionized urban workforces. Page (1998) made a similar argument with regard to the decentralization of the meatpacking industry from centers of militant union power such as Chicago to smaller towns throughout the US Midwest which had more pliable unions. A similar process appears to have occurred in Britain during the 1980s, as investment flowed from urban to suburban and rural areas in a process designed to replace militant urban unions with less militant suburban/rural ones (Church and Stevens, 1994).

Such analyses illustrate how capital has attempted to negotiate its way in the landscape by avoiding areas of labor militancy – thereby showing how labor unions have indirectly affected the evolution of economic landscapes. A different tack has been taken by other analyses showing how organized labor has more directly shaped the economic geography of capitalism. Parson (1982, 1984), for example, highlighted the role played by unions in the USA in debates over suburbanization and urban renewal, and how they actively shaped these processes as part of a solution to the housing and employment problems faced by many of their members. In his

analysis of agriculture in early twentieth-century California, Mitchell (1996) argued that the spatial practices of migratory workers shaped the ways in which the rural landscape was fashioned. In what was perhaps an early hint of the recent "cultural turn" in economic geography, Cooke (1985) analyzed how the cultural practices associated with unionism had been fundamental to the establishment of South Wales as a coherent industrial and political region in the nineteenth century. Turning to more recent events, Hudson and Sadler (1983, 1985, 1986) have argued that the activities of steelworkers, particularly their responses to government efforts in France and Britain to privatize their industry, significantly shaped processes of economic restructuring in these two countries' steel industries. Focusing on the international activities of the US labor movement during the twentieth century, Herod (1997d) has documented how organized labor played an important role in structuring patterns of economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean. To ensure jobs for US workers, many US union officials helped corporations "open up" the region's markets for US products.

A final aspect of this strand of work has examined how the geographical organization of the economic landscape affects the ways in which unions organize. Earle (1992a) suggests, for example, that a geographical examination of strikes in the USA in the 1880s and 1890s highlights the changing characteristics of organized labor. He maintains that as urbanization proceeded, and cities such as Chicago drew in ever larger numbers of migrants from rural and small-town America, together with immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, the bringing together of workers sharing new common experiences facilitated the growth of organized labor's economic and political power. (Thompson (1963) has made similar arguments about how the process of urbanization in Britain during the Industrial Revolution allowed for the "collectivization" of worker protest.) In a quite different situation, Holmes and Rusonik (1991) similarly argued that changes in the economic landscape may dramatically impact unions' structure and capacities to exert political and economic power. For example, the widening of production–cost differentials in the auto industry between Canada and the USA in the late 1970s created a situation in which workers on opposite sides of the border were experiencing very different sets of economic conditions. This, they argued, created such tension between the Canadian and the US segments of the United Auto Workers union that the Canadian workers split from their US colleagues to form a new Canadian Auto Workers union.

The political geography of union organizing

Labor organizing, like any other type of political organizing, is geographically informed. A third avenue of research, then, has been to investigate how space is implicated in union organizing, both in terms of how differences across the economic landscape shape the context within which organizing is occurring and also in terms of the geographical assumptions that are built into different models of organizing. For example, in their discussion of efforts to organize two quite different groups of workers – clerical workers at Yale University and janitors in Los Angeles – Berman (1998) and Savage (1998) have shown how geography informed the tactics and models of organizing adopted by both groups. In the case of Yale this involved dividing the campus up into zones in which different groups of organizers would

operate, while in the case of Los Angeles's janitors it involved moving the campaign for a living wage from the private spaces of the workplace (i.e. the individual buildings within which the janitors worked) to the public spaces of the street, thereby bringing public pressure to bear upon the employers.

The geographical mobility of union organizers has also been examined. Indeed, Southall (1988, 1989, 1996) has argued that the mobility of artisans in eighteenth-century Britain laid the basis for the formation of unions in many trades as artisans took ideas about unionism with them to different parts of the country or even abroad. Wills (1998a) has likewise shown how the migration of union organizers between different factories in northern England during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s helped both to spread ideas about labor unionism and to develop solidarity between workers in these different plants – a solidarity that became important during a number of industrial disputes. Mitchell (1998) has highlighted the role played by traveling organizers in spatially connecting strikes by agricultural workers in different parts of California in the 1930s. All of these authors have argued, in different ways, that ideas about unionism can be transmitted from place to place through the geographic migration of union activists, helping develop solidarity between workers in different communities. Equally, they have suggested that understanding this process can provide insight into the evolution of cultures of labor unionism in different places in ways that non-spatial approaches cannot. For example, analysis of labor migration, with migrating workers bringing new ideas about unions with them, may help account for sudden transformations in local cultures of unionism in ways that purely historical analyses of such places' internal dynamics do not (this argument is laid out more fully in Herod, 1998b).

A final theme involves understanding how different cultures of work and political life may shape the political geography of union organizing. Earle (1992b), for instance, suggests that through their understanding of the geography of support and non-support for the 1886 general strike in the USA, leaders of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) quickly realized that the US working class was deeply divided along geographical lines. The failure of the general strike in many parts of the country brought the AFL to the view that its own interests were perhaps best served by a narrowly-defined craft unionism focused upon self-identified constituencies in the northeastern industrial heartland, rather than by an industrial unionism that was broader both sectorally and geographically.[3] These leaders determined that a geographically decentralized organizational structure would be a way to minimize the spread of industrial violence that had precipitated widespread state repression of unions after the 1886 strike. The result has been a rather weak federative style of unionism at the national level in the USA, in contrast to the strong centrally run systems in countries such as Germany. (In similar fashion, Charlesworth et al. (1996) suggest that variations in local work cultures and attitudes help explain the geography of industrial protest in Britain between 1750 and 1990.)

Local context and the power of place

Geographers have long regarded the concept of "place" as holding a somewhat vaunted position within the discipline. This is evident in work conducted on labor

unionism, which has attempted both to illustrate how union practices vary across the economic landscape but also how the specific geographic context within which organized workers live may shape their practice of labor unionism. For example, Painter (1991) has suggested that public-sector unions' responses to privatization in Britain have been conditioned by local histories and cultures of union activity, economic well-being, and past experiences with privatization. In turn, differences across the landscape in these unions' responses have shaped the process of privatization itself in an on-going manner – greater opposition in some locales has hindered privatization relative to other places where it has been more easily undertaken. Likewise, Wills's (1996) examination of the geography of unionism in the British banking industry highlighted divergent traditions and attitudes towards unionism between Warrington in the north of England and the "new town" of Welwyn Garden City in southern England which are, in turn, affecting patterns of investment and the introduction of new technologies and work practices into the financial industry. Relatedly, Martin et al. (1994a, 1994b) have shown how local context shaped the evolution of industrial relations and union politics in the British engineering industry. As employers have pressured unions to decentralize the geographical scale at which bargaining takes place, nationally uniform contracts are being replaced by a patchwork of locally negotiated ones which may vary considerably from place to place. As a result, capital may be allowed greater opportunities to play plants and localities against one another, exploiting differences in their local conditions and contracts (a situation that also exists in the USA where many national agreements were dismantled in the 1980s (Herod, 1991)).

Theoretical and Methodological Debates

A number of theoretical and methodological debates and discussions have shaped the study of the spatial nature of labor unionism. The most significant conceptual issues have involved debates over the relative importance of "culture" versus "economy" in understanding patterns of unionization (which is itself somewhat reflective of the challenge to traditional economic geography that the "cultural turn" has posed), matters of the geographical scale at which unions carry out their activities, and contrasts in approach between examining the "geography of labor" and "labor geographies." These debates have also raised methodological issues about how to carry out research in this area.

One of the most significant discussions concerning the spatiality of unionism emerged in Britain as a result of efforts to explain the geography of the 1984–85 strike by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in opposition to the government's plans to privatize the coal industry and shut down many unprofitable mines. The debate focused on the relative significance of economic factors and of cultures of unionism in explaining geographical differences in support for the strike and the subsequent secession from the old NUM of miners in the East Midlands. Whereas Rees (1985, 1986) suggested that the pattern of support for the strike had to do largely with the changing geography of investment in the industry – with the National Coal Board shifting production away from peripheral regions such as South Wales and towards lower-cost fields in the East Midlands – Sunley (1986, 1990) and Griffiths and Johnston (1991) maintained that a more

significant explanator was the differing cultures of labor politics in regions such as Scotland and South Wales (where miners have a long history of socialist politics) compared to the East Midlands (where miners have tended to be less socialist in outlook).

A slightly different debate about "culture versus economy" in examining the geography of trade unionism in Britain involved an interchange between Massey and a number of her co-workers (Massey, 1994; Painter, 1994; Massey and Miles, 1984; Massey and Painter, 1989) and Martin et al. (1993, 1994c; see also 1996). Much of this interchange involved a methodological debate concerning changing national patterns of union representation. Massey and her colleagues used data on the changing share of unions' membership accounted for by different parts of Britain to suggest that the geography of unionism evident for much of the twentieth century underwent a dramatic transformation in the post-1970 period. They argued that the traditional "heartlands" of unionism such as Scotland, Wales, and Northern England had seen both a relative and an absolute decline in union membership as a result of the geographic reorganization of capital, the failure of unions to organize in regions of new investment, and the relocation of many government functions away from London (which facilitated the growth of public sector unionism in more peripheral regions). Taken together, these developments were seen to have brought about a greater equalization of levels of unionism across the national landscape as many traditional regions of manufacturing unionism were decimated and other regions with little union tradition experienced a growth, particularly in service and public sector unionism. Such developments were understood to suggest that economic restructuring and political reorganization had diminished the influence of local union culture in traditional union heartlands.

In contrast, Martin et al. maintained that the heartlands of British unionism had remained quite resilient during the post-1970s economic restructuring and had not experienced the kind of "smoothing out" suggested by Massey et al. Their opposing view was based on the fact that Martin et al. measured levels of union membership in a different manner, using union *density* (the proportion of workers in different industries and regions who are actually union members) instead of the percentage share of unions' membership accounted for by various regions. Based upon this analysis, they argued that, in fact, economic restructuring had had little effect on relative levels of density for most unions – that is to say, that the heartlands still retained generally higher levels of union density than did the traditionally less-unionized regions. They inferred from this that economic restructuring was less significant in explaining patterns of unionism in Britain towards the end of the twentieth century than were local cultures and traditions of unionism, which seemed to have a certain degree of resilience across time. Though not specifically related to this "culture versus economy" debate, Church and Stevens (1994) suggested that an examination of union density in Britain at the urban and rural – rather than regional – scale of analysis showed patterns different from those described by either Massey et al. or Martin et al.[4]

Such variations in interpretation resulting from analyses at different geographical scales (urban versus regional, for example) highlight the question of geographic scale with regard to examining the spatiality of labor unionism. Certainly, as outlined above, scale has been implicated methodologically in the study of unionism – that is

to say, varying the scale of the analysis may lead to differing interpretations of what is being observed, such that an apparent concentration of union membership measured at one scale may appear to be a dispersed pattern at another scale. More interestingly, however, much analysis of the spatial tactics engaged in by workers and unions has also attempted to understand how they have created different geographical scales of organization as an integral part of their political practice, together with how such efforts have been contested by employers, by the state, and by different fractions of workers with different political visions. The ability, for example, to "scale up" from local to national systems of wage bargaining, in which all workers in an industry are paid the same wage, allows unions to eliminate wage competition, thereby limiting employers' abilities to play different groups of workers against each other. In such an example, the ability to construct a new scale of bargaining – national rather than local – represents a significant victory for workers. Such conflicts over scale, though, are not always simply between capital and labor. Rather, they may involve struggles between different groups of workers fighting amongst themselves to organize their activities on a spatial scale that most helps them attain their own goals. For instance, workers in high-unemployment regions may fight against the establishment of national contracts, fearing that nationally set wages may price them out of local labor markets where conditions only support low-wage production. Equally, rival factions within a union might look to achieve different scales of organization. In the case of the British miners' strike, the national NUM leadership attempted to maintain national unity whereas miners in Nottinghamshire broke away to form a regional union (the Union of Democratic Miners) which, they felt, would better reflect their political goals. Social conflicts, then, frequently involve one group of actors trying to confine their opponents to a scale of social operation that limits their abilities to achieve their goals, while making sure their own operations are organized at the appropriate geographical scale to facilitate their own action. How such conflicts are resolved has important implications for the ways in which the economic geography of capitalism is made.

A further issue has concerned the differentiation between what has been termed a "geography of labor" and a "labor geography," a nomenclature intended to distinguish two approaches to examining the spatiality of labor unionism (Herod, 1997e). The term "geography of labor" describes approaches in which workers and their organizations appear in explanations in rather passive terms, as social objects between which capital chooses in making its locational decisions. Such approaches tend, implicitly, to tell the story of how economic landscapes are made from the perspective of capital, which uses such differences to its own advantage. Peet's (1983) analysis of the geography of class struggle in the USA, for example, while highlighting the varying characteristics of labor in different parts of the country, was principally aimed at showing how capital exploited such variations as it reorganized itself in the post-WWII period in the great "Snowbelt–Sunbelt" migration from the old industrial heartland to the new industrial spaces of the South and Southwest. The term "labor geography" was coined to describe approaches that attempt to incorporate a more active sense of workers and their organizations struggling to shape the economic landscape as an integral part of their own social practices. Such approaches seek to tell the story of how economic landscapes are made through the eyes of labor, to show that workers, too, have a vested interest in ensuring that the

geography of capitalism is made in some ways and not others. Thus, through their spatial strategies and geographical struggles, workers might attempt to develop a certain "spatial fix" (cf. Harvey, 1982) which they see as central to achieving their social and political goals.

The purpose of this distinction was neither to create a taxonomy of studies, nor to suggest that understanding how the geography of capitalism is made could rely upon only one approach. Rather, it was intended as a corrective to the narrow ways in which economic geographers, informed by both mainstream (i.e. neoclassical) economic theory and Marxist theory, had usually thought about labor. It is important to understand how corporations play different locations against each other based upon their labor characteristics, but it is equally important to understand how workers and their organizations may successfully shape the economic landscape in ways which they prefer – ways that an examination solely of the activities of capital will not reveal. Nevertheless, the two approaches do tend to implicate different methodologies in their explanations, which in many ways reflect Sayer's (1982) distinction between what he called "extensive" and "intensive" research practices. Studies of the "geography of labor" (such as Peet, 1983) tend to be more descriptive of labor, tend to focus upon patterns of labor across the landscape, and tend to lend themselves more easily to quantitative analysis. Those focusing upon "labor geography" (cf. Herod, 1998c) tend toward a more active incorporation of labor, tend to look for causality rather than pattern in explanation, tend more frequently to be case studies of particular situations, and tend to use more qualitative-type research methodologies such as ethnography, personal interviews of key players in particular events, and analysis of archival records which can illuminate causality better than can large-scale statistical analyses (cf. Schoenberger, 1991, on the uses of interviews). Whereas the former tend to produce results that are often generalizable to other situations, the latter tend towards explanations that are not meant to be generalizable in a statistical sense but, rather, are designed to shed light upon broader conceptual issues or economic processes.

Unions in the New Economy

This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of recent trends in the economic geography of capitalism but there are three that appear to augur important consequences for labor unions: the impact of globalization; the growth of the service sector; and the reorganization of work in what has sometimes been termed the transition from "Fordism" to "post-Fordism." I touch on these briefly to show that each has particular implications for how unions organize themselves spatially.

Globalization

The growing integration of the global economy is posing many problems for workers in both the industrialized economies, where they face issues of job loss, and in the developing nations which, though often the recipients of capital investment by transnational corporations, usually have not seen workers' standards of living rise and have tended to remain in a neocolonial economic relationship with Western Europe, the USA and Canada, and Japan. Within such developments, two issues are

of particular importance to unions in both the industrialized and the developing worlds. First, clearly, workers in different countries are increasingly working in different branches of the same corporations. Although this is raising many problems for unions, it is also bringing with it new possibilities. Unions representing workers in different countries are increasingly attempting to develop global networks through which they can mount international campaigns against their common employers. There are many problems associated with this – such as widely differing work conditions, levels of remuneration, labor laws, and traditions of unionism – but some unions have achieved a good degree of success in organizing across national boundaries (cf. Moody, 1988, 1997; Hecker and Hallock, 1991; Bendiner, 1987; Frundt, 1987, 1996; Herod, 1995; ICEM, 1998; Johns, 1998; Wills, 1998b; Armbruster-Sandoval, 1999; for an historical account, see van Holthoon and van der Linden, 1988).

Second, globalization and the growing access to telecommunications technology are bringing with them new ways of trying to develop international solidarity between workers, such as corporate campaigns, attempting to get corporations to adopt codes of conduct, consumer activism, and others (Jarley and Maranto, 1990). Although there have been international union organizations since the middle of the nineteenth century, for much of the twentieth century they were split along Cold War lines and were often limited in their capacities to act (for general accounts of international labor activities during the past 150 years, see Windmuller, 1980; Price, 1945; Busch, 1983). The international activities of various nations' labor movements have also typically been the preserve of professional organizers associated with national or international labor union organizations. By their very nature, these have tended to be quite hierarchically organized activities, with unions in one country contacting their national center, which then contacts the international organization, which contacts the national center in the second country, which then contacts the appropriate local union representing workers in the same corporation that employs workers in the first country. The rise of new telecommunications media in general, and the Internet in particular, however, have led some to suggest that in the future rank-and-file workers who are handy with a computer and who can make direct links with their confederates in plants in other countries will increasingly be on the cutting edge of cross-border labor activities – a shift from what Waterman (1993) calls solidarity through paid "agents" of international labor organizations to solidarity through shopfloor "networkers." Such a new model of labor organization brings with it quite different geographical assumptions and ways of thinking about the spatial relationships between workers (such as conceptualizing space in less "hierarchical" terms, viewing connections between workers in terms of their location within cyberspace rather than their actual location in concrete space, and a diminished importance of the national capital cities – where union headquarters are often located – relative to peripheral regions where the workers themselves may be physically located). Indeed, although a relatively new technology, the Internet's interactive nature has already been used successfully in corporate campaigns by several unions (for an account of the international campaign waged by the United Steelworkers of America and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions against the Bridgestone/Firestone tire company, see Herod, 1998d).

Growth of the service sector

In most industrial economies, employment in services has grown dramatically during the past three decades. This is significant for unions in a number of ways, not least of which is that service sector jobs are often held by women and minorities, groups that labor unions in industrialized countries have either been reluctant to organize or have found difficult to organize. One of the most important implications for unions, however, is that organizing service sector workers may involve different sets of geographical assumptions and spatial strategies than does organizing manufacturing workers.

Savage (1998, p. 231, drawing on Green and Tilly, 1987) has suggested that, at least in the USA, traditional methods of labor organizing have been developed in the context of the manufacturing sector, often relying on models that have certain implicit geographical assumptions about the spatial layout of the workplace. Such models have typically assumed: 1) workers in a workplace "hot shop" have already decided they want to be unionized and contact an organizer; 2) the organizer appeals to "bread and butter" issues such as wages and benefits rather than product quality, worker participation, or broader social justice issues; 3) the organizer appeals to workers on the basis of their identity as workers for a particular employer, not as minorities, women, community members, etc.; 4) the organizer views organizing as a technical matter rather than as a means to engage a broad-based rank-and-file movement; 5) organizing strategies are based on large, centralized workplaces with few entrance gates, regular shift changes, and large, stable workforces (meaning that just a handful of pickets can easily leaflet large numbers of workers about the benefits of unionism); and 6) organizers focus upon winning 51 percent of any union representation vote and then quickly move on to campaigns elsewhere. Such models tend to assume a certain micro-geography to the workplace, such as limited means of egress, and the existence of areas within the plant where workers are more radicalized or have developed solidarity around the defense of certain narrowly defined work skills (perhaps as a result of working at a single task in a particular phase of the production process). They therefore tend to focus attention on organizing at the scale of the workplace itself, a process in which workers are usually disembodied from broader-scale struggles of social justice or from broader notions of geographic community, in which each plant is seen as a separate entity with its own sets of issues, and in which conflicts over organizing and collective bargaining are largely conducted within the relatively private spaces of the shop floor and corporate boardroom.

Organizing in the service sector involves quite different spatial assumptions and micro-geographies of work. Service sector workers often work in much closer physical contact to an employer or supervisor (making it more difficult for organizers to gain access to them). Furthermore, they are often employed in smaller-scale workplaces, are often part-time or temporary workers, and are often employed in places to which non-workers such as customers have access (i.e. in more public spaces than manufacturing workers). In the case of retailing in particular, they also are frequently "multi-tasking" workers who engage in several different tasks during the workday (serving customers, restocking shelves, cleaning up workspaces, doing

paperwork, etc.). Savage notes that such differences mean that successful organizing in the service sector must adopt different models of organizing with different spatial assumptions. These include moving the struggle for union rights from the private space of the workplace to the public space of the streets or shopping malls (thereby allowing public and/or consumer pressure to be brought to bear upon employers), and moving beyond site-specific struggles to community-based unionism. Some (e.g. Cobble, 1991) argue that moving the geographical terrain of conflict in this way is particularly effective for workers such as waitresses and janitors who have ties to an occupation but not necessarily to an individual employer and, thus, to a particular workplace.

Post-Fordism, just-in-time production, and teamwork

"Fordist" methods of manufacturing frequently involved firms stockpiling components (the so-called "just-in-case" approach), and dividing the labor process into narrow skill categories as part of the "Taylorization" of work (categories that unions often defend vigorously as a way of maintaining jobs).[5] The rise of what some have termed a "post-Fordist" mode of accumulation in a number of capitalist economies has been marked by the growth of just-in-time (JIT) production (where components arrive at a plant just before they are needed) and "teamwork." The growth of JIT appears to be affecting the geographical relationships between some manufacturers and components suppliers, with suppliers tending to locate closer in both time and space to manufacturers (see Mair et al., 1988, for an example from the US auto industry). Likewise, "teamwork" is affecting the micro-geography of the shop floor as many employers attempt to eliminate job categories and introduce "multi-tasking." This frequently involves redesigning the workplace (e.g. the growth of "modularization" in the auto industry (Weiss, 1999; Juárez Núñez and Babson, 1998)) as well as workers' social and geographical relationships to each other and to the machinery they operate (cf. Parker and Slaughter, 1988, on "teamwork"). The spread of both JIT and teamwork, then, have geographic implications for unions.

Although JIT is often seen as a way for manufacturers to increase profitability by reducing storage costs, and by subcontracting much work previously done in-house to separate suppliers, their reliance upon the timely delivery of components does leave JIT manufacturers vulnerable to labor disputes that disrupt the supply chain. This has become particularly evident in a number of important strikes in the USA in recent years, such as at United Parcel Service in August 1997 (see Coleman and Jennings, 1998) and several strikes by the United Auto Workers against General Motors. There are many aspects of JIT that cannot be covered here, but one that stands out with regard to how unions organize themselves geographically relates to the question of whether firms' increased dependency upon timely delivery of components provides local unions with an opportunity to exert greater power over their employers. Specifically, a local work stoppage may quickly spread throughout the corporate network to become a national, or even international, dispute – as occurred in the 1998 UAW–GM dispute in which virtually all of GM's North American production was brought to a halt within a few days (*Ward's Auto World*, 1998; Herod, 2000). Indeed, this is a strategy the UAW has used effectively during the 1990s (Babson, 1998). Because some local unions

representing workers located at strategic points in the production chain are able to cripple a corporation, nationally or even internationally, new geographical relationships may emerge between the local and national union (raising again issues of geographic scale) and between different local unions. The latter may have implications for the geography of union solidarity, as workers in one location may resent being laid off over issues they feel do not affect them and are particular to workers located elsewhere.

The growth of teamwork and the redesign of shopfloor spaces also have implications for unions. Teamwork involves workers switching between many different types of job on the production floor as needed. This may have significant implications for unions in terms of the micro-geographies of the labor process. First, teamwork invariably means that the sharp delimitations between job categories that typified "Fordist" ways of organizing factories, and which often served as the basis for union organization, are eroded as the physical layout of the shop floor is transformed to accommodate the new ways in which teams must now work. This may make it difficult for unions to identify traditional "hot shops" or for workers to develop the kinds of on-the-job solidarity that crystallize out of working long periods together in the same jobs. If workers are switched between different jobs and/or teams, they may never have the extended contact with their colleagues that has usually been necessary for a culture of solidarity to emerge. Second, the introduction of teamwork frequently involves production-line workers taking on supervisory roles, blurring traditional lines between themselves and managers. In some countries such developments have run up against prevailing labor laws which define the appropriate roles of managers and workers more adversarially. In the USA, this has resulted in a growing push to restructure extant labor law, allowing a greater degree of labor–management "cooperation" (Herod, 1997f). It remains to be seen how unions will respond to such developments.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter I have attempted to do two things. First, I have presented an overview of how labor unions have been conceptualized and studied within the field of economic geography. Specifically, I have argued that geographers have increasingly come to view unions as important geographical actors, from which much can be learned about how the economic geography of capitalism is made. In turn, the growing interest in the spatiality of labor unionism has spawned a number of conceptual and methodological debates. Second, I have identified some salient trends in capitalist economies that are affecting how material economic geographies are themselves being made in different ways. Developments such as globalization, the growth of the service sector, and post-Fordist production methods pose new challenges for unions but may also bring with them new possibilities. Unions' responses to such developments will require strategies that are not simply political or economic in nature, but also geographical.

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Endnotes

1. Parts of this section draw upon Herod (1998a). Interested readers should consult this earlier work for a more detailed review.
2. The NLRB was established in the 1930s to settle disputes between unions and employers concerning matters of labor law. For more on the NLRB, see Gross (1974, 1981) and Kammholz and Straus (1987).
3. Craft unionism is when unions organize workers in the same craft (carpenters, bakers, engineers, etc.) into separate unions defined by the specific type of work they do. Industrial unionism is when unions organize all workers in a particular industry (metal-working, autos, etc.) regardless of the actual type of work they do within that industry.
4. These scales were based upon population size as follows: Greater London; conurbations; free-standing towns; large towns; small towns; rural areas.
5. Taylorization refers to the ideas of Fredrick Taylor who, in the early twentieth century, argued that jobs should be broken down into a number of smaller parts so that time and motion studies could determine the most efficient (for the employers) way in which the production line could be organized.

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