

Union Density in Israel 1995–2010: The Hybridization of Industrial Relations

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In the past the Israeli industrial relations system was corporatist, characterized by high levels of membership in trade unions and employers' associations, as well as broad coverage of collective agreements. The corporatist system gradually eroded from the mid-1980s, but its major transformation came with the removal of the Ghent-like system in 1995. The article observes data collected since the transformation, distinguishing between membership and coverage trends. These distinctions aid in revealing that a hybrid of two distinct industrial relations subsystems has developed. The notion of hybridization suggests that unlike past accounts, which described the substitution of the corporatist industrial relations system by a liberal-pluralist system, what actually emerges is their coexistence. Despite the path-determined nature of the Israeli hybrid, the interaction between coverage and membership is instructive for understanding strategic choices made in other European countries in which a similar gap emerged. The article notes the potential for synergy between the two subsystems and notes the actual development of rivalry and friction.

Introduction

In the past, the Israeli industrial relations system was highly centralized. The system was characterized by high levels of membership in trade unions and employers' associations, as well as broad coverage of collective agreements. It utilized institutions typical of corporatist countries, such as state- and branch-level collective agreements, extension orders, and a variation of the "Ghent System," in which the state delegated the provision of health care and pensions to the trade unions, thereby encouraging individuals to join them.

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The corporatist system gradually eroded from the mid-1980s, but its major transformation came with the removal of the Ghent-like system in 1995, when the Parliament disassociated healthcare provision from trade unions. The more apparent outcome of this reform was the removal of a central financial pillar supporting the General *Histadrut*. However, the transformation of the industrial relations system was much more comprehensive, and it took several years until its extent and institutional implications were recognized. These included the gradual and incremental process of decentralization of bargaining, de-concentration of interests' representation, and the marginalization of bi- and tripartite institutions. Moreover, the change fundamentally affected the meaning of trade union membership.

Independently, collected data on trade union membership and coverage are not readily available in Israel. In a previous study, we looked at a sample of the Israeli population to identify what happened to membership and coverage in 2000—a few years after the transformation (Cohen et al. 2003). That article established the case for unpacking coverage and membership when measuring union density and assessing the interaction between them.

The present article draws on a similar survey that was taken in 2006. Together, the two surveys cover a decade of dramatic change in the Israeli industrial relations system. The findings from 2006 indicate that while membership continued to decline, the coverage of collective agreements has hardly changed, suggesting that the old industrial relations system, which is strongly associated with sector- and nationwide bargaining, is resilient in parts and has not been wholly deposed by a new system. At the same time, declining membership rates are indicative of the system's relocation at the enterprise level.

Additional data (not derived from the surveys) on unprecedented organizing drives that were conducted between 2008 and 2010 further accentuate the significance of the growing gap between coverage and membership. The unpacking of membership and coverage rates that was developed in previous articles proves to be a useful analytical instrument for refining our understanding of the transition in the industrial relations system. The findings indicate that a hybrid of two distinct industrial relations subsystems has developed. The notion of hybridization suggests that unlike past accounts, which described the substitution of the corporatist industrial relations system by a liberal-pluralist system, what actually emerges is their coexistence. Despite the path-determined nature of the Israeli hybrid, the interaction between coverage and membership is instructive for understanding strategic choices made in other European countries in which a similar gap emerged.

The article is structured as follows: In the first part we discuss the relationship between measures of union density and the changing nature of the industrial relations system. The second part presents the 2006 survey findings. The

concluding part discusses the implications of recent attempts to increase membership rates for the hybridization of the Israeli system and for other European countries in which a similar gap between coverage and membership persist.

Transformation of the Israeli Industrial Relations System

One of the most important measures in examining industrial relations systems is union density. In general, high union density indicates a relatively high level of collective labor relations. In a previous article, we noted that in examining union density one has to distinguish between two dimensions: The percentage of workers who are members of a labor union and the percentage of coverage of the collective agreements (the workers to whom the agreement applies) (Cohen et al. 2003, 2005). This distinction is important because there is not necessarily any overlap between membership and coverage. Whereas membership in a trade union is voluntary in that workers are free to join or not to join as they please (Mundlak 2007: ch. 5), the coverage of a collective Agreement is determined by law and by the parties to the agreement (S. 13, 14—Collective Agreement Law 1957). The distinction is apparent in many countries, leading in some to uneven levels of coverage and membership (Andrews et al. 1998; Visser 2006; for union membership 1960–2007, see ICTWSS 2011; OECD 2009). Thus, for instance, countries like Finland, Belgium, and Sweden maintain high levels of both membership and coverage, whereas in countries like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom they are both low, and in countries like Israel, Netherlands, Austria, and Germany the level of coverage is considerably greater than the level of membership. Such a gap is particularly notable in France, where the level of membership in trade unions is 8.2 percent and the level of coverage of the agreements is 95 percent.

The level of membership in trade unions in Israel has been documented for many years in various forms, on the basis of various data and by various means. An analysis of the changes in the levels of membership in trade unions from the days of the British Mandate over Palestine (starting in 1917) until the year 2000 appears in a previous study (Cohen et al. 2005), which noted that after a gradual rise, which peaked in the early 1980s when the membership level stood at about 80 percent, a decline began. For 15 years or so, it was moderate and mostly unobserved in the day-to-day functioning of the industrial relations system,¹ but with the coming into effect of the National Health Insur-

¹ The first documentation of the moderate decline since the mid-1980s appears only in Cohen et al., (2005). Previously, it had been thought that 1995 is a clear-cut threshold that separates stable union density from decline.

ance Law (1994) it began to significantly accelerate. In the year 2000, the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor conducted a survey on a representative sample of the country's salaried employees, which showed that no more than 45 percent of them were members of trade unions.

No equivalent systematic examination of the level of coverage of the collective agreements has been carried out over the years. Previous estimations noted that at the beginning of the 1980s, the level of coverage stood at about 80 percent of the workforce.² The survey that was carried out in the year 2000 examined the level of coverage of agreements in Israel and discovered that it had dropped to about 56 percent of the workforce. In other words, the fall in coverage was more moderate than the fall in membership.

While obviously the drop in union density on both measures indicates a weakening of the collective regime, the data provide a richer qualitative understanding of the transformation. An analysis of the data on membership and coverage in 2000, together with additional data sources, account for significant changes that had taken place in Israel's labor relations, including the opening of higher wage differentials and growing inequality (Cohen et al. 2003; Kristal, Cohen, and Mundlak 2011), decentralization of the bargaining system (Kristal and Cohen 2007), dissolution of labor market institutions that were associated with the corporatist regime and their replacement with juridified forms of interests' representation (Mundlak 2007), and the tying of membership rates and data on what workers want with an argument about employers' increased animosity to unions in the newly emerging system (Saporta 2007).

These results can be generalized by suggesting that the new industrial relations system changed the perceptions and meaning of membership and coverage. The corporatist system relied on peak-level negotiations between the private employers' associations and the public employers on the one hand and the trade unions on the other hand. The extensive coverage of these agreements was a byproduct of the legitimacy accorded to the system of social partnership that characterizes the corporatist model. Membership was a derivative of the extensive coverage, encouraged by the state through the Ghent-like system. It was found that most workers joined the *Histadrut* as a by-product of their desire to take part in the *Histadrut's* healthcare system (Haberfeld 1995).³ When the 1995 separation between healthcare provision and trade

² This figure is not weighted for expansion orders, some of which covered the general workforce in Israel, such as the expansion orders on vacation pay, travel allowance, and so on.

³ The two major healthcare providers were the General and National Health Care Systems (which were owned and operated by the General and National *Histadruts*, respectively). Two small healthcare providers (Maccabi and United Health Care) were not affiliated with trade unions.

unionism took place, membership became attuned to the workers' interests in actual trade union representation.

If the system had transformed wholly to an American model in which workers and employers are entirely free to choose whether to join associations and bargain at will, we would expect coverage rates to have gradually become a derivative of membership rates. That is, membership would be required to grant a trade union exclusive representation rights (Collective Agreements Law [1957], Sections 3–4). The withdrawal of the state's support for membership would render the organization of workers a matter that is best carried out at the enterprise level, where organizing drives can actually reach the workers. In those places where workers have succeeded in organizing there should be a greater level of coverage.

The data obtained from the 2000 survey indicated that the transformation of the Israeli system conformed to the process of declining membership, but only to a lesser extent to the expected process of declining coverage. This was explained in the previous studies by the fact that the corporatist agreements of the past tended to be "sticky." In Israel, collective agreements continue to govern the parties even after their agreed-upon timeframe has been exhausted. According to the Collective Agreements Law (1957, Sections 13–14), agreements continue to be in force until one of the parties actively demands to void them. The fact that a greater share of workers reported coverage compared with membership suggested that the old broad corporatist agreements had persisted. This was based on a point in time which was rather near to the 1995 turning point.

After 2000, political and economic processes were unfavorable to the Israeli trade unions. During the years 2000–2001, the bursting of the global high-tech bubble and the local effects of the second Palestinian Uprising in the Occupied Territories (the *Intifada*) further contributed to the economic crisis in Israel, considerably reducing the trade unions' bargaining leverage. Shortly thereafter, the state succeeded in establishing its autonomy from the social partners, trade unions, and employers' associations alike, and began treating them as mere interest groups rather than social partners. Similarly, between 2003 and 2005, the reigning political coalition succeeded in carrying out an intensive retrenchment of the Israeli welfare state (Doron 2007). Even the components of the process that touched on industrial relations, such as significant reforms in the field of pensions, as well as attempts at privatization of the public sector, were implemented with hardly any consultation with the social partners. It was therefore assumed that the process of transformation had escalated and that with the removal of the Ghent-like system, the dissolution of the political alliance between the trade unions and employers' associations and the state, and the erosion of the welfare state, the system would gradually

become assimilated to the American model (Cohen et al. 2007; Mundlak 2007).

To assess the processes that had occurred in the industrial relations system, a survey similar to the one in 2000 was carried out in December 2006. The 2000 survey had been conducted soon after the coming into effect of the National Health Insurance Law and its findings indicated that the system had not yet stabilized. This was manifest in the lack of clarity that was still apparent among the respondents with respect to the distinction between membership in a trade union and membership in the health insurance plan—two components that had been one prior to the introduction of the National Health Insurance Law in 1995. The advantage of conducting an additional survey was that using the same method of measurement enabled a more accurate examination of whether or not and how the system had stabilized. Moreover, the 2006 survey was conducted at a time when the corporatist residues of the old system had gradually dissipated.

In the next section, we review the findings of the 2006 survey and compare them to the findings of the 2000 survey along various dimensions. Specifically, we examine the trends that occurred in the level of membership, the level of coverage, and the interaction between them. Following our 2003 classification (Cohen et al. 2003), we make a distinction among four possible combinations of membership and coverage. “Insiders” are those who are both members and covered. By contrast, “outsiders” are neither members nor covered. The two intermediate groups are the “partials,” who are covered non-members, and the “residuals,” who are non-covered members. We examine the demographic composition of the four groups, and the gaps between the present positioning of employees in the industrial relations system and their preferences concerning this positioning. This examination makes it possible to see whether the system has reached a state of stability that finds expression in a narrowing of the gaps between employees’ present and desired situations.

The 2006 Survey

The 2006 findings are based on a telephone survey carried out on a representative sample of households in Israel. The sample consisted of 1401 people between the ages of 18 and 66 who were employed during the period of the survey or had been employed for at least 1 month during the previous 3 years. As some of the subjects did not answer all the relevant questions, the findings are based on 1135 male and female workers (and for some of the questions on an even smaller number, but not less than 890). We should note that in both 2000 and 2006, the samples that we used are not fully representative of the

salaried employees in the country. Data on salaries and occupations show that workers in the sample of 2006 were weaker on average than those of 2000.⁴ Insofar as our primary focus is on the relations between the average characteristics of the members of the studied groups at the two points in time and not on absolute levels, these deviations in the two samples—assuming that they affected all the groups in the same fashion—do not detract from the quality of the comparisons between the groups.⁵

Membership in Trade Unions. To examine whether the respondents were members of trade unions, they were asked: “Are you a member of a workers’ union, the General *Histadrut*, or a professional union? If yes, in which?” To distinguish between different types of membership, those who answered that they were members of the General *Histadrut* were asked: “Are you also a member of a professional union inside the General *Histadrut* (such as the Engineers’ Union, the Metalworkers’ Union, and so on)?” This question is necessary because while membership in trade unions outside the General *Histadrut* (such as the Teachers’ Union, the Israeli Medical Federation, or the Academic Faculty Union) is membership in a clearly defined professional union, membership in the General *Histadrut* can take the form of a general membership in the Federation as a whole, or a specific and more significant membership in one or more of the professional unions operating within its framework.

As can be seen from Table 1, 34 percent of the respondents answered that they were members of a trade union, down from 45 percent in 2000. However, Table 1 also shows that the decline in the level of membership is not uniform across all the membership categories. Membership rates of workers who are members in a professional trade union, whether within the General *Histadrut* (e.g., clerical workers, nurses) or external to it (e.g., the two teachers’ unions, physicians, academic staff in universities), increased slightly between 2000 and 2006 (from 14.5 to 17 percent of the total sample). By contrast, most of the decline is among workers who reported being members only of the *Histadrut*, and not of any particular trade union within or outside it. Possibly, these

⁴ The data of Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics show that the average salary of an employed worker rose by 10 percent between the years 2000 and 2006 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2007). By contrast, the average salary in the 2006 sample (presented in Table 1 [NIS 5795]) is only 1 percent higher than that of 2000 (NIS 5745). Similarly, while the percentage of salaried employees in the economy in professional, technical, and managerial occupations remained virtually unchanged between 2000 and 2006 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2007), in our sample (Table 4), the level dropped from 44 to 36.6 percent.

⁵ A reservation must be expressed with regard to this assumption. As will be explained below, it is almost certain that the underrepresentation of workers with high human capital in the outsiders group was more significant in 2006 than in 2000.

TABLE 1
 PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERSHIP IN TRADE UNIONS IN 2000 AND 2006

	2000 N = 803	2006 N = 1135
Members—total	45%	34%
Core members	14.6%	17%
In a trade union within the General <i>Histadrut</i>		7.9%
In a trade union outside the General <i>Histadrut</i>		9.1%
Peripheral members (only in the General <i>Histadrut</i>)	30.6%	17%
Percentage of members in the General <i>Histadrut</i> out of all the members of professional unions (concentration)	65.5%	72%

changes merely indicate a better understanding by respondents of their membership status in 2006, compared with 2000. In 2000, a large number of workers did not distinguish between membership in the General Health Care Provider, which was under the control of the General *Histadrut* until 1995, and membership in the General *Histadrut* itself. The distinction may have become clearer by 2006. If that is indeed the case, the 2006 data indicate the possibility that the 2000 figures are overestimates of the level of membership at the time. This means that the decline in the level of membership up to 2000 was larger than had been estimated, while the decline since 2000 is more moderate than the figures in Table 1 indicate.

In addition to potential errors in the respondents' answers that are reflective of the transformation process itself, there is also reason to believe that workers who were not affiliated with any particular trade union, either within or outside the General *Histadrut*, were the best candidates to leave the trade union for lack of any real identification with the trade union movement. By contrast, in the strongholds of organized labor—public sector workers and traditional industry—workers remained members of a trade union and continued to identify with its mission. These are also sectors and occupations in which collective bargaining agreements are broad, and employers have nothing to lose if more workers get organized. There is therefore no employers' animosity toward workers' decision to remain unionized. Hence, some of the traditional strongholds of the corporatist industrial relations system have remained intact—with a more committed workforce.

Coverage of Collective Agreements. To estimate the level of coverage of collective agreements, it is necessary to ask a number of questions that can provide an indication for that, because not all workers are directly aware of the fact that a collective agreement applies to them. This is especially true of workers to whom a *general* collective agreement (an industry-level agree-

ment or a national agreement in contrast to a *particular* collective agreement that covers only one workplace or employer) applies. For this reason, we estimated the coverage on the basis of four questions (compared with three questions in the survey of 2000):

1. Are membership dues, agency fees, or workers' committee fees deducted from your salary?
2. Is your salary on the basis of individual or collective negotiations?
3. Is there a workers' committee at your place of employment?
4. Are you covered by a collective agreement at your place of work?

We considered a person to be covered by a collective agreement if she answered positively to at least one of the four questions. Obviously, when the answer to all the four questions is positive it clearly indicates coverage. However, there are anomalous cases. For instance, there are workers who are covered by a collective agreement, but there is no workers' committee at their place of employment (Zussman 1995). Similarly, there are workers whose pay is determined by individual negotiations at a level above the level agreed by the collective agreement they are subject to. Even if deduction of membership dues from the worker's salary is a strong indication of membership, the number of respondents answering this question in the affirmative may be distorted downwards as possibly there are workers who are not aware of the fact that membership dues or agency fees are being deducted from their pay. This is particularly notable in the case of direct deduction from salary, in contrast to payment of membership dues in a trade union by means of a standing order through a bank (as in the High School Teachers' Organization). An analysis of the responses appears in Table 2.

As can be seen from the data in Table 2, there was no change in the level of coverage of collective agreements from 2000 to 2006. However inaccurate the data on the coverage level, this problem existed both in 2000 and in 2006, and there is no reason to believe that there was a change in employees' knowledge whether a workers' committee existed at their place of work or deductions were being made from their pay.⁶ Therefore, as we said in 2000, the

⁶ The effect of replacing the three questions in the 2000 survey with four questions in the 2006 survey is small. Only thirty respondents responded in the affirmative only to question number 4 (the question that was added to the 2006 questionnaire) without responding in the affirmative to at least one other question. Thus, while the results for coverage appear to be one and the same, there is a possibility that the 2000 figures slightly underestimated the rate of coverage (by approximately 4 percent). However, at the same time, it is important to remember that we take a generous approach toward assessing coverage to begin with, sufficing with a positive answer to at least one of the four questions. Coupled with problems of respondents' misunderstanding and missing information, the rates obtained are a crude approximation. It is therefore fair to state that the rate of coverage has remained generally stable.

TABLE 2
 PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS COVERED BY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS IN 2000 AND 2006

	2000	2006
Payment of membership dues OR agency fees OR workers committee fees	39%	38%
Existence of a workers' committee at place of work	35%	39%
Coverage of collective agreement at place of work	35%	36%
Is your pay determined by a collective agreement (as distinct from those who answered that their pay is determined in a personal contract)	–	36%
Some sort of indication of coverage (at least one positive response)	56.1%	56%
Positive responses	% of all those covered	
1	25	
2	20.3	
3	18.7	
4	36	



level of coverage of 56 percent is a rough measure. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that a comparison of the findings at these two points in time shows that the level of coverage remained stable.

The Interplay Between Membership and Coverage. As shown by the data presented so far and further to the findings from the year 2000, a wide gap has opened up between membership and coverage. This is not surprising, because membership is a personal decision of the individual (to join an organization or not to do so), whereas coverage is determined by law and by the parties to the agreement. In the past, the figures of membership and coverage overlapped, as in Belgium and Sweden, because of the Ghent system. With the decline in the two measures and in the absence of a fit between them, it becomes necessary to examine the differences among four different groups. Table 3 presents the interaction between membership and coverage and the division of the respondents into the four groups.

This table shows that most of the movement took workers out of the residuals group and into the outsiders group (see Arrow A). A considerably smaller decline was observed among the insiders, coupled with a small increase among the partials (see Arrow B).⁷ Both movements resonate with the earlier finding that most members who resigned from the trade union held less committed membership in the Federation and were not affiliated with a particular trade union.

⁷ It should be noted that we do not have data indicating that the residuals moved particularly to the outsiders groups or that the insiders moved particularly to the partials group. Arrows A and B only indicate the overall trends. Nevertheless, it may be assumed that most of the movement is as presented by the arrows, because the change that took place with regard to the insiders and the residuals for the most part concerns everything connected with membership, as the levels of coverage remained stable.

TABLE 3
 PERCENTAGES OF MEMBERSHIP AND COVERAGE AMONG 1096 RESPONDENTS IN THE YEAR 2006
 (THE DATA FOR THE YEAR 2000 ARE IN PARENTHESES)

	Not covered	Covered
Not members	Outsiders (1)	Partials (2)
	41.7 (34.0) 	21.9 (20.0) 
Members	Residuals (3)	Insiders (4)
	2.8 (10.0)	33.6 (36.0)

Insofar as there is any significance in the limited migration from the insiders to the partials, this movement may be attributed to free-riders; that is, workers who know that they will continue to be covered by a collective agreement even though they have ceased their membership. It is interesting to note, however, that even though 40 percent of the internal workers in 2000 noted that they would prefer a less collective framework (see Table 5 below), the scope of exiting from the insiders group was smaller.

By contrast, the residuals (members that are not covered), as the name implies, is a group that had no clear identity at the time it was identified in 2000, and the behavior of its members was difficult to explain. In 2000, we offered various explanations for this group. For instance, we suggested that they are workers who are interested in a collective agreement and have taken the first step in that direction (joining the General *Histadrut*), workers who have received legal aid from the General *Histadrut* and signed membership forms as a condition, and so on. These explanations did not purport to account for the relatively large size of the group. In the 2006 survey, it was practically emptied, and most of its members had moved to the outsiders group. The explanation for this move could be complicated, depending on whom the group's members were in the past. They may have been individuals hoping that membership in a trade union would improve their collective rights. Clearly, they discovered that this was not the case and moved to the outsiders group (because they were unable to exert any influence that would advance them in the direction of the insiders group and coverage by an agreement). If the group was composed of workers who at the time mistakenly thought that they were members of a trade union when they were in fact members of the General or National Health Care Providers, over the intervening 6 years the distinction between membership in a healthcare fund and membership in a trade union seems to have been clarified. We find the second explanation more convincing, because there were very few attempts at organization that involved new members joining the General *Histadrut* before the year 2000. The overall

result is a diminishing of the problematic group of residuals to a relatively small size (less than 3 percent of the workforce).

Characteristics of the Four Groups. As we showed in 2000, the movements in union density are not random. A demographic analysis of the four groups shows the changes that occurred in the characteristics of the groups

TABLE 4
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISRAELI WORKFORCE BY MEMBERSHIP IN UNIONS AND
COVERAGE BY COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Group	Total Sample	Members and Covered Insiders	Covered But Not Members Partial	Members but Not Covered Residuals	Not Members and Not Covered Outsiders
Average age					
2000	37.9	42.4	34.9	38.8	35.0
2006	40.3	44.1	38.7	41.9	37.9
% Males	46.2	43.2	44.0	43.4	51.5
	46.9	37.8	51.7	51.6	51.4
% Arabs	10.6	10.0	16.3	4.0	9.7
	15.5	14.4	19.8	25.9	13.5
Average years of education	13.8	14.1	13.8	13.0	13.7
	14.0	14.6	13.7	13.6	13.7
% Holders of academic degree	35.0	39.6	32.6	23.5	34.8
	42.0	54.2	37.8	33.3	34.1
Average monthly salary	5745	6018	5454	4887	5848
	5795	6901	5565	4858	5061
Average weekly work hours	38.5	38.3	40.9	37.1	37.7
	37.9	36.5	40.1	36.1	38.0
Average seniority in workplace	9.3	13.3	7.8	6.7	5.5
	8.9	14.0	7.8	7.8	5.6
% Managers, profess., & technical	44.0	50.8	40.0	36.7	40.5
	39.6	53.9	30.3	36.7	33.3
% Clerical and sales personnel	37.9	28.7	41.9	40.8	45.4
	38.0	29.0	43.1	43.3	42.1
% Skilled blue-collar	11.9	15.9	11.4	12.2	7.4
	11.4	9.6	11.9	16.7	12.2
% Public sector	43.9	58.1	56.7	17.0	24.4
	43.0	65.9	40.0	34.5	25.0
No. of cases	783 (100%)	280 (36%)	159 (20%)	76 (10%)	268 (34%)
	995 (100%)	343 (34%)	215 (22%)	29 (3%)	408 (41%)

The White Rows Represent the Data for 2000, and the Gray Rows Represent the Data for 2006

between 2000 and 2006. Table 4 presents the demographic data for each of the four groups, as well as data on their income and working hours.

The insiders group (members with coverage): In 2000, this group included the most educated employees, and the salaries of its members were on average 5 percent above the average of the entire sample. In 2006, there was no diminishing of the gap between the insiders and the other groups in terms of human capital and salaries. On the contrary, it even widened. More than half of the insider workers in 2006 had an academic degree (compared with less than 40 percent in the other groups), and their salaries were 19 percent higher than the average for the whole sample. The concentration of the insider workers in the public sector also rose between 2000 and 2006, as did their concentration in managerial, professional, and technical occupations. The number of women in the group also rose. In sum: since 2000, there has been an improvement in the situation of the insiders (almost two thirds of whom are women) compared with workers who are not part of the collective system or are only partially connected to it.

The outsiders group (not members and not covered): In 2006, as in 2000, the members of this group were relatively young, relatively new to the workforce, and tended to work in the private sector. However, this group grew from 34 percent of the salaried employees in 2000 to 41 percent in 2006. As we saw previously, the increase in the percentage of outsiders may be traced to the “transition” of workers from the residuals group to the outsiders group. The residuals were characterized in 2000 as workers with relatively low human capital and pay. Consequently, whereas in 2000 the pay of the outsiders was only a little lower (3 percent) than the average pay of the insiders, in 2006, the gap between the two groups had widened to 36 percent. This huge differential is apparently due to two factors. First, it is almost certain that the level of heterogeneity of this group—which was the highest already in 2000—was even higher in 2006, as many of the weakest employees, who belonged to the residuals group in 2000, joined the outsiders group in 2006. In addition to the increased heterogeneity, the large difference in average salary between the outsiders and insiders in 2006 raises the possibility of underrepresentation in the 2006 sample (compared with the 2000 sample) of skilled external workers holding the good jobs in the new economy.

In 2000, the two intermediate groups—the partials and the residuals (in which there is no fit between membership and coverage)—were weaker than the insiders and outsiders; in 2006, the situation changed. The residuals diminished considerably in size and remained the lowest socioeconomic group. By contrast, the partials benefited from the lessening of the average status of the outsiders—at least concerning salaries—and thus improved their position relative to the outsiders (although their salaries were still

much lower than those of the insiders). However, from the point of view of occupation, which is a more stable measure of lifetime salary, the position of the partials showed a substantial relative worsening between 2000 and 2006.

The group of residuals, now almost eliminated, can be viewed as a category that collects miscellaneous and negligible interests and institutional positions, but mostly errors. Hence, a discussion of particular characteristics of this group is omitted.⁸

Actual Representation Versus Future Preferences. The study carried out in 2000 revealed a substantial mismatch between the positioning of the individuals in the four groups and their preferences. In light of the time elapsed, it is reasonable to suppose that individuals channeled themselves into the position most suitable to them. The process of establishing a fit between the existing situation and preferences may take one of two directions. The simpler tack is that taken by individuals who wish to disconnect themselves from the collective labor relations system. These individuals can do one of two things: They can cease their membership in the trade union or they can move to a workplace in which there is no collective agreement. Clearly, the former possibility is simpler to implement. However, the second possibility cannot be dismissed, because it may be assumed that it is not unusual for workers to quit their job at an organized workplace (such as the education system in the public sector covered by a collective agreement) and move to an unorganized one (such as advanced educational projects in the private sector).

The second direction in which workers' situation may be matched with their preferences pertains to those who want more collectivism than they currently have. Here too there are two possibilities—to join a labor union and strive toward collective negotiations, or to move to an organized workplace. Both possibilities exist, but they are more difficult to carry out than the possibilities open to those who want less collectivism. While it is true that joining a labor union is a very simple procedure, individuals will not take this step if it is not accompanied by a collective agreement (that is, the assumption is that individuals will not wish to join the residuals group). As will be explained in the following section, the option of organization that ends with a collective agreement is difficult to attain. Moreover, finding a workplace that has a collective agreement is harder than finding a non-organized one. As we have seen, the insiders group consists mainly of veteran workers. New workers are

⁸ For example, what appears to be a very significant rise in the share of Arab ("non-Jewish") workers among the residuals in 2006 is accounted for by three Arabs in this category (2000) compared with eight Arabs in 2006. The small numbers make any inferences with regard to this problem category precarious.

taken more into workplaces that do not have collective agreements, and even if they are recruited in organized workplaces, they are often hired through subcontractors or under second generation/tier collective agreements, which accord workers only partial and limited rights relative to the rights of veteran employees.

Despite the various options for individuals to adjust their situation in the industrial relations system (increase/decrease their collective representation), the findings presented in Table 5 show that the distribution into the three groups (satisfied with their position, want more collective representation, or want more individualization of the work relationship) remained virtually unchanged between 2000 and 2006. No significant adjustments have been made. Possibly, the process of matching is relatively long and will continue for many years to come. It is also possible that the matching options listed

TABLE 5
POSITIONS OF WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM (MEMBERSHIP AND COVERAGE) AND
THEIR PREFERENCES IN 2006 (DATA FOR 2000 ARE IN PARENTHESES)

Group	Preferences with regard to representation				Total
	Outsiders	Partials	Residuals	Insiders	
Actual representation					
Outsiders	48.7 (52.0)	13.3 (12.2)	8.8 (9.4)	12.8 (26.4)	100
Partials	28.3 (27.0)	27.9 (25.7)	6.8 (8.8)	37.0 (38.5)	100
Residuals	44.8 (32.9)	17.2 (17.8)	17.2 (8.2)	20.7 (41.1)	100
Insiders	15.8 (13.1)	24.5 (27.0)	5.9 (2.2)	53.9 (57.7)	100
Total	33.5 (31.1)	20.2 (20.8)	7.3 (6.6)	39.0 (41.5)	100
	Prefer more collective*	Satisfied with current position		Prefer less collective**	
2000	30%		44.5%	25.5%	
2006	32%		45%	23%	

* This group includes all the cells above the shaded diagonal.

** This group includes all the cells below the shaded diagonal.

previously are not simple to realize or that individual preferences are not strong enough to be followed through.

The aforesaid notwithstanding, in perusing Table 5, one must bear in mind the data presented in the previous tables. Thus, for instance, we see that in general, the members of the residuals group were not satisfied with their positioning already in 2000 and that many of them “left” the group. At the same time, it is interesting that in 2000 about 40 percent of the residuals expressed a preference for collectivism, whereas in 2006, we see that most of them relocated to the outsiders group, which has no collective labor relations. This movement is indicative of the particular hardships involved in collective

action, namely translating the individual freedom to join a union into a collective drive that can benefit the group as a whole. Similarly, there are no indications that a significant share of outsiders who asserted a preference for more collectivism acted on their preference between the years 2000 and 2006.

At the same time, despite the fact that some insiders expressed an interest in less collective representation, they did not choose the simple solution of forgoing membership. A very small share of the insiders stopped their membership and became partials (“free-riders”). While relinquishing membership is easy in principle (merely submitting an opt-out letter), most insiders were identified as being concentrated in heavily unionized and covered industries and in the public sector, where peer pressure and the institutional path determinacy typical of corporatist arrangements constrain the option of forgoing membership.

In sum, the various adjustment strategies were not shown to be operative. Consequently, other than the emptying out of the residuals category, little adjustment of existing situations to asserted preferences was displayed. The membership and coverage of insiders and partials was kept stable by corporatist logic, while liberal/pluralist logic prevented the closing of the representation gap (that is—increasing membership).

In the next section, we will discuss the entry of new unions circa 2008 and the unprecedented attempts at organizing new workers, at the same time that traditional peak-level bargaining was resumed. It will be argued that this process underscores the coexistence of the old and the new systems side by side. The data used for this section are based on aggregated self-reported data by the trade unions. While it is difficult to match these reports with the data that were derived from the surveys, it is sufficient for the purpose of extending the timeframe after transition and revealing the hybridization concept with which we conclude.

The Hybridization of the System

New Organization of Members. Overall, the findings of the 2006 survey show that from 2000 to 2006 there was a change in membership rates and no significant change in the coverage of collective agreements. With respect to the former, part of the decline in membership was in fact a correction of the instability and lack of clarity that apparently prevailed in 2000. Most of the decline in membership was due to the emptying of the residuals group, the composition of which was not entirely clear to begin with. Other movements recorded were continuations of processes that began several years earlier and

were already noted in 2000. Finally, the decline in membership did not appear among those who work in the public sector and traditional industries where collective bargaining continued despite the decline. Instead, those who resigned from their membership were mostly workers who were less involved in collective representation and were not affiliated with a particular trade union (as opposed to general membership in the *Histadrut*).

By contrast, coverage rates remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2006. The sinking membership rate coupled with stable coverage is indicative of what we designate as the hybridization of the industrial relations system. In fact, a dual logic is emerging, where membership has been transformed into a complex fusion of choice and commitment, while coverage retains the governance aspect of corporatist industrial relations.

The hybridization of the system is strongly suggested also by the finding that despite a gap between the workers' situation and their preference for more or less collective representation, they do not act on their preferences. Those who belong to the corporatist system are still induced into participation by institutional means (the union's collection of agency fees) and social peer-pressure. On the other hand, those who wish for more collectivism do not act on their preference and join a trade union. There are also institutional barriers (notably employers' resistance and unfair labor practices) and social concerns about the trade union option. Absent significant change, the fate of those who aspire for more collective representation is likely to be similar to that of many who suffer from the representation gap in North America (Freeman and Rogers 2006; Towers 1997). This is a symptom of the liberal-pluralist system that has emerged side by side with the corporatist residues.

After the transformation, the collective industrial relations regime has at times been lamented as a relic of the past. The removal of the Ghent-like system incurred a financial crisis in the General *Histadrut*: Members ceased their membership and withdrew their membership dues and, more importantly, their support from the trade union. The relatively stable coverage of collective agreements contained the losses, because the lawful collection of the slightly lesser agency fees (from workers who are covered but not members), in lieu of membership dues, ensured some financial stability. However, the challenges facing the collective system were not just financial. It was necessary to redefine the concept of union membership, drawing on both instrumental (e.g., wages and protection) and intrinsic (e.g., solidarity and dignity) incentives. The trade union movement was slow to adjust, and at times, it seemed that the image of a relic was well founded. The pessimistic view was supported by the figures on coverage and, most notably, membership. Indeed, since the 2006 survey, various changes have taken place that cannot conceal the strongly negative trend of the first decade after the transformation. How-

ever, they also indicate that there is a very lively core of interests in collective representation that was not removed during the transformation. In fact, the sense of primacy that attaches to collective bargaining in 2011 is very far removed from the pessimism that characterized the period of retrenchment captured by the 2000 and 2006 surveys.

Two significant sets of changes have taken place since 2006 which strengthen the hybridization thesis, although their outcome must be tested empirically in future surveys. The first is the process of revival of corporatist institutions, including the meaningful role of social partnership, sector-wide collective agreements in the private sector, framework agreements for the public sector, and collective agreements at the national level, including—most notably—the introduction of mandatory pension for all workers. Sector- and nationwide agreements are also extended, thus ensuring comprehensive coverage (Mundlak 2009).

The second set of changes concerns a process that began in 2008, with the establishment of a grassroots union (Power to the Workers) that seeks to organize workers and build membership from the bottom up, in contrast to the instrumental and derivative notion of membership that prevailed in the corporatist regime (Svirski 2009). Because the General *Histadrut* relied on the Ghent system in the past, it did not develop organizing skills, and only a few efforts at organizing were conducted following the transformation. The new trade union motivated the General and National *Histadruts* to follow suit and try to organize workers. Since 2008, several high-visibility organizing drives have been conducted, targeting waitresses in a coffee chain, science guides in a museum and the workers of the Jerusalem cinemathèque, the junior academic staff in the Open University, workers in industrial plants, workers of the largest cable TV provider, workers in an alternative medicine healthcare provider, and more. Most, if not all, of these organizing drives suffered from employers' retaliatory actions. In all of the establishments concerned, no prior collective relations existed. In several cases, inter-union rivalry surfaced and competition over the status of exclusive representation paved the way for matters to reach the courtroom. These phenomena are symptomatic of a liberal-pluralist system in which there is a low level of centralization and concentration of workers' interests, and in which organizing is focused on the enterprise level.

Consequently, what are the expected effects of this twofold course of development in the Israeli system? On the basis of existing figures, we assume that the first process will further entrench the level of coverage observed in previous studies. At the same time, the new organizing drives are unlikely to change the negative trend in membership, although it may contain the extent of decline.

The new corporatist-like developments are rather different from the broad bargaining patterns of the past (Mundlak 2009). However, the renewal of sector-level agreements and the signing of the framework agreement for the public sector (2008, 2010) indicate that corporatist institutions remain resilient even under severe changes of circumstance. In several branches, new collective agreements were signed, including agriculture (2009), construction (2010), print and communications (2010), security (2010), cleaning (2010, pending and contingent on extension by the Ministry of Labor), and supermarket chains (2010; an extension order was issued and is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court). Thus, even putting aside national agreements with extension orders, such as the mandatory pension agreement of 2008, the agreements regulating wages and working conditions in the public sector and in the various branches in the private sector ensure that coverage will remain relatively stable.⁹

Hypothetically, the new liberal-pluralist developments may give the wheel another turn to actually increase the levels of membership. However, in this context, more hesitation is advised. The trade unions (the General *Histadrut*, National *Histadrut*, and Power to the Workers) report approximately 35,000—50,000 workers who registered as new members (in all three unions) between 2008 and 2010.¹⁰ Self-reported data cannot be verified, tend to be tilted upwards (Visser 2006), and do not distinguish between the recruitment of members who were not members of a trade union in the past and workers who were “pulled” from membership in one union to membership in another. Acknowledging these caveats, the figures provided by the unions add approximately 1.1–1.5 percent of the workforce to the category of members.

Drawing on the data collected in the 2006 survey and using respondents’ age, we find that between 2006 and 2011, the expected attrition of members for reasons of retirement (hence, not including workers who seek to terminate their membership for other reasons) is 6.6 percent of all members (or approximately 2 percent of the workforce). The expected attrition for reasons of retirement between 2011 and 2016 is 9 percent of the membership (or 3 percent of the workforce).¹¹

⁹ It is noteworthy that in the questions on coverage in the survey, we sought to avoid the coverage of nationwide collective agreements and extension orders that engage in discrete issues and cover the whole workforce (e.g., convalescence pay, days off for bereavement), a large part of the workforce (e.g., privacy rights in employees’ e-mails) or a large group of workers (e.g., mandatory pension). By contrast, we did seek to capture the more detailed sector-wide agreements and the framework agreements for the public sector which regulate wages and other benefits.

¹⁰ These figures were reported by the trade unions in the annual Industrial Relations Conference (February 2011 Eilat—Israel) and confirmed by obtaining aggregate figures from the three trade unions on August 2011.

¹¹ Retirement age in Israel is 67 for men and 62–67 for women (Retirement Age Law, 2004). For calculating the rate of attrition for reasons of retirement, we included all men and women who reach the age of 67 in the 5-year timeframe, and a crude estimation of 50 percent of the women who will reach the age of 62 in the same timeframe.

Consequently, the new organizing drives are not expected to halt the drop in membership rates, but they will slow it down.

Path-Determined Change: the Hybridization of the Israeli System. The expected trend is therefore twofold: A relatively stable coverage rate on the one hand and a continued drop in membership rates, although at a less volatile pace, on the other. Meanwhile, the description of membership and coverage patterns from 1995 to the present is sufficient to uphold the hybridization thesis. Two separate industrial relations subsystems are evolving. They are led by agents that only partially overlap, are based on different legal institutions, draw on separate modes of communications, and cover distinct groups of workers.

The residue of the corporatist system constitutes the first subsystem, in which peak-level bargaining continues to govern the public sector and select branches in the private sector. Despite the decline of the corporatist system for the last two decades, this subsystem retains the notion of joint governance by the state and the social partners. It is sensitive to political contingencies and the legitimacy accorded by the state and the employers' associations with the trade unions engaged in this peak-level bargaining (most notably, the General *Histadrut*, but also the unions of the physicians, teachers, and academic staff in the universities). The broad coverage of these agreements is not contingent on membership rates.

The second subsystem is governed by liberal-pluralist logic and is currently in a state of germination. The new members are employed in workplaces that were for the most part outside of the corporatist collective regime. The organizing attempts, even when successful, do not always end in a collective agreement, and sometimes suffice with some form of collective ordering that falls short of formal agreements. The relevant unions (most notably, the General and National *Histadruts*, Power to the Workers) are concerned with the well-being of the workers in the establishments they organize, as opposed to the macro-concerns of the corporatist subsystem. Their success is therefore reliant on the legitimacy accorded to them by the workers, rather than from the sources of the corporatist subsystem's legitimacy.

The hybridization of the industrial relations system poses challenges for future attempts at revitalization. As described in Frege and Kelly (2004), revitalization strategies of trade unions must be adapted to the nature of the industrial relations system. The coexistence of two subsystems points at different revitalization strategies that can complement but may also collide with each other. To sustain the corporatist subsystem, the legitimacy accorded by the state and employers must be maintained by displaying "responsible unionism," institutionalizing peak-level deliberations and maintaining a unified and centralized voice for labor. This is the top-down nature of corporatist governance. By con-

trast, to nurture the emerging liberal-pluralist system, more militant action is required on the part of the unions, as well as improving the relationship between organizing and other forms of collective action in civil society, and attracting workers in small units that feasibly can be organized and managed.

The two trajectories for revitalization can complement each other, if there is some form of planned division of responsibility between the state and sector levels (the corporatist subsystem) and the enterprise level (the liberal-pluralist subsystem). The last few years have actually demonstrated considerable tension, which surfaces in the form of inter-union rivalry, legal contestation of basic concepts such as “bargaining units” (whereby the corporatist subsystem seeks expansive bargaining units and a unitary voice for large groups, while the pluralist subsystem seeks small bargaining units that are easier to organize), and a general fragmentation of collective representation. The hybridization of industrial relations also accounts for factions that are evolving within the corporatist subsystem, such as the emergent dissenting voices in broad collective negotiations, as was noticed in the 2011 industrial disputes of social workers and physicians.

Convergence of the Organizing Challenge? Implications for Other Industrial Relations Systems. The hybridization of the Israeli system was boosted by the recent strategies of organizing workers in establishments that are not covered by branch-level collective agreements. This peculiar development of industrial relations came about in direct response to the decline in membership. However, such strategies are not merely a local idiosyncrasy, and they are instructive as regards the challenge of increasing membership rates in many other countries.

A recent survey of attempts at increasing union membership in the European Union reveals that most countries face a decline in membership rates (EIRO 2010). The report describes the growing recognition among European unions that membership rates must be raised. The comprehensive survey and national reports reveal a diversity of strategies, but without comparisons of coverage rates the strategic choices that unions make are sometimes difficult to explain. Our emphasis on the interplay between membership and coverage, and its implementation in Israel, can aid in accounting for strategic choices elsewhere.

Three patterns of interplay between membership and coverage are particularly instructive. First, there are states that maintain a combination of high coverage and membership, drawing on the Ghent system, as Israel did in the past. However, the Ghent system has weakened in some of these states, particularly Finland and Denmark (Böckerman and Uusitalo 2006, EIRO 2010). But unlike in Israel, even though it has weakened, it was not dismantled, and

therefore, the decline in membership was contained at less than 10 percent points over the last decade (ICTWSS 2011). To these countries, the Israeli case may indicate the potential of changing the notion of membership and account for the gradual decline in membership over the last decade. However, unlike in Israel, attempts at increasing membership are not being made at the enterprise level, as the system retains a high level of coverage rates (80 percent for Denmark and 90 percent for Finland) (ICTWSS 2011). Hence, organizing strategies are aimed at increasing members to match the extensive coverage of broad collective agreements, highlighting the role of trade unions for the workforce as a whole, and overcoming the free-riders problem (that is, reducing the group we designate as “partials”) by means of individual incentives for workers to join. In these systems, the centralized nature of industrial relations remains dominant.

Contrarily, the attempts to recruit workers of countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States are centered in non-union establishments. Organizing at the establishment level is important because branch- and nation-wide bargaining is not possible and threshold requirements for obtaining representative status refer to the establishment level. New organizing drives maintain the decentralized nature of the industrial relations system. Given the difficulty of reaching the high threshold that is necessary, organizing can at most slow down the decline in membership and coverage (Yates and Fairbrother 2003). Given the nature of the system, membership and coverage rates remain similar, and the difference between the two figures is in the range of 2–5 percent in each of the countries (ICTWSS 2011).

Unlike the first two clusters in which recruitment of new members nests in a unified (corporatist or pluralist) system of industrial relations, there are countries in which coverage and membership trends are no longer in conformance. In this group are countries such as Austria (28 percent membership and 99 percent coverage), the Netherlands (19 percent membership and 82 percent coverage), and Germany (18 percent membership and 43 percent coverage). When these countries are compared with Israel, some are more similar than others. In Austria, full coverage of collective agreements is mandated by law, and therefore, unions do not benefit from organizing at the establishment level. Instead they target groups of workers (youth and women) who they claim can benefit from increased involvement (EIRO 2010; Austria report). In the Netherlands, continuous reliance on extension orders requires unions to develop strategies to recruit new members who are covered by collective agreements. Similar attempts to organize security workers in Hamburg were reported in Germany (Bremme, Fürniss, and Meinecke 2007). Organizers from Australia and the United States aided in these organizing drives, although organizing strategies from the Anglo-American systems did not produce the same levels of

recruitment as in the decentralized systems, due to the high level of coverage independent of membership rates.

The Israeli development indicates yet another possibility that focuses on organizing workers who are not covered by statewide collective agreements. Similar processes were observed in Germany, where coverage is more scattered than in Austria and the Netherlands. The entry of the Christian Social unions introduced a hybridization effect that is similar in some respects to the processes that took place in Israel.¹²

Thus, the countries in which membership and coverage rates are not in conformance bridge the gap between the two other groups in three distinct ways: (1) recruiting workers belonging to demographic groups such as women and youth who are already covered by collective agreements; (2) recruiting individuals to a system that is centrally negotiated and in which national and sector-based agreements prevail; and (3) recruiting workers outside of the covered domain. The choice of organizing strategy is therefore strongly related to the scope and nature of coverage. Other institutional factors can account for similarities and differences in the choice of organizing methods, such as the prevalence of works councils. However, the interplay between membership and coverage is essential to analyzing changing strategies.

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¹² A significant difference is that the Christian unions in Germany, it has been argued, offer sweetheart deals, while the new enterprise bargaining in Israel is considered to be more militant than the centralized bargaining.

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