What Is Social Movement Unionism?
—Its Uniqueness and Implications—

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Introduction

It has been long since the tendency of decline of the labor movement was indicated in many advanced capitalist countries. As is well known, the rate of organized workers has been declining for decades. For example, the rate of organized labor in the private sector in the United States went down to almost 10% in the former 1990s.

This tendency has been one of basic characteristics of industrial relations in core regions of the world-system at least since the 1970s. It has been pointed that one of the reasons for it is the drastic measures for the rollback of capital against labor such as plant closings and the relocation of production to peripheral regions. In such a situation, there is no doubt that those who seek to construct an alternative society have been disappointed with the labor movement and come to try to pursue new possibilities for other movements.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, the tendency of revitalization of the labor movement, even if partly, has also been confirmed for the past decade. That is a new type of the labor movement which is called Social Movement Unionism (SMU) particularly in the United States. This type of the labor movement earnestly tries to organize unorganized workers such as immigrants and to implement various campaigns actively. The representative example of such a campaign is the “Justice for Janitors” campaign by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which has been increasingly activated since 1990.

When we take a glance at these contradictory situations in the labor movement in the core, we at once find ourselves faced with several questions not easy to answer. For example, can SMU be sure to become a type of revitalization of the labor movement? Or is it only an exception in a limited region? Furthermore, can the labor movement be a social force for societal change again in core regions in the 21st century? Or will it be declining, even if there is a temporary upsurge? In addition, are there any differences for labor activism between the core and the periphery, or not? The purpose of this paper is to clarify the characteristics, the concept, the implications, and the prospects and constraints of SMU in order to obtain clues to answer these questions.

Firstly, in order to grasp the overall realities of SMU, various characteristics—i.e., subject,
industry, resources, and directionality—will be illustrated, primarily based on a case of the SEIU. Secondly, this paper will define the concept of SMU on the basis of these characteristics. In the literature on the labor movement, the term of SMU is often used as just a descriptive/empirical one in contrast to business unionism. Instead of that, this paper will try to define SMU conceptually/theoretically in comparison with New Social Movements (NSMs) and to clarify that SMU is just a reply to questions asked of the labor movement as one of “old” social movements in the theory of NSMs.

Thirdly, it will be considered theoretically what implications these characteristics of SMU have in the era of globalization. As is well known, it is a general trend in core regions that immigrant workers increasingly migrate in from the periphery. What are the theoretical and practical meanings of SMU in globalization, which actively seeks to organize immigrant workers? Lastly, to what extent SMU will be able to have possibilities as a new type of labor movement will be examined. We will briefly examine both prospects and constraints of SMU.

Characteristics: the Realities of Social Movement Unionism

So what kind of characteristics does the trend of labor movement called SMU have? In this section, we will address the following items—i.e., subject, industry, resources mobilization, and directionality. We will also depend on the case of the SEIU mainly, for it is one of the representative federations seeking the revitalization of the labor movement.

Subject

Because SMU is a trend of the labor movement, its subject consists of the working class. But he or she does not belong to stable and large companies but so often to small sweat shops in the subcontracting system, the low-end personal services—i.e., restaurant and hotel clerks, the stern home care service, and so forth. Furthermore, many workers in SMU are female immigrants from Latin America (mostly Mexico) and Asia. For example, workers organized by

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1 Now the SEIU is the largest union in the North America, organizing workers in four main service sectors (the health care service, the home care service, the property service, and other public services). It organizes 1.8 million workers in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The SEIU organizes the following kinds of workers: 900,000 workers including nurses and doctors in the health care service, 350,000 home care workers and 150,000 home-nursing workers in the home care service, 850,000 workers including local and state government workers, public school employees, bus drivers, childcare providers in the public service, and 225,000 workers including janitors and security guards in the property service (http://www.seiu.org/about/index.cfm ).

2 Wells (2000) indicates that the majority of hotel workers in San Francisco have consisted of Hispanics and Asians. He also discusses, “The proportion of immigrants in the hotel workforce increased from 22 percent in 1970 to fully 48 percent by 1990.” For example, “in 1970 almost half of room cleaners were black, another fifth were white, and the rest were Asians and Hispanics. But by 1990 whites and blacks combined were totaled only 14 percent of room cleaners, Asians comprised over half, and Hispanics over one-third.”
the SEIU have much diversity. They consist of many women, who are 66% of members, and immigrants. According to the website, the “SEIU represents more immigrant workers than any other union in the United States.” (http://www.seiu.org/about/fast%5Ffacts/ )

This trait of SMU comes to make affiliated unions seek to solve gender and race/ethnicity problems in the labor movement as well as NSMs does, and as a result, to amend one of faults in business unionism or “old” social movements. For example, given many immigrant workers in the property and the home care services, which the SEIU aims to organize, the SEIU’s campaigns themselves for janitors and care workers would turn out to be one of such attempts (e.g., Waldinger et al., 1998; Mareschal, 2006).

Regarding janitors, one of the most important problems is that their wages are very low and no health plans are often afforded. Therefore, first of all, the SEIU is trying to win “livable wages” for them. The famous “Justice for Janitors” campaign is an attempt to solve this problem. According to the SEIU’s website, this campaign began in 1985 in Denver. In 1990, union members were attacked by the police during the demonstration in Los Angeles, which made this campaign more popular. This affair raised up the support of citizens and forced ISS (the cleaning contractor company, the target of the demonstration) to confirm a union (http://www.seiu.org/property/janitors/about/ ).

The SEIU still now continues the “Justice for Janitors” campaign and is earnestly implementing to organize janitors across the country as a part of the campaign. It seems that the economic benefits which the SEIU has won primarily accelerate the number of members. Furthermore, the SEIU also pursues political struggles for janitors. That is to say, it demands that companies should comply with laws, which protect human rights and enforce allowances for overtime jobs. In addition, the SEIU also analyzes that the low wages for security guards often lead to their high turnover rates, and as a result, insufficient skill training for them. Therefore, the SEIU is trying to improve such a situation and to announce some suggestions.

With regard to care workers, the SEIU addresses unique problems deriving from this industry—i.e., staff shortage from low wages, unsafe home caring related to that shortage, and so on. In order to solve these problems, the SEIU is trying to take various measures—for example, winning higher pays, the collaborations with communities, the institutional reforms pursuing to protect and effectively use Medicare system, and so on. In this case, the SEIU also seems to seek political struggles (http://www.seiu.org/longterm/issues/workforce_shortage.cfm ).

For female workers as subjects, the Change To Win, of which the SEIU have been one of affiliated federations since 2005, also elected a female chair, Anna Burger, for the first time in the history of the American labor movement, and it identifies itself with a representative of women workers, who are one of main organizational targets.
Industry

As mentioned above, SMU is characteristic of organizing workers mainly in the service industry. Taking an example of the SEIU again, it consists of four service industries—i.e., the health care, the home care, the property service such as janitors and security guards, and the public service such as education and transportation. Furthermore, the Union of Needletrade, Industrial and Textile Employees – Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (UNITE – HERE), which is a member of the Change To Win, is organizing workers in the apparel industry, and this industry is composed of many sweatshops in the United States in these days.³

The UNITE – HERE also associates with various groups such as labor-related non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and students’ anti-sweatshop organizations, in order to improve low wages and inferior working conditions and to demand that transnational corporations (TNCs) should not subcontract their production to sweatshops (e.g., Ness, 1998).

This trait of SMU, that is to say, its primary basis of the low-end service industry and manufacturing, in itself indicates the direction of overcoming a cause of the decline of the labor movement. This is because the decline of the labor movement is partly due to the falling rate of union-density in accordance with the shift of industry from manufacturing to the service industry and the flexible labor usages such as outsourcing and the subcontracting system. Furthermore, given that the service industry is growing particularly in the core, SMU based on the service industry could also be substitute for business unionism, which is based on the organization of the declining manufacturing.

Resources Mobilization

As Olson (1971) indicates, if the results of collective actions are public goods, many people enjoy them even though they do not join these actions and invest their resources and time for them. Therefore, social movements generally have tendency to decline over time. This is a so-called “free rider problem”. Can SMU escape a free rider problem? If it can, how does it do so?

As Voss and Sherman (2000; 2000) indicate on the basis of their close field work, the labor movement in SMU has been activated by activists and organizers from outside the labor movement.⁴ These activists and organizers have experience with various movements—for

³ Of course, sweat shops are not only present in the United States but also in many peripheral regions. Nowadays, corporations in the apparel industry in core regions are generally transnationalized and establish their subsidiaries in peripheral regions. Such subsidiaries are often sweat shops, which are run through the subcontracting system. Bonacich and Appelbaum (2000) analyze the coexistence of sweatshops in the core and the periphery. On anti-sweatshop movements, also see Rodriguez-Gravito (2005).

⁴ Voss and Sherman (2000) indicate two other factors required for the revitalization of the labor movement at the local union level. One is the political crisis of local unions and the other is the control of the international union.
example, student movements, civil rights movements, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and so forth. In short, these human resources are mobilized so successfully that the labor movement in SMU can be activated instead of declining. Furthermore, activists and organizers who experienced various activities in other movements are likely to mobilize into SMU the similar consciousnesses to those of NSMs—anti-racism, ecologism, and so on.

In addition, SMU is so eager to get lay workers to participate in union activities such as campaigns that union organizations can be activated and democratized. This situation means that SMU has an apparatus through which human resources are incessantly mobilized. Furthermore, given that the SEIU, for example, is earnest to foster new leaders at each local union,\(^5\) it is likely that the labor movement in SMU will be able to keep union organization lively by itself.\(^6\)

**Directionality: the Global-Oriented and Community-Based Organization**

What kinds of directionality does the labor movement in SMU have? What kinds of groups does it seek the solidarity with? On the one hand, the directionality of the labor movement in SMU is toward global solidarity. If globalization is one of secular trends in contemporary society and capital, which is a party of industrial relations, moves across borders, the labor movement should also aim at global solidarity.\(^7\)

Taking an example of the SEIU again, it also seeks to make solidarity with other unions globally. For example, the SEIU recognizes that workers whom it organizes are working with transnational corporations (TNCs) in various sectors—i.e., the cleaning service, the food service, the security service, and the school transportation service—and insists that strengthening the labor movement and resisting globalization should require *global partnerships* across national borders. The SEIU now unites with the Transport and General Workers Union in the UK, the Verdi in Germany, and so on. Furthermore, the SEIU is a member of some international federations such as the Union Network International (UNI), the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and the like.

As one of practices for global partnerships, the SEIU is announcing to workers in other

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\(^5\) This is a strategy to foster local union leaders with a real perspective of the local union purpose in the rapid changing environment. This strategic program began in 2004 and is now being pursued through Local Strength Committee. Related to this, Institute for Change program is being implemented. This is a program to “seek to advance social and economic justice by helping SEIU locals develop their leaders, strengthen their organizations, and increase the power of the labor movement.” (http://www.seiu.org/about/institute%5Ffor%5Fchange/)

\(^6\) But, as Voss and Sherman (2000) also indicate, these activities are implemented through strong directions from above by the international union. Therefore, this implementation is likely to be contradictory to the strategy for union democracy. It might be one of constraints to SMU.

\(^7\) Following Evans (2000; 2005), this could be called “counterhegemonic globalization”. According to Kay (2005), global institutions such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are likely to promote global activities for solidarity. On global-oriented organization or a new internationalism, also see Moody (1997a; 1997b) and Waterman (2004).
countries on the Internet that workers with a TNC, for example, Group 4 Securicor or First Student\(^8\) in the United States are faced with difficulties forced by the same corporation that they are working with. The media reform for workers is also considered significant for this strategy. Therefore, the SEIU is delivering the News for Workers on the Internet against the pro-company broadcasting.

On the other hand, the labor movement in SMU also seeks to obtain local solidarity.\(^9\) For example, the SEIU has more than 300 local union affiliates and 25 states councils in the North America. It also has community centers (Community Strength Resource Center) and eight caucuses based mainly on constituent ethnicities as its resource. Community Strength Resource Centers are related to the strategy to unite diverse people from various races, ethnicities, and genders. These centers do not only implement *cultural* activities mentioned above, but also handle *economic* issues such as wages and labor standards, and *political* issues—for example, immigration reforms, the promotion of voting by immigrants, and so on.

These centers also aim at improving the lives of members by winning on issues such as health care and education, and at uniting workers with various kinds of social backgrounds through common interests. For that purpose, such community centers collaborate with many local organizations such as National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Furthermore, one of the purposes of Caucuses is to advance the diversity of membership in the SEIU. The activities through such community centers and caucuses seem to be *cultural/ideological* ones and strengthen the solidarity among members in their daily lives.

In short, as shown in the case of the SEIU, the labor movement in SMU is pursuing local solidarity with citizens (as indicated in the “Justice for Janitors” campaign) and other local NGOs, and community-based activities for organizing workers and fostering leaders (Needleman, 1998). It is also pursuing global solidarity with unions in other countries. It seems that both directionalties, that is, global-oriented and local community-based activities, are adequate to immigrant workers organized in the labor movement in SMU, given that they came from other (peripheral) countries and established their communities in the United States.

**Concept: What Is Social Movement Unionism?**

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\(^8\) Group 4 Securicor is the largest security provider in the world and First Student is a subsidiary of the Scotland-based multinational First Group. The former stands against the unionization in Kenya, Indonesia, India, and the United States. The latter employs many school bus drivers in the United States, but it is unfortunately famous for its terrible working conditions—no paid sick leave, no affordable health insurance, and so forth (http://www.seiu.org/about/global%5Fpartnerships)—and, as a result, high turn-over rate undermining the safety and reliability of the bus operation of the company.

\(^9\) Regarding community-based organizational activities, their importance in practice is asserted in various ways (e.g., Rhomber & Simmons, 1998).
Until now, we have reviewed the characteristics of SMU concretely. In the following, we will try to define the concept of SMU more theoretically on the basis of such characteristics.

**Descriptive Definition**

When we examine some social events, we must begin by making their concepts explicit in order to clarify our objects for consideration. If the social events are new ones, this step would be mandatory. Therefore, we also need to try to define the concept of SMU in this paper. How has SMU been defined in the literature on the labor movement? Virtually, many scholars have not grasped SMU conceptually, but depicted it empirically.\(^{10}\) In many cases, SMU has also been defined in contrast to business unionism, which has characterized the postwar labor movement particularly in the United States.

For example, business unionism is characteristic of servicing only existing members, protecting their benefits, bureaucratizing union organizations, coordinating their interests through collective bargaining controlled by National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), and so forth (e.g., Fantasia & Voss, 2004). On the contrary, SMU is said to have the following properties: concentrating on organizing unorganized workers such as immigrant workers instead of servicing their members; implementing radical actions such as corporate campaigns and disruptive activism; involving lay members into union activities; seeking to obtain the union approval by card checks instead of the elections on NLRB; and so forth.

In this case, the following examples are so often taken up as representative of SMU: particular union activities such as those of the SEIU; shifting strategies of the American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL – CIO), which came to put many resources into organizational activities and educating organizers after John Sweeney had been elected as president in 1995; and the formation of a new national federation, the Change To Win,\(^{11}\) which was formed by seven industrial federations including the SEIU and split from the AFL – CIO in 2005.

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\(^{10}\) Exceptionally, Robinson (2000) is one of few attempts to try to grasp SMU conceptually. He formed four dichotomies for the analysis of union natures—voluntary/involuntary (to members), autonomous/subordinate (to unions’ chief interlocutors), inclusive/exclusive (to workers), and critical/uncritical (to the existing politics, the economy, and so on). According to him, business union is exclusive and uncritical. On the contrary, social movement union is inclusive and critical. He set two other union types such as social union and sectarian union. He also asserted that neo-liberal restructuring would make favorable conditions for SMU, which is formed by inclusive and critical unions. His attempt is a valuable one, but seems required to be more sophisticated theoretically because all four dichotomies are not used to form union types. Logically, four dichotomies could make 16 union types, but he suggested only four union types using only two dichotomies. As a result, two other dichotomies are thought to be redundant.

\(^{11}\) In 2005, the SEIU withdrew from the AFL-CIO with other unions—i.e., the UNITE—HERE, the Teamsters, the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Laborers, and the Carpenters and United Farm Workers—and formed the Change To Win as a new federation (http://www.seiu.org/about/seiu_history/index.cfm ). This is a result of such strategies to manage to implement a disruptive activity in order to strengthen the labor movement. The Change To Win is pursuing to organize 90% of workers without unions in the United States.
**Conceptual Definition: the Modification of Industrial Relations**

But, even if we reiterate these descriptions in detail, we would not be able to get to the substance of union activities called SMU. So what can we do to do that? First of all, we need to consider industrial relations *analytically*. Industrial relations generally consist of social relations in three spheres—i.e., economic, political, and cultural/ideological.  

As seen above in detail, SMU has won benefits for workers in all these spheres. For example, it has gotten much increase of wages in the economic sphere; it has interrogated the way of employment mediated by the subcontracting system in the political sphere; and it has modified the public consciousness for low-wage work, as was seen in the “Justice for Janitors” campaign, and dissented from neo-liberalism in the cultural/ideological sphere. If the restructuring of industrial relations are seen in SMU, the definition of SMU could be obtained as follows. That is to say, SMU is a type of the labor movement that seeks the formation of labor-advantageous industrial relations through the transformation of those in three spheres.

**Social Movement Unionism and New Social Movements**

However, this would not be enough. If SMU can be a case of the revitalization of the labor movement, it is likely to realize or recover the requirements for institutional and/or societal change, which were thought to be lost from the labor movement in advanced capitalist countries or core regions. Therefore, we must analyze SMU in comparison with NSMs, since scholars sympathizing with NSMs once insisted that the labor movement as one of “old” social movements should lose such capabilities as to change society drastically.

By this we virtually mean that SMU is only a type of the labor movement in the core. It is true that the labor movement has become activated in some peripheral and semiperipheral regions such as South Korea and South Africa for past decades, and that some researchers have compared such cases in both regions with each other and tried to grasp the similar pattern (Chun, 2005; 2006). Nevertheless, it would seem that the differences of historical situations in these regions should be crucial.

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12 This recognition is inherently based on Marx’s thought, which was “discovered” by Althusser (Althusser, 1964) and elaborated by Poulantzas (1968) and Burawoy (1985). The point of it is that the *political* and the *ideological* are included in the *economic*, and therefore, that Marxism is not economic determinism. Basically, the economic relations of industrial relations are for the exploitation of labor force, political relations are for the control of work, and also cultural/ideological ones are for workers’ knowledge/skill and consciousness. Concretely, they come up each other as wage relations, relations in organizations, and the consciousness of work and society. For details, see Yamada (1996: chap.1).

13 In referring to SMU, some scholars take NSMs and/or its comparison with NSMs into consideration (e.g., Clawson, 2003; Frundt, 2005). But they only seem to stress that the labor movement should address such matters and strategies picked by NSMs because they are just scholars on the labor movement. Instead, this paper tries to confirm the traits of NSMs theoretically and to insist, in comparison with each other, that SMU should entail such traits in a high degree.

14 Precisely, social movement unionism is a term used to characterize militant labor movements in Brazil, South Africa, South Korea (Seidman, 1994: 2; 266-272), and the Philippines (Scipes, 1992).
For example, the fact that authoritarian regimes and resistances to them were present in
the recent past is likely to give some effects on the activation of the labor movement in
some semiperipheral and peripheral regions. This situation is quite different from that in the
core, where liberal democratic regimes have continued at least since the end of the World War II.
Therefore, if we grasp the shifting labor movement in both regions under the single term of
SMU, we are likely to fail to figure out the true implications of the revitalization of the labor
movement in the core. For this reason, we will use the term of SMU only when we refer to the
revitalization of the labor movement in the core.

So what are NSMs? In the 1980s, the NSMs theory was elaborated to analyze the reality of
some social movements, which addressed various issues—i.e., women, anti-nuclear weapons,
peace, environment, race/ethnicity, etc—and to explain the reason for their rise. In the NSMs
theory, the “newness” of NSMs was indicated for various properties of movements (e.g., Offe,
1985); 15 their organizations tended to have ad hoc, anti-bureaucratic, and non-hierarchical nature
and not to demarcate leaders and followers; their subjects were often of the new middle class and
“decommodified” groups such as housewives and students, and they questioned their identities or
territories (e.g., the life world); their values were based on autonomy and so-called
postmaterialism16, and were against dominance and manipulation; and their issues were taken
variously but handled singularly.17

The labor movement as one of “old” social movements was also characterized as the
opposite of NSMs; its organizations were huge and bureaucratized, and the participation of its lay
members was limited; its subjects were, needless to say, of the working class primarily in the
monopoly sector, who had earned vested interests in society; its values were based on
“materialism”, which could not lead to mass mobilization in affluent societies; and its issues were
basically for economic benefits of members, which could not dissent from capitalism. In short,
according to the NSMs theory, the labor movement was regarded as rigidified, and was presumed
to have already lost such abilities as to change society drastically (e.g., Touraine, 1986).

Nevertheless, as opposed to the NSMs theory, the trend of revitalized labor movement called

15 The problematique of Offe is that NSMs blur the conventional distinction of the state and civil society, and they
politicize the civil society. There are, however, some criticisms for these formulations of NSMs. For example, Pichardo
(1997) argues that such properties of NSMs are dubious and not necessarily verified.
16 Postmaterialism is a concept defined by some scholars such as Inglehart (1989), which is a form of consciousness in
advanced societies since the 1970s. In a word, postmaterialism is such a consciousness as to prefer the “quality” of life to
material affluence. In advanced societies, especially in the mid-1950s, it is said that so-called “affluent society” was realized
and that material needs were fulfilled in some degree. In this situation, a consciousness of postmaterialism is said to spread
widely. Inglehart calls this shift of consciousness a “silent revolution”.
17 One of reasons why issues addressed by NSMs are singular is that their organizations are ad hoc. Offe (1985) also
emphasizes that such movements on single-issues should tend to be of no compromise for their demands partly because
they do not win anything in return for concessions so that their organizations have ad hoc natures.
SMU seems to realize some of the properties of NSMs. For example, as is the case with the Change To Win, some unions actively try to democratize their organizations and promote their members. Furthermore, the subjects of SMU are of the working class as long as it is a type of the labor movement, but most agents are not relatively benefited workers in the monopoly sector but underemployed immigrant female workers in the service industry. This means that the labor movement in the core has to take the same issues (e.g., gender, race and ethnicity) that NSMs addressed, and that the NSMs theory is not necessarily antithesis to a type of the labor movement called SMU.

In addition, when we see immigrant workers seriously demand the increase of their wages because they can not help doing so to live, we are forced to assume that “materialism” can still or again be one of the leverages for societal change in core regions. In short, globalization is giving rise to the modification of value consciousness in the core, which is the cultural/ideological basis of social movements, and social movements including the labor movement could break out if not necessarily mediated by “postmaterialism”.

To summarize the above discussion, first of all, we have to grasp the specificity of SMU conceptually. SMU is a type of the labor movement oriented to the formation of labor-advantageous industrial relations. Secondly, SMU is a type of the labor movement in the core in globalization. And, lastly, SMU is a type of the labor movement that aims at institutional and/or societal change through its revitalization. In other words, SMU is a self-reflexive product of the labor movement and is pursuing the identity of them in globalization, just as NSMs were the

18 Related to this point, Piore and Safford (2006) also assert that the axes of social mobilization are shifting in the labor movement, and that such new axes are around identities. This may indicate the post-modern transformation of subject in the labor movement.

19 However, according to Offe (1985), NSMs are not necessarily based on “new” values but what is at issue in NSMs is the mode of implementation of such values. For example, the personal autonomy is not a “new” value but has been existent in the process of modernization. In this meaning, it is shared with the labor movement as an “old” social movement. Olofsson (1988) also asserts that NSMs could be regarded as the “remakes” of old movements.

20 This ensures once again that the low income strata such as immigrants are growing in the core through globalization. In this meaning, the core in the world-system is being “peripheralized” or “semiperipheralized”, as Sassen-Koob (1982) once asserted.

21 By this we do not mean that the new middle class is not motivated to social movements by “postmaterialism”. For example, in the “Justice for Janitors” campaign, the bulk of citizens of the middle class sympathized with janitors, despite the fact that they were not economically poor and could live affluent material lives. This did not suggest at least that the citizens expressing solidarity with janitors should join the campaign with materialist consciousness.

22 Definitely speaking, by revitalization we primarily mean that labor-advantageous industrial relations are connected. However, the formation of these industrial relations is directly related to institutional and/or societal change in society. For example, pursuing the rise of wages through labor-advantageous industrial relations is more likely to alter the official minimum wage in the society, which can be seen just institutional change. The fact that SMU addresses such matters as gender and ethnicity also means that it has to seek to transform some institutions that define existing gender and/or ethnic relations. In this way, the modification of industrial relations can lead to institutional and/or societal change. Related to this point, the relationships between SMU and political organizations such as parties might also be required to be examined, but in this article this problem is not addressed. For example, Scipes (1992) considers this problem, criticizing the traditional Leninist vision of unions.
products of self-reflexivity on identity and society in the 1980s.

Implications

So what kind of implications does SMU have as a type of the labor movement in the core in the era of globalization? Following the above conceptualization, we will explore them along with the characteristics of SMU.

Immigrants as Subjects

The subjects of SMU consist of many female immigrant workers, as is the case with the SEIU. Needless to say, this implies that SMU itself is a product of globalization. Moreover, SMU is an indication that the existence of immigrant workers is being transformed. As recognized in business unionism, immigrant workers were difficult to organize because they are only sojourners (Fantasia & Voss, 2004). Therefore, immigrant workers became all the more disposable and displaceable because they were not a target for organizing.

But SMU has been changing the estimation of immigrant workers, since they are evidently able to be organized as agents for counter attacks against employers. Not to mention, this transformation of the existence of immigrant workers could be directly implemented by activists and organizers. Nonetheless, given that the labor movement in SMU is able to mobilize lay members of immigrant workers in various activities, the bargaining power in SMU does not only seem to derive from activists and organizers but also from lay workers.

In a word, immigrant workers are modified—i.e., from the disposable and displaceable existence to the united and resistible one. Furthermore, given that the phenomenon of immigration is ubiquitous in the core, SMU will not only be prevalent in the United States but also in other countries if other conditions are equal.

23 In the 1990s, main interests of scholars were in whether it was possible to organize immigrant workers or not (Delgado, 1993). But nowadays such interests have shifted toward what statics and strategies in organizing activities are effective because it became self-evident that immigrant workers were able to be organized. For my idea, one of the most relevant problems is to clarify how the social networks among immigrant workers are mobilized into worker organizations such as unions and worker centers, and to make concrete organizing processes explicit. It is true that many scholars also indicated that immigrant workers are easy to organize through their social networks (e.g., Ness, 2005; Milkman, 2000; 2006; 2007), but concrete processes through which these networks are mobilized and the extent to which they are mobilized are not still evident. In this point, employment processes through the social networks among immigrants have been researched much better than union organizing processes (Waldinger & Lichter, 2003).

24 Probably, this process of modification seems not to have been implemented only by activists and organizers. That is to say, social relationships connected between immigrant workers, which the author thinks are realized as communal or communitarian ones in immigrant social networks, are likely to be the origin of the strength of SMU. This point will be examined in another paper, taking into consideration the social origin of immigrant workers (Yamada, 2008).
The Service Industry as a Place of Organization

As Sassen (1991) insists as a global city hypothesis, globalization proceeding, the service industry is increasingly growing in the core in the world-system, particularly in large cities. The reason for this phenomenon is that TNCs relocate production activities to peripheral regions and that, in accordance with it, manufacturing is declining. In this case, growing service industries are classified in two different types. That is to say, one is the high-end service industry to support the activities of TNCs—regarding finance, information, communication, insurance industries, etc. The other is the low-end service industry to benefit elites working with the head offices of TNCs and the high-end service industries, and to support their lives—regarding retail, food, cleaning, housekeeping, child care, etc.

In such low-end and personal service industries, immigrant workers are employed. Personal services include jobs related to the reproduction of labor force—a maid, a nanny, a care worker, and so forth. Of course, such jobs are done mostly by female immigrant workers. As current research shows, based on the large difference of wages between the core and the periphery, women in the middle class in the periphery, who themselves employ maids and/or nannies for their husbands and children, also work as such workers as related to the reproduction for their counterparts in the core. In this situation, a new difference between the core and the periphery could show up in globalization.25

In any case, given that globalization proceeds with the growing service industry, the fact that SMU is actively organizing workers in the service industry could make SMU a type of the revitalization of the labor movement.

The Community-based Organization as a Form of Resource Mobilizations

What is the origin of the strength of SMU? Except enthusiastic activists and organizers, we need to find it out in lay workers. As mentioned above, given that in SMU unions concentrate on organizing the whole communities of immigrants,26 such community-based organization is likely to withdraw strong solidarity from immigrant communities.

For example, the SEIU employs many bilingual organizers and tries to organize immigrant

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25 If harsh competition between companies is one of the reasons for globalization, privatization and deregulation are likely to proceed with it. In this situation, the privatization of the labor of reproduction is likely to spread even more widely.

26 Strictly speaking, this characteristic is more salient in worker centers than in unions. Worker centers have been formed in various regions in the United States since the 1990s and they are labor-related NGOs which seek to organize particular ethnicities such as Chinese and Latinos based on specific immigrant communities. They are advocates to support immigrant workers legally and take activities for the advancement of immigrant rights. For worker centers, see Fine (2006). On the contrary, unions try to mobilize social networks among immigrant workers for organizing. Furthermore, among community-based organizations, there are two different types—one is a type seeking to win the approval of community residents for their activities, the typical case of which is “Justice for Janitors” campaign in Los Angeles and the other is a type pursuing to organize the whole community, as mentioned above.
workers through forming one-on-one relationships with them (e.g., Wong, 2001; Milkman & Wong, 2001). In this case, organizers consult for immigrants for their private problems on children, siblings and spouses. As a result, SMU seems to be able to obtain the trust of immigrants and to organize immigrant communities as a whole. This form of organization appears to mobilize the *communitarian* power of immigrant communities. To put it another way, SMU can organize immigrant workers on the basis of their networks from their home countries to urban areas in host countries. These networks would foster such strong solidarity among members.

To our interest, the similar strategy was implemented in Japan in the 1950s. This was called *Gurumi Tosō*, which was a family and community-involved struggle. This type of struggle was directed by Makoto Takano, the Chair of the Japan Trade Union Council, and one of its characteristics was to establish the buttresses for struggles in the families and the communities of workers and to mobilize the wives of workers for the support of struggles. One of the representative cases was *Nikko Muroran Sogi* in the Muroran Steelmill of Nihonseiko Company in 1954. Although this type of struggles finally failed in winning their demands because of recalcitrant capital, the strength of solidarity buttressed by wide social networks beyond workplaces could be to some extent revealed. SMU, in which the similar type of movements is implemented, also seems to realize the similar strength.

The Directionality of Anti-globalization

If one of the reasons for globalization is harsh competition between capitals and a consequence of it is the demand of concession for labor, the labor movement would have to take some counter measures against capital, given that capital-labor relations, that is, the basis of industrial relations, are at their essence antagonistic. That is to say, it would be required that the labor movement in the age of globalization should implement activities against capital-driven globalization.

So can SMU do such an activity? Generally speaking, anti-globalization or *counterhegemonic* movements could have already risen in various forms in core regions—for example, the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transaction for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) (Anchelovici, 2002), the World Social Forum (WSF), anti-sweatshop organizations,

Of course, immigrant workers unionized in SMU are so diverse that they could be antagonistic to each other because of the diversity of their social and cultural backgrounds. Regarding this, for example, the SEIU’s Community Resource Strength Center, to which we have already referred, seems to be useful in order to avoid antagonism among members. Furthermore, if *communitarian* relationships in immigrant communities can be the origin of the strength of SMU, we would need to define the essence of these relationships. For my idea, they are likely to be *premodern* or *pre-capitalist* relationships originating from rural areas in the periphery. This point will be examined in another paper theoretically, and verified through field works. In short, SMU does not only have *post-modern*, as referred to above, but also *pre-modern* properties.
and so on. Of course, these organizations include trade unions as their members, and therefore, some labor unions have the directionality toward anti-globalization and global solidarity.

Furthermore, there would be no doubt that SMU has the strongest directionality in the labor movement, as already confirmed in the case of the SEIU. Given that SMU seeks to establish the community-based organizations, it may be that SMU also has the traits of a “rooted cosmopolitan” as an actor of “transnational activism” (Tarrow, 2005). This is because SMU can connect the local problems of immigrant workers as its members with the transnational ones that are related to the global movements of capital.

**Concluding Remarks: Prospects and Constraints**

This paper has discussed a type of the labor movement called SMU. First of all, some characteristics of SMU have been confirmed—regarding subject, organizations, resources mobilization, and directionality. In a word, it was confirmed that SMU primarily consisted of female immigrants, sought to democratize its organizations, was activated by activists and organizers, and pursued community-based organization and global solidarity.

Secondly, this paper tried to define the concept of SMU. SMU is a type of the labor movement which aims at the formation of labor-advantageous relations in three spheres of industrial relations and at institutional and/or societal change through such formation in the core in the age of globalization. SMU also has some traits of new social movements, and overcomes some faults of the labor movement (especially business unionism) as an “old” social movement.

Thirdly, this paper considered the implications of SMU. SMU could set immigrant workers in the low-end service industry actors against capital on the basis of their **communitarian** power, which was made possible through its community-based organizational activities. SMU—it organizes many immigrants in the growing service industry and seeks global solidarity—could be just a new labor movement in the era of globalization.

And, lastly, we will examine prospects and constraints of SMU. Can SMU have universality? Can SMU also be prevalent in other core regions than the United States? Given that immigrants are increasingly flowing in the core, SMU will potentially have its basis prevalently in the core. Of course, there are many constraints for the prevalence of SMU.

First of all, each country has such a different institution that the revitalization of the labor movement through the self-reformation of local unions in the United States may not be necessarily possible (Carter, 2001; Carter et al., 2003). Furthermore, SMU organizes so diverse workers that their cultural values can be different and that they are difficult to organize and to unite for global solidarity.
In any case, this paper only implemented a brief review of SMU, defined its concept, and considered its implications. In order to ascertain whether SMU will be able to overcome the defects of the existing labor movement and to become a new type of the labor movement in the era of globalization or not, the local origin of bargaining power and the possibility of global solidarity in SMU would require to be swiftly investigated theoretically and empirically.

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