



# Evaluating the Effects of Globalization on Work: Building upon Awareness, Learning, and Knowledge<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Phenomenological processes influence how one evaluates globalization, and consequently one's attitudes toward it. The awareness of, learning about, and knowledge of complex problems have direct effects on how problems are evaluated and managed, even in contexts predominantly based on material interests. We analyze the perceived effects globalization has on work by looking at the attitudes and evaluations of labor union representatives in Finland ( $N = 334$ ). We propose a tripartite phenomenological model of awareness, learning, and knowledge, and apply it in a cross-sectional OLS regression model using 20 explanatory variables. Findings show significant associations for two variables, including employers and supervisors as information sources and effects of foreign branches. The model moderately explains the evaluations of the effects of globalization, despite the sample consisting of social classes with differing life-worlds. This suggests that union representatives' attitudes toward globalization seem partly contingent on their individual, phenomenological attachment to global circumstances.

## KEYWORDS

*awareness / globalization evaluations / knowledge / learning / phenomenological distance / trade union representatives*

This article focuses on the following question: How do different modes of awareness, learning, and knowledge about globalization among Finnish labor union representatives relate to their attitudes toward globalization and its perceived effects on work? Thus, we address the general sociological question about how social change, in this case globalization, is perceived—according to labor union representatives—to influence and change working life and labor market conditions in Finland.

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon, covering a wide array of economic, social, and institutional changes in societies (Ritzer 2007, 2012; Scholte 2008). Consequently, globalization is not a simple question of pro or anti, but a complex problem with multiple interpretations, definitions, and desired outcomes (Kelly & Olds 1999; Scholte 2008). While the 21st century has seen large-scale anti-globalist manifestations and world summit protests, recent research suggests that there are no clear attitudinal shifts viz. globalization in the general population (Walter 2021). However, an awareness

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of globalization-related issues, and a subsequent political polarization, has increased in the past decades (Walter 2021), coinciding with the rise, and electoral success, of ethno-nationalism in many Western democracies.

Different social groups view globalization differently, depending on their resources and historical experiences. However, in the European context, the administrative elite and the political establishment present a fairly unified perception of this phenomenon, viewing it mainly in terms of an inevitable, primarily economic, positive world-historical process (cf. Hegel 1979; Graham & Paulsen 2002; Smith & Hay 2008). Such a consensus of meaning regarding the perception of globalization may be necessary for the mobilization of political resources (McGuire 2014), as well as a direct function of the industrial structure that actors find themselves in (Abbott 2011). In other words: the level to which the sociohistorical context puts pressure on political actors (in terms of material, political, and ideological pressure) defines the propensity to which these actors are both able and willing to act. One can thus expect divergent social contexts to result in divergent perceptions of globalization, and thus to divergent political processes and results (e.g., Walchuk 2011).

Approaching this question from the standpoint of the labor movement, research has emphasized objective material relations in understanding the reactions of trade unions to globalization. Not surprisingly, interest-based approaches have dominated the research on trade unions. Less focus has been given to subjectivities, including processes of knowledge formation and learning (Birelma 2018). These subjectivities, or what we term *phenomenological processes*, affect how actors interpret the world, and—crucially—how they construct knowledge and evaluations about the world's phenomena (Helander 2004, 2008; Jarvis 2007; Schütz 1967). For instance, learning has been identified as a key component of global leadership (Cseh et al. 2013). Informal learning may also develop material linkages between international trade and labor standards, resulting in diverse reactions to globalization (Burgoon 2004).

This article contributes to the research on the responses of the labor movement to globalization: first, we develop a theoretical framework for analyzing subjective experiences and knowledge-based conceptions in labor movements, and second, we contribute to the small but growing knowledge base on Finnish corporatism.

In this article, we analyze the effects that different modes of awareness, learning, and knowledge have on attitudes toward globalization among a historical sample of Finnish labor union representatives. Since the 1980s, the Finnish labor movement had supported free trade and economic deregulation (Boldt 2008; Boldt et al. 1997; Hämäläinen 1998). Due to a high degree of labor organization and the application of the Ghent system (see below), these attitudes have had a direct effect on the Finnish labor-economic response to globalization. Thus, we ask: what were the perceptions regarding globalization's effects on working conditions among Finnish trade union representatives in the middle of a strong economic globalization process in 2010, and are these perceptions attributable to differences in awareness, learning, and knowledge processes?

The choice of data collection period is historically motivated. The first decade of the 21st century saw large-scale economic and cultural transformations in Finland, reflecting changing global circumstances. The data collection occurred just a couple of years after mass anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle, Prague, and Gothenburg, as well as a little less than two years after the fall of the Lehman Brothers bank and the start of a global economic recession. In Finland, the export flagship Nokia lost its

market dominance in telecommunications, and the Finnish industrial economy underwent large-scale restructuring, including multiple mass factory closures.<sup>1</sup> These material changes coincided with the large-scale rise of the ethno-nationalist party in Finland, the Finns party, which saw a four-fold increase in support over one year (Yle 2022). We are thus interested in how labor representatives reacted to this turbulent period, and in which ways their evaluations of globalization consequently varied.

## The Finnish Trade Union Movement

Finland is a *coordinated market economy*, where societal partners work together to achieve consensus in industrial and economic policy (Hall & Soskice 2001; Haman & Kelly 2008). From 1969 until 2015, this consensus has been established through trilateral comprehensive income policy agreements (in Finnish, *tulopoliittiset kokonaisratkaisut* or Tupo) or centralized labor market agreements between union confederations and employer organizations, with the state as a mediator (Bergholm 2009; Kaitila et al. 2022; Sippola & Bergholm 2023). Thus, Finnish trade unions are key actors in developing, shaping, and establishing economic policy (cf. Ojala, Eloranta & Jalava 2006). If, for instance, the main trade union confederations would have opposed joining the EU or EMU, Finland would not have become a member of these international co-operations.

Not much international research exists on the Finnish variety of corporatism. As Bergholm (2009: 29) notes, “only since 2000 has some vague idea about the Finnish *Sonderweg* become more permanently established in Finnish and international social sciences debates.” Historians, however, date the start of Finnish neo-corporatism to the 1960s, when unemployment insurance, a pension reform, and the comprehensive income policy agreements were introduced (Bergholm 2009). Finnish corporatism experienced a golden age until Finnish membership in the European Union in 1995, after which sections of the corporatist system have slowly eroded (Böckerman & Uusitalo 2006; Bergholm & Bieler 2013). Despite this, internationally, Finland remains a stronghold of corporatism (Bergholm & Bieler 2013; Vesa et al. 2018).

The Finnish trade union movement organized around 70% of the workforce around the year 2010, a high level of organizing comparable to other Nordic countries and countries applying the Ghent System in unemployment insurance (Bergholm 2003; Böckerman & Uusitalo 2006; Taylor & Rioux 2018: 195). The movement is profession-, industry-, and class-based, as in the rest of the Nordic region (Kjellberg 2023; Sippola & Bergholm 2023). Professional unions organize the workforce under the same roof and make comprehensive agreements for their respective industries. In turn, the unions belong to class-based confederations. Blue-collar unions belong to the SAK confederation; intermediary positions, for example, nurses, firefighters, and different supervisory positions, organize in STTK, the Finnish Confederation of Professionals, and academic professions such as physicians, teachers, and engineers belong to the Akava confederation (Sippola & Bergholm 2023).

The sampled population of this study consists of democratically elected representatives of trade unions of Finland. Finnish unions follow a model of representative democracy, wherein members elect boards and general assemblies (or councils) that meet several times a year to make decisions on union policy.<sup>2</sup> In addition to making concrete decisions, these bodies are also the locus of political debate and communicative opinion

formation within the union. Thus, it is of particular interest to gauge the worldviews of the assembly members and to study what kind of individual characteristics or subjectivities they are linked to.

## The phenomenology of awareness, learning, and knowledge

To analyze how elected representatives of Finnish trade unions understand and react to globalization, we choose a phenomenological approach to conceptualize evaluation, judgment, and decision-making. This choice is both theoretically and meta-theoretically motivated. Globalization analysis has often focused on structural facts and phenomena, leaving less room for subjectivities and individual perceptions (Birelma 2018). The relationship between structural constraints and individual reactions, however, seems to be a dialectical one, where the agent may always react in accordance with or diametrically opposed to structural prescriptions (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Giddens 1984). Thus, despite the structurally turbulent times of the global economy in the 2000s, the subsequent reactions and value formations of trade union representatives would still have presented a degree of open-endedness and free choice.

From a phenomenological perspective, for any agent involved in globalization to make sense of the relation between the abstract, high-level phenomenon and its concrete life-world effects, several phenomenological relations must exist. First, the agent must be made *aware* of the phenomenon and its connections to concrete effects; second, this awareness is constitutively dependent of some level of *knowledge* of the phenomenon the agent is aware of (cf. Selg et al. 2022). Third, this process of attaining knowledge and awareness may be transmitted through variable modes of *learning*.

Global *awareness* has been analyzed particularly in the tradition of global education for children and young people (cf. Burnouf 2004). One such analysis is Robert G. Hanvey's five-dimensional model relating to 'specialized capacities, predispositions and attitudes of the group members' (Hanvey 1982: 162), which has been especially influential in geography education (Klein et al. 2014). Much of the contributing research later has developed this framework with insights from post-colonial studies (cf. Burnouf 2004), but mostly for research in pedagogy—not for a focused study of adult decision-makers who work and live in different social circumstances. We are partly inspired by Hanvey's model of awareness. However, the model seems to us too monolithic, in that it does not adequately distinguish between different objects of awareness. Relatedly, Hanvey's model applies a realist conception of awareness as having a 'correct' form. We wish to emphasize awareness of complex problems without simple, correct solutions, but instead multiple interest-related solutions, none of which are objectively better than the other. Whether a solution is deemed 'correct' is a direct function of one's lifeworld (cf. Schütz 1962: 287–356; 1967). Thus, as long as there are multiple life-worlds, there are multiple correct solutions to abstract problems.

Instead, we propose a division of awareness into two constituent dimensions: *Conceptual-Symbolic Awareness* and *Social-Material Awareness*. For individuals facing globalization, they must become aware of both the symbolic concept of globalization and its relations to their concrete social, material, and cultural life-worlds (cf. Schütz 1967).<sup>3</sup> These two modes of awareness may coincide or clash. For instance, when workers both uphold solidarity with workers abroad, and maintain their own

working standards at home, one may talk of coinciding modes of awareness.<sup>4</sup> If, however, one's perception of globalization as a concept is positive but the perception of globalization's concrete effects on working conditions is negative, then the two modes may be said to clash. Thus, we believe a separation of these two modes of awareness is necessary for understanding the dynamics of how individuals relate to globalization as a process. Thus, the factors within the dimension of awareness are assumed to be both directly and indirectly linked to global phenomena. We include questions about being aware of global events, and their consequences, for instance by asking about the effects replacements of global political leaders or events in global politics have on interest representation as direct operational indicators of global awareness. Indirectly, they are linked to awareness, for instance, by asking about the level of global integration of the industry and about the presence of foreign branches. Assessing these questions shows to what degree a person can frame their work environment in terms of global circumstances, instead of only in relation to the local, the geographically situated work organization.

A second aspect is that of *learning* processes. Learning comes in both formal shapes, such as courses and education, and informal shapes. Informal learning is itself a multi-dimensional process consisting, for example, of contact with a phenomenon and knowledge gathered through long experience. Informal learning may also consist of multiple knowledge sources, such as friends, family, the workplace, hobbies, and consumption (Aittola 1999; Marsick & Watkins 2015). These knowledge sources may often be at odds with one another, such as when formal education tries to instill a pro-globalization attitude in the individual, only to be countered by anti-globalization tendencies in one's circle of peers. Thus, we suggest two constituent dimensions of learning, *Formal Learning*, and *Informal Learning*. We have chosen factors that illustrate the origins of information about global circumstances, which we call information sources. Learning may involve different information sources. In addition, the previous awareness factors also have relevance for the knowledge dimension.

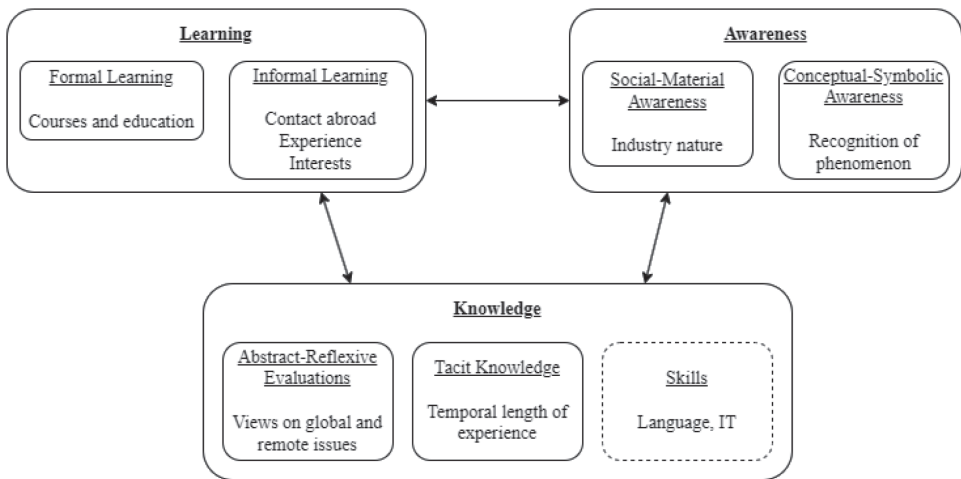
Finally, the third aspect of translating an abstract phenomenon into one's lifeworld and evaluating its effects consists of *knowledge*. We propose a tripartite distinction within this dimension: *Tacit Knowledge*, *Abstract-Reflexive Evaluations*, and *Skills*. Tacit knowledge is knowledge which guides the individual, but which need not be explicitly stated nor reflected upon (Polanyi 1958). This type of knowledge is assumed to be created through experience and informal learning (Guthrie 1995). When combined with reflection, tacit knowledge may become abstracted reflexive knowledge. For instance, of our respondents, nearly half seem to define global interest representation as a reflexive reconstruction of tacit, domain-specific knowledge regarding the effects of globalization.<sup>5</sup> Finally, skills-related knowledge may come into play in evaluating the effects of globalization. For instance, the effects of globalization can be assumed to be more negatively evaluated if an individual does not possess skills necessary for managing globalization, such as IT skills, foreign language proficiency, or the ability to utilize air travel and global airports. In this study, we have used an index variable of global knowledge to directly measure the knowledge dimension. When it comes to the knowledge of the existence and effects of foreign branches, in addition to awareness, it is also related to knowledge about global circumstances. In addition, foreign branches facilitate learning about global issues, and they create awareness about globalization, and further serve as sources for knowledge about global conditions.



We want to underline, regarding the choice of variables and operational indicators for the three dimensions, that besides the index of global knowledge, we have mainly chosen to utilize proxy variables that relate to phenomenological aspects of awareness, learning, and knowledge. A different kind of approach, which would include testing of direct indicators for learning (for instance test-retest design), may provide more immediate results of the effects of learning on the evaluations of the effects of globalization. However, in this study, there was no possibility of doing such a test-based investigation. Yet, our view on phenomenology is such that not cutting a phenomenon into atomistic, mutually exclusive slices of some common sense object of study, are more valid in the study of an abstract phenomenon and abstract, reflexive evaluations. It is uncertain whether information sources result in knowledge or awareness, but it is still reasonable to expect that this is the case. For instance, The Swedish National Mediation Office NMO (Medlingsinstitutet) has as one of its main tasks to inform about the economic outlook and other working life and labor market related issues in order to facilitate decision-making in wage negotiations (<https://www.mi.se/english/about-us/>). As the dimensions are linked to each other and constitute an emergent whole of a phenomenological explanation, it is reasonable to treat these proxy variables as indicators of all three dimensions simultaneously, but in different modes. For instance, Knight (2016: 104) illustrates this intertwined characteristic of awareness and knowledge and operationalizes awareness in the following way: ‘Awareness of climate change was measured with an item that asked, “How much do you know about global warming or climate change?”’. As our interest lies in the overall model and its explanatory power, we are not interested in developing particular predictors. We consider validity in terms of the entire model and its ability to grasp the three dimensions of phenomenological explanation, that is awareness, learning and knowledge. Thus, we inductively consider our factors form a phenomenological universe of awareness, learning, and knowledge.

Figure 1 shows the final model, with examples for each dimension mode.

**Figure 1** A phenomenological model of learning, awareness, and knowledge.



Finally, concerning the interrelation of our theory and our methodology, phenomenological analysis is essentially interested in processes of social action and meaning making (cf. Schütz 1967). A qualitative research program might thus be the first to spring to mind. However, much research has successfully applied a quantitative analysis to phenomenology (e.g., Rudmin 1994; Fisher Jr. & Stenner 2011; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie 2014; Perkins 2012). There are also many criticisms to the notion that survey research would be inherently positivist (Ayeni et al. 2019; Marsh 1979). We follow a perspective of methodological pragmatism. Our main emphasis is on exploring the proposed phenomenological model regarding its general applicability, shape, and contents, and its relations to the evaluation of the effects of abstract globalization. This is, we believe, possible through multiple methods, of which survey research is one.

We also restrict this model to only apply in the context of trade union representatives and globalization. It is possible that the model applies equally to any interpretive event where an abstract phenomenon is made sense of (like globalization), and to other agents in decision-making positions where the interpretation of the event is a key variable (like trade union representatives in Finland). Since we do not have data to support such a generalization, however, we stay in the empirical context of this article.

## Methods and materials

### Sample

The data were gathered through an electronic questionnaire in February and March of 2010. The survey was directed at elected labor union general assembly representatives in a strategic sample of then-current unions in Finland. This sample was constructed to match the sizes, approximate levels of social influence, and occupational structure of the Finnish union field.

Secretaries of union boards in 21 unions were contacted by email, with a request to forward a link to the questionnaire, together with a letter explaining the purpose of the research, to all general assembly members. This procedure gave the possibility to the secretaries and the union boards to act as gatekeepers, whose approval of the study also increased the credibility of and trust for the study.

Three hundred thirty-four responses were retained from 16 unions. Response rates vary between 17% and 56%, with a mean of 35% and a median of 37%. The gender distribution is slightly skewed toward male (male:  $n = 180$ ; female:  $n = 154$ ), and the age distribution is highly skewed toward older representatives ( $\leq 29$ :  $n = 6$ ; 30–39:  $n = 32$ ; 40–49:  $n = 93$ ; 50–59:  $n = 167$ ;  $\geq 60$ :  $n = 36$ ), with over three quarters of the respondents being aged 40–59 years. Union confederation membership is skewed toward the lower-class end (SAK:  $n = 190$ ; STTK:  $n = 92$ ; Akava:  $n = 52$ ), with the SAK confederation representing most of the data. The sample is thus similar to, but not fully representative of, the population of union members.<sup>6</sup> These skews are not, however, particularly surprising, as the sample is not expected to represent the larger population of Finnish union members or the general assemblies as such. The sample represents trade union activists in decision-making positions according to the sizes of the three



trade union confederations in Finland. We nonetheless refrain from generalizing onto a larger population, and instead view the sample as suggestive of phenomenological processes.

### Dependent variable

We constructed an index measuring *evaluations of globalization*. The respondents were asked to gauge the impact of economic integration and globalization on their industry in both the past 10 years (2000–2010) and in the next few years, on six different dimensions: ‘How do you assess that the economic integration and internationalization has/will influence(d) your industry in the past ten years/the upcoming few years’. The dimensions were employment, salary levels, work health and safety, productivity requirements, educational and competency requirements, and the possibilities for influence. The original response scale was coded 1 positively, 2 no remarkable effect, 3 negatively, and 4 cannot say. Variables were first re-coded into new codes constituting a negativity–positivity scale of –1 to +1, with neutral assessments coded as 0. This facilitated the treatment of the variable as a quantitative measure about positivity (+1) or negativity (–1) toward the effects of globalization. To minimize internal omission, and due to their qualitative similarities in interpretation, non-responses (‘Cannot say’) and missing values were re-coded as neutral assessments. Table 1 shows these dimensions with means and standard deviations, along with the constructed index.

**Table 1** Survey questions on the impact of economic globalization, and the constructed index of evaluations of globalization

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Impact (Last 10 years) <sup>a</sup>		
Industry employment	–0.12	0.73
Salary levels	–0.10	0.51
Work health and safety	0.03	0.64
Productivity requirements	–0.25	0.76
Educational or competency requirements	0.22	0.60
Possibilities for influence	–0.19	0.61
Impact (Upcoming years) <sup>a</sup>		
Industry employment	–0.21	0.80
Salary levels	–0.23	0.65
Work health and safety	–0.02	0.68
Productivity requirements	–0.27	0.75
Educational or competency requirements	0.19	0.64
Possibilities for influence	–0.22	0.68
Perceived effects of globalization	–1.05	5.14

<sup>a</sup>Variables ordered as in original survey form.



The resulting 12 variables were additively combined to create an index of globalization evaluations, with a possible range of  $-12$  to  $+12$ . The mean for the index variable on the perceived effects of globalization is  $-1.05$ , meaning that evaluations in general are slightly negative.

## Independent variables

To assess the potentially differing aspects of the proposed phenomenological model, we selected 20 variables to function as independent variables in the model. Table 2 shows the number of valid observations, means, standard deviations, and observed ranges for each variable. We describe each variable below, along with bivariate product-moment correlations  $r$  between the variable and the dependent measure, evaluations of globalization. We chose to include some variables that had a non-significant correlation, primarily because of their potential theoretical importance. As seen in Table 3, we then classified all variables according to the three dimensions of the phenomenological model. The variables are ordered in the tables by their phenomenological dimensions.

**Table 2** Independent variables in the regression models

	<b>n</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Range</b>
IS: Education and courses	331	1.61	0.75	[1, 4]
IS: Union employees and offices	332	1.71	0.82	[1, 5]
IS: Literature and research	329	1.84	0.77	[1, 4]
Level of global integration	316	2.04	0.87	[1, 4]
Index of global knowledge	334	13.34	2.90	[0, 16]
IS: Authorities	330	1.92	0.91	[1, 5]
IS: Media	332	1.60	0.75	[1, 5]
Active years as union representative	330	5.70	5.48	[0, 30]
Index of global contact	334	1.12	1.67	[0, 8]
Distance to nearest university city	326	49.05	45.95	[1.08, 349.78]
IS: Industry employees	328	1.85	0.93	[1, 5]
IS: Employers and supervisors	326	2.14	1.00	[1, 5]
IS: Union leadership	331	1.69	0.89	[1, 5]
IS: Friends and acquaintances	329	2.65	1.03	[1, 5]
IS: Work safety officials	328	1.93	0.98	[1, 5]
IS: Occupational safety and health district	327	2.05	1.03	[1, 5]
Effect of foreign branches	319	0.29	0.45	[0, 1]
IS: Union elected officials	332	1.70	0.81	[1, 5]
IS: Political decision makers	329	1.93	0.95	[1, 5]
IS: Civil movements	329	2.31	0.95	[1, 5]

Descriptive statistics.  
IS, information source.



**Table 3** Independent variables classified on the three dimensions of the proposed phenomenological model

	<b>Learning</b>	<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>
IS: Education and courses	Formal	Conceptual-Symbolic	Abstract/Skills
IS: Union employees and offices	Formal	Social-Material	Abstract
IS: Literature and research	Formal	Both	Abstract
Level of global integration	Informal	Conceptual-Symbolic	Abstract
Index of global knowledge	Informal	Conceptual-Symbolic	Abstract
IS: Authorities	Informal	Conceptual-Symbolic	Abstract
IS: Media	Informal	Conceptual-Symbolic	Abstract
Active years as union representative	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
Index of global contact	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
Distance to nearest university city	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
IS: Industry employees	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
IS: Employers and supervisors	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
IS: Union leadership	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
IS: Friends and acquaintances	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit
IS: Work safety officials	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit/Skills
IS: Occupational safety and health district	Informal	Social-Material	Tacit/Skills
Effect of foreign branches	Informal	Social-Material	Abstract
IS: Union elected officials	Informal	Social-Material	Abstract
IS: Political decision makers	Informal	Both	Abstract
IS: Civil movements	Both	Both	Abstract/Skills

IS, information source.

It is worth noting that not every variable is dichotomously classified for all dimensions. For instance, the awareness gained from political decision-makers, civil movements, and literature and research may be both social-material, in terms of concrete industry-related awareness, and conceptual-symbolic, of globalization as a general phenomenon. Similarly, skills-related knowledge may coincide with both abstract-reflexive evaluations and tacit knowledge.

### Active years as a union representative

The respondents reported their number of active years as union representatives as a free-form text: ‘How long have you functioned as a union representative?’ We quantified these responses to years of practice, with any uncertainties in interpretation being resolved through author consensus. A few respondents did not give quantifiable responses and were subsequently left as missing values. The bivariate correlation between this variable and the dependent variable is not significant ( $r = 0.103$ ,  $p = 0.092$ ).

## Effect of foreign branches

The respondents reported whether their employer had foreign subsidiaries or parent companies. A follow-up question then asked them if the existence of said branches affected Finnish working conditions ('If yes, then: Does the existence of the foreign branches affect Finnish working conditions?'), to which respondents could answer Yes, they do, No they do not, or Uncertain. The latter were re-coded as missing values, while original missing values were coded as 'no effect', as these respondents did not have foreign branches and thus left the question unanswered. The bivariate correlation between this variable and the dependent is significantly negative ( $r = -0.297, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the belief that foreign branches generally affect Finnish work coincides with more negative evaluations of globalization.

## Index of global contact

The respondents were asked: 'Are you in contact with foreign actors (abroad) at least once a month in your work?' on five dimensions: *By phone*; *By email, mail, fax*; *By travelling abroad*; *By receiving visits from abroad*; and *By retrieving information*. For each dimension, they indicated either *No*; *Yes, in my work tasks*; *Yes, in interest representation*; or *Yes, in both*. Responses were re-coded so that either of the positive answers gave one point on an additive index, the dual answer gave two, and the negative answer gave zero. Non-responses were coded as zero values. Including all five dimensions in an additive index, this resulted in a possible range of 0–10. It is worth noting that 54% of the respondents scored zero on the index, and that the largest represented score was eight. The bivariate correlation to the dependent variable is significantly negative ( $r = -0.121, p = 0.045$ ), suggesting that more contact correlates with more negative opinions on the effects of globalization.

## Level of global integration

The respondents gauged the level of global integration of their industry on a four-point scale: 'How integrated is your industry sector to the global economy and international operating environment?' Non-responses were coded as missing values. Level of integration is positively correlated to evaluations of globalization ( $r = 0.199, p = 0.001$ ).

## Index of global knowledge

We constructed an index of global knowledge from two different questions. The first question asked respondents, 'How important do you think it is for the union to affect the following political areas?', and the second asked, 'How have the following phenomena in recent years affected unions' opportunities of influence in Finland?'

From the political areas, we selected five variables that were explicitly connected to global or transnational processes: *Immigration politics*, *Global trade politics*, *EU politics*, *Defense politics*, and *Global organizational politics*. From the current phenomena, we retained 11 phenomena, either directly connected to globalization or being processes that require a global connection.



A factor analysis with Varimax rotation and a minimum Eigenvalue for extraction of one confirmed that the variables loaded onto similar factors. One factor included another variable—the Finnish film *Eila* by Jarmo Lampela<sup>7</sup>—that was excluded because of its merely indirect relation to global processes. Parallel analysis (Lorenzo-Seva et al. 2011) suggested a three-factor solution. However, all three factors were moderately-to-strongly positively correlated, and no variable showed a marked negative loading on any of the three factors after oblique rotation. Thus, we deem the solution substantively unidimensional, although further research should inspect this structure more closely.

**Table 4** Current global phenomena

- 
- Regulatory effect of European Union directives
  - OECD recommendations regarding business in 1999 and 2000
  - Increase in social research
  - Michael Moore's documentary films
  - Spread of information dissemination to the web
  - Economic depression
  - Increase in work-related immigration
  - Indebtedness of the Finnish economy
  - Appointment of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States
  - Barroso's continuation in the leadership of the European Commission
  - Expansion of the European Union
- 

All variables were dichotomized, with one representing having knowledge of the phenomenon and zero representing not having knowledge of it. The variables were then added together, resulting in an index ranging from 0 to 16, where 16 signals high levels of global knowledge and 0 signals low levels. The resulting index is not significantly related to the dependent variable ( $r = 0.110$ ,  $p = 0.070$ ).

### Distance to the nearest university city

Respondents reported the area code of their place of residence. Using a Python script developed by the second author, Oliver Saal, the area codes were then compared with the area codes of 11 Finnish university cities via the Google Maps Distance Matrix API. The shortest distance in meters and its corresponding city were retained for each respondent, and the distances were converted into kilometers. This analysis includes only the distance measure. The bivariate correlation to the dependent variable is not significant ( $r = -0.024$ ,  $p = 0.698$ ).

### Relevance of information sources

Respondents evaluated the relevance of fourteen different information sources (IS): 'Evaluate the importance of the following information sources for the management

of globalization in your industry'. Each variable could take a value on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing *Not important* and 5 representing *Very important*. However, *Education and courses*, and *Literature and research* both exhibited a bounded observed range of 1 to 4. Of all information sources, seven are negatively correlated to the dependent variable ( $r$ 's  $< -0.135$ ,  $p$ 's  $< 0.026$ ).

We preliminarily attempted to probe for latent effects by running an exploratory factor analysis on the information sources and using the resulting factors in a regression model together with the other dependent variables. This resulted in three factors, but the resulting factors did not separately significantly predict evaluations of globalization ( $\beta$ s  $< |0.10|$ ,  $p$ s  $> 0.595$ ,  $R^2 = 0.120$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, we restrict our analysis to independent information sources.

## Methods of analysis

We used multiple ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression analysis to assess the phenomenological model on the perceived effects of globalization. We conducted a regression analysis on the entire dataset. We also performed multiple bias and outlier analyses. We have used significance values and confidence intervals mostly as heuristic tools, to establish each variable's potential relevance in the model.

We report both standardized and unstandardized coefficients, along with standard errors and two-tailed significance tests. We also report model summary statistics, such as  $R^2$  and the overall significance of the model from the model analysis of variance.

## Results

### Bias tests

We conducted multiple bias tests to gauge whether multiple OLS regression was applicable to the studied variables. The Durbin-Watson test statistic lands within the cut-off points of 1 and 3 (value = 1.674), indicating independence of errors for the independent variables. No tolerance statistic is under either 0.2 or 0.1. VIF statistics are all under 10, and the average VIF (value = 2.002) is not substantially greater than one. Subsequently, we interpret these statistics as not signaling any major multicollinearity.

We also checked the resulting model for heteroscedasticity. The histogram of the error distribution, as well as the P-P plot of the observed and expected residual probabilities suggest homoscedastic error distributions, in line with the requirements of a linear regression model. There were no case-wise Cook's distances greater than 1, indicating that no outliers significantly bias the regression slope.

### Coefficients and model summary

The model significantly explains 22.4% of the variance ( $F(20, 244) = 2.940$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Table 4 presents the variable coefficients, standard errors, and significance tests of the model. In this model, only two variables achieved conventional significance: *Effect of*



foreign branches ( $b = -3.179, p < 0.001$ ) and IS: Employers and supervisors ( $b = -1.137, p = 0.005$ ). Interpreting these results, it seems as if the effect of foreign branches effectively made the respondents' evaluations of globalization three points more negative on the 25-point scale, indicating a large effect even when viewed together with other relevant variables. Similarly, a respondent who valued employers and supervisors highly as information sources scored five points lower on the evaluation scale than one who did not. The variable refers to the aspect of credibility of the information received from employers and supervisors and thus trust in social relations. Employers and supervisors usually bring bad news about global circumstances such as competition, economic conjunctures, or order stock of the firm. Employees do not always trust this information and may interpret this information as a negative, manipulative story about the consequences of globalization. The influence of foreign branches illustrate the negative effects of these branches on the level of the factory floor, as first-hand information about competition, downsizing, delocalization, and outsourcing.

**Table 5** Multiple linear OLS regression model of predictors of evaluations of globalization

	<b>b (95 % CI)</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>p</b>
(Intercept)	-1.621 (-6.895; 3.654)	2.675		0.545
IS: Education and courses	-0.802 (-2.073, 0.469)	0.645	-0.119	0.215
IS: Union employees and offices	0.009 (-1.348, 1.366)	0.688	0.001	0.990
IS: Literature and research	0.418 (-0.537, 1.373)	0.484	0.062	0.389
Level of global integration	0.542 (-0.339, 1.423)	0.447	0.089	0.227
Index of global knowledge	0.136 (-0.129, 0.401)	0.135	0.067	0.312
IS: Authorities	-0.072 (-1.142, 0.999)	0.543	-0.013	0.895
IS: Media	-0.694 (-1.726, 0.338)	0.524	-0.108	0.187
Active years as union representative	0.082 (-0.031, 0.195)	0.057	0.091	0.155
Index of global contact	0.113 (-0.347, 0.573)	0.233	0.037	0.629
Distance to nearest university city	-0.008 (-0.021, 0.006)	0.007	-0.072	0.275
IS: Industry employees	0.802 <sup>†</sup> (-0.119, 1.722)	0.467	0.146	0.088
IS: Employers and supervisors	-1.137** (-1.922, -0.353)	0.398	-0.226	0.005
IS: Union leadership	-0.176 (-1.246, 0.894)	0.543	-0.031	0.746
IS: Friends and acquaintances	0.107 (-0.605, 0.819)	0.361	0.021	0.768
IS: Work safety officials	-0.376 (-1.501, 0.748)	0.570	-0.074	0.510
IS: Occupational safety and health district	0.528 (-0.523, 1.579)	0.533	0.109	0.323
Effect of foreign branches	-3.179** (-4.824, -1.535)	0.834	-0.284	<0.001
IS: Union elected officials	0.262 (-1.133, 1.657)	0.707	0.043	0.712
IS: Political decision makers	-0.410 (-1.272, 0.452)	0.437	-0.080	0.349
IS: Civil movements	0.346 (-0.497, 1.189)	0.428	0.067	0.420

Notes:  $R^2 = 0.224, p < 0.001$ .  
 Confidence intervals reported in parentheses.  
 IS, information source.  
 \*\* $p < 0.01, †p < 0.1$ .



## Discussion

Foreign influences, especially from the Nordic region, have been important in the historical formation of Finnish corporatism (Bergholm 2009). Thus, it is crucial to analyze the mechanisms of how corporatist actors grasp these global industrial relations and the wider economic environment, how they learn about it, and how they become both aware of and knowledgeable about global circumstances. The implications for this study are relevant for the corporatist system in general, and how the trade union movement at large relates to core questions about the political choices of Finland as a nation–state. The main context lies in the understanding of the views and opinion formation of a democratic core actor in the corporatist system. Thus, in order to understand the viewpoint of the trade union movement in questions such as the EU membership, European common currency, and the EMU cooperation, the Finnish stance on immigration and asylum policy, NATO membership, and issues related to free trade or austerity policy, this kind of research setting is crucial. If the purpose would be to study particular trade union stances on specific labor market policy issues, another approach—based on interest-related theoretical considerations—would perhaps be more appropriate. We have, however, studied abstract, general evaluations of globalization, linked to working life and to choices and directions of the whole nation. In this article, we have argued theoretically and shown empirically that trade union actors' judgments and evaluations of globalization seem to be related to the ways in which they become aware of, knowledgeable of, and learn about global circumstances. Trade unionist evaluations of globalization are important in their standpoint formation viz. national and international policy issues. These evaluations are shaped by the prevailing state of corporatism in Finland, but dialectically, trade union representatives' interpretations of the state and effects of globalization will in turn shape national corporatism.

As we want to understand evaluations of globalization, and in a more general sense differing responses to global challenges such as ethnonationalism and environmentalism, one might resort to many different sociological approaches. For instance, the issue could be approached through the previously mentioned interests, and a materialistic and class-based paradigm, emphasizing the different material conditions of people making judgments about globalization. Another approach could be a geographical one, viewing the locations actors inhabit and their proximities to direct and visible effects of globalization. Yet another perspective may include a political framework, where the potential for influencing globalization and the empowerment of people, or alternatively, the erosion of democracy, would be a starting point. In line with previous calls for alternatives (Birelma 2018), we have, however, approached the issue through a phenomenological model of awareness, learning, and knowledge. This has turned out to be a fruitful approach in understanding why actors evaluate globalization differently: almost a quarter ( $R^2 = 0.224$ ) of the variance in evaluations of globalization in our sample is explained with a model based on awareness, learning, and knowledge. As we instructed the respondents to gauge the consequences of globalization in their work context, it is particularly theoretically significant that these consequences can be explained in terms of a rather generalist phenomenological model, as opposed to the more direct approaches suggested above. Yet, it should be acknowledged that only two of the variables were statistically significant, which raises questions regarding needs to reduce the complexity of the model.

Our results indicate that views on globalization and the evaluation of the phenomenon can be considered within a broader framework of modernization theories within sociology and development studies (cf. So 1990). In these perspectives, attitudes toward globalization are a question about modernization and learning. Second, if we hypothetically would consider different competing theories as purely additive and contributory (and not incommensurable), then our modernization-linked phenomenological model could contribute with almost one-quarter of the full explanation of evaluations of globalization. While such an additive approach may not be the case, it suggests the fruitfulness of considering a phenomenological approach to the study of globalization. The model explains evaluations of globalization to a reasonable degree, despite the fact that it is an alternative way of understanding labor union stances and attitudes, differing from the dominating interest-based approach, and despite the sample consisting of different social classes with differing interests, worldviews, and life-worlds.

Taking a closer look at the results within our model, formal learning seems to play a comparatively smaller role than informal learning, since the formal learning variables are rarely significantly related to the outcome.<sup>8</sup> When professionally active adults are studied, the importance of informal learning is not very surprising (Marsick & Watkins 2015). If the study were to be conducted on adolescents, we could expect formal learning to gain importance. Our conclusion is thus that informal learning is more important when it comes to evaluating globalization than formal learning. It is more important that trade union activists have contacts abroad and interests related to globalization, that is, their everyday learning experiences, than that they participate in education and courses.

Viewing the results of the awareness dimension, the statistical model does not seem to be influenced by types of awareness *per se*, as significant results are found only in the Social-Material awareness variables. It is important, however, to note that awareness of material conditions is not the same as the material conditions themselves. This reflects Husserl's distinction between noesis and noema, between the process that produces the phenomenon and the phenomenon itself. Thus, the phenomenon of being affected by one's working conditions is distinct from being *aware* of being affected by working conditions. This consequently means that these distinct phenomena may have distinct effects.

As for knowledge, the two significant variables represent both abstract knowledge (the effect of foreign branches) and tacit knowledge (valuing employers and supervisors as information sources). Both of these knowledge modes are negatively related to the perceived effects of globalization. This result could be suggestive of the dependence of abstract knowledge on tacit knowledge—the abstraction of globalization-related knowledge could be contingent on a tacit knowledge of processes phenomenologically linked to globalization.

As we have only preliminarily explored this three-dimensional phenomenological model, we do not propose any hierarchical *a priori* structure or causal mechanisms between the dimensions. We assume, however, that the three dimensions relate to each other dialectically. Through their dialectical interrelations, they could give rise to the emergent process of translating abstract phenomena into concrete life-worlds, and simultaneously to the evaluation of the phenomenon of study. Thus, we assume a causal relation: events in one's lifeworld are interpreted through the phenomenological process (our tripartite model), whose internal relations give rise to the interpretation and opinion one has of the events in question. We also assume that these three dimensions



collectively subsume another important aspect of the phenomenological process, namely *phenomenological distance* or the variability in life-world embeddedness and closeness of the abstract phenomenon (cf. Berger & Luckmann 1966: 36).

In this study, we did not analyze the influence of skills in the model, which is shown as a greyed-out dimension in Figure 1. One important dimension of knowledge is thus left outside of the research design and needs to be included and studied separately in future research. Further, we do not yet know the processes through which the phenomenological dimensions interrelate or bring about the evaluations of globalization. This needs to be developed in further research, by refining the model in terms of internal relationships.<sup>9</sup> The model might also be suitable and relevant for research on other abstract evaluations and judgments, such as the study of moral decision-making or expertise. Further research should develop theoretical hierarchies and explore the dimensional interrelations. Future research could reduce the large number of variables in order to focus the measurement and pinpoint the complex structure of the phenomenological model.

While the phenomenological approach we apply here is yet underdeveloped, it has proven itself a fruitful one. Structural and material circumstances may affect trade unionists, as may rational evaluations of policy alternatives, but the area of subjective experiences, interpretations, and knowledge constructions ought not to be overlooked. The effects of globalization may be very tangible and material, but the collective conception of globalization as a coherent phenomenon is, we argue, not as phenomenologically immediate. The process wherein concrete events become subsumed under the abstract title of 'globalization' entails many interpretative steps. These steps are crucially contingent both on the life-histories and life-worlds of the interpreter (Schütz 2011: 93–200), and on the interaction of biographies with concrete historical events (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Our empirical results support this theoretical argument: the ways in which trade unionists prefer to take in information about globalization influences the valence and strength of opinion on how globalization has affected working conditions in Finland. In other words, their prior experiences prime their interpretations and, subsequently, their opinions. What remains to be analyzed in further research is how this process functions: how do modes of awareness, learning, and knowledge specifically cause variable opinions? Second, are the effects similar in different social classes? There are indications in our data that this is not the case, and that the effects are even larger within academically educated classes. We do not, however, yet have the information for making an evidence-based assessment about this question, but our intention is to pursue this research question further. A third line of research worth developing further is an assessment of the model in relation to other theoretical approaches, such as models building upon material interests. This classical approach in labor union research needs to be scrutinized thoroughly in relation to an alternative, phenomenological approach in a welfare state setting, where the basic safety net is intact as an insurance system against materialistic risks and threats (cf. Giddens 1990). Fourth, it is worth investigating whether these relations hold for other phenomena than globalization, and other actors than trade unionists.

We have tried to include all aspects of the model, and not necessarily focused on whether any single variable or effect is attributable to a specific dimension or aspect of the model. Thus, the model is so far both crude and generalized, but provides a starting point for theoretical and empirical refinement. Our research seems to suggest

that the theoretical approach of analyzing evaluations of globalization with the phenomenological model of awareness, learning, and knowledge is a potentially fruitful approach.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>These include wood refinery factories in Kemijärvi, Voikkaa, and Kaskinen, and an electronics component factory in Joensuu, in a period of less than four years.

<sup>2</sup>Historically, unions have also had union congresses, which meet more sparsely than the boards and assemblies (Sippola & Bergholm 2023: 394).

<sup>3</sup>This dichotomy reflects Schütz's 'spectrum of decreasing vividness' between the four life-worlds of consociates, contemporaries, predecessors, and successors (Schütz 1967: 142–143, 176–181). Schütz defines the degree of immediacy, or tangibility, of experiential 'data' as the key dimension that determines the extent to which the individual can subsume the other's Ego as their own. In other words: how well the agent can understand the intended meaning of another's actions is a function of how many 'points of touch' they have to the world in which the other acts. Conceptual-symbolic awareness would, then, reflect a situation where the 'Other' that is to be understood (agents of globalization and their actions) is more non-immediate than a situation of social-material awareness. There are fewer points of tangibility in the abstract world-historical processes of globalization than in, say, one's working-class friends becoming unemployed due to workplace restructuring.

<sup>4</sup>This reading depends crucially on the spectrum of decreasing vividness: 'solidarity with global workers' is by necessity more abstract and non-immediate than 'home-field working standards', as concepts such as 'solidarity' allow for fewer material points of immediacy than 'working standards'.

<sup>5</sup>Respondents were invited to 'In your own words, describe the international and global dimension of interest representation. What do the presented questions and the topic make you think of?' in free text. We coded the responses using a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and found that 44% of responses reflected tacit knowledge.

<sup>6</sup>In 2009, the member counts of the confederations were SAK 757 250, STTK 468 431, and Akava 415 479 members. The counts for 2009 are calculated by Sippola and Bergholm (2023: 396), based on statistics from Finanssivalvonta [The Financial Supervisory Authority of Finland]. Whether our sample is representative for the general assemblies and corresponds to their relative sizes is difficult to assess, not only due to lacking information about non-responses, but also due to differing response rates. The general assemblies do not have the same number of elected representatives, and consequently, the representativity of the sample for the assemblies as an additively summed 'entity' is also not clear. This is, however, not very relevant, as the relative representativity and sample sizes of the confederations within the sample is more interesting, and important in that the confederations correspond to social classes and other important sociological variables.



<sup>7</sup>*Eila* depicts a cleaner being let go after the privatisation of a cleaning company, and her subsequent struggles, labour strikes, and legal battles. The film is based on a real lawsuit filed by a former cleaner against the Finnish government in 1994 (*Eila* 2003).

<sup>8</sup>Note that the statistical models only included three purely formal learning variables, as compared to 16 informal variables and one representing a mix of both modes.

<sup>9</sup>This development ought perhaps best be done in a philosophical analysis of the model's grounds and ontologies. The current combination of empirical and theoretical development through one specific case has produced a heuristic model, whose continued development using multiple different methods (e.g., philosophical clarification) could result in a proliferation of approaches.