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Changes in hegemony in Swedish blue-collar trade unions during the twentieth century¹

The Swedish blue-collar trade union movement is and has been dominated by the reformist social democrats. The communists and other militants have with few exceptions played a minor role.² In this paper I will discuss this hegemonic order of power, which for a long time marginalized the communists and contributed to a close cooperation between the social democratic party (the SAP) and the blue-collar trade union movement (the LO). But, during the last decades this cooperation and the social democratic hegemony in the trade unions both have diminished.

The concept of hegemony

A hegemonic power relation is an asymmetrical power relation between two parties with contrarious interests. The parties make an unwritten “contract” about the rules of the game of their relation and their interpretation of meaning. The superior party has the interpretative prerogative, tries to define the world and deny the existence of conflicts of interest. The subordinate party can choose to accept the subordination and the interpretation of meaning, as a breach against the hegemony can start an unpredictable conflict. A precondition for hegemony is a substantial superiority of power. In the everyday praxis a lasting bargaining tests and re-define the relation and the interpretation of meaning. The willingness of maintaining consensus or a low-conflict relation is conditioned according to the interests of the parties. For example, workers can accept the hegemony of the employer if the substitution is advantageous.³

When the superior party has reached a substantial position of power the subordinated party can be forced into the hegemony. In those circumstances the subordinated no longer has enough resources to breach the informal contract. In this paper I will test if the social

¹ This paper is based on a forthcoming book, Björn Horgby, *Kampen om facket* (The struggle in the trade unions) 2010.

² I use the term “communist” as a description of militant workers who sympathize with the communist and other left-wing parties in Sweden. So the communists don’t have to members in the party.

³ Steven Lukes, *Power*. New York 2005, s 7-12; Håkan Thörn, *Rörelser i det moderna*. Stockholm 1997, p 32; Karin Boréus, Högevåg. Stockholm 1994, p 18; Christer Ericsson, *Vi är alla delar av samma familj*. Stockholm 1997.

democrats in the trade unions reached enough power to create a hegemonic power relation and if this resulted in limiting the liberty of action of the communists. Could the communists act counter-hegemonic without breaching the hegemonic relation and interpretation of meaning?⁴

The object

There is more than one hegemonic relation in society. In this study I will focus the hegemonic relation in the trade unions. As object I choose three local unions in the major industrial town Norrköping, dominated until the 1950s by textile mills, when the textile industry crashed, and thereafter by engineering industry. The Textil 1 organized the textile workers, the Metall 12 engineering workers and Pappers 53 paper mill workers. I study the Textil 1 and its superiors from the early twentieth century to 1960 and the other two unions to the end of the century.⁵

The formation of hegemony in three blue-collar unions

If you were a skilled worker with low exchangeability on the labour market, you had better possibilities to promote a militant policy than if you were unskilled. With strong power resources you could win conflicts and drive home far-reaching demands.

The textile industry included a few big, some medium-sized and some minor companies. Female, unskilled workers dominated. The division of sex, skill and workplaces undermined the power of the textile workers. The division of labour between several working moments also impaired that unity and the resources of power.⁶ So, theoretically the textile workers ought to choose a reformist policy and they also did. They founded substantial trade unions in the early twentieth century – especially in 1916-18, when women organized in masse. In 1936 the unions

⁴ About counter-hegemonic action, Åsa Linderborg, *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia*. Stockholm 2001, pp 16-17; Lukes 2005.

⁵ The sources of this study are primary: *Norrköpings föreningsarkiv*, FCO-Norrköping, Styrelseprotokoll 1940-76; Industrifacket 14 Östergötland, Representantskapsprotokoll 1993-2000; LO-sektionen in Norrköping, Styrelseprotokoll 1977-1996; LO-facken in Norrköping, Styrelseprotokoll 1997-2000; Norrköpings arbetarekommun, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1899-1975, Representantskapsprotokoll 1975-89; Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1890-1988; Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1901-08, 1918-2000; Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1901-22, Representantskaps- and Styrelseprotokoll 1936-60, Norrköpings Textilarbetares samorganisation, Mötesprotokoll 1910-24, Styrelseprotokoll 1910-36; Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 2, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1910-36; Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 9, Mötes- and Styrelseprotokoll 1903-21, 1930-36; *Norrköpings Stadsmuseums arkiv*, Arbetarminnen, Interviews AM 1-321; Folklivscentrum i Östergötland, Holmens dolda historia, Interviews FC 1023:1-67; *Linköpings universitets arkiv*, Norrköpings historia, Interviews. In the forthcoming I only reference the source material as Horgby 2010.

⁶ For a theoretical discussion about resources of power, Klas Åmark, *Maktkamp i byggbransch*. Stockholm 1989; also Sverre Lysgaard, *Arbeiderkollektivet*. Oslo 1976. About resources of power in the textile industry, Björn Horgby, *Egensinne och skötsamhet*. Stockholm 1993 and “Identitet och vardagsliv”, in Hans Nilsson ed, *Norrköpings historia. 1900-talet*. Norrköping 2000.

united in Textil 1. Politically the textile unions supported the social democratic party. The trade union policy also was reformist. The after-war depression in 1921-22 affected the textile industry severely and the workers were forced to accept major wage cuts. This resulted in frustrated debates, but no militant policy. The militant spirits then diminished, without picking up by a non-existing communist opposition.

Conflicts on the labour market mobilized the members and supported a more militant trade union policy. During the depression in 1931 the federation of textile workers went on a national strike to prevent wage cuts. The workers could not win due to high unemployment and lacking financial resources, but the strike mobilized the dissatisfaction, which temporarily was used by mobilizing a substantial communist opposition. In the Textil 9 they succeeded to reach majority in reducing the union fee. Then, the board of trustees, dominated by the social democrats, resigned. As the communists failed to mobilize enough candidates to the election of trustees, the old board reclaimed power. The communists lost in credibility and the social democrats continued to govern.

In the late 30s the communists grew in the former union no 9, which now was a club in the unified union. However, they could not challenge the reformist policy. The outbreak of war – most of all the assault on Finland – created a severe crisis of credibility of the communists who were supposed to become traitors if Sweden became participant in the war. During the early war period the communist leader Sven Nordlöf was the single voice of the opposition at the union meetings. The turn of the war in 1943 changed the attitudes to the communists. That year Nordlöf headed a wild strike. After the war the social democrats began to combat the communists on a more regular and systematic basis. In the early post war period Nordlöf successfully participated in the negotiations of wages. However, his personal qualities did not change the relation of power between the social democrats and the communists.

In 1948 the social democratic party and the LO started a very successful anti-communist campaign. The purpose was to marginalize the communists in the trade unions boards of trustees. So in the 50s the union meetings were very quiet. In that time the textile industry crashed and Nordlöf became one of the major actors in the prevention of the shutdown of the textile mills. But his policy now was as reformist as the social democrats'.⁷

In the 10s and 20s the social democrats formed a very strong hegemony in the textile workers unions. In the next decade the communists without success tried to challenge this. The counter-hegemonic action during the war and the early post war years was very weak. The anti-communist campaign created a political climate in the union who ruled out new attempts. So,

⁷ Horgby 2010

the communists had few possibilities to go beyond the social democratic framework except for short periods of labour market conflicts.

Before World War Two small companies dominated the engineering industry, employing male, skilled workers. Until the 60s some new major companies were founded. And they employed many female unskilled workers in assembly factories. So the engineering workers began to lose their strong collective position of power.⁸ The Metall 12, founded in 1890, became a substantial union at the turn of the century. As the textile unions the Metall 12 had very close connections to the social democratic party and also framed a reformist union policy. In 1917 the SAP was disunited in two parts, one major social democratic and one minor left-wing socialist, which in 1921 became the communist party, the SKP. These political changes did not affect the union. In 1918 the rhetoric went militant, but the tense atmosphere was casual and mostly caused by food shortage. And it did not change the overall strategy.

Power relations between the social democrats and the communists change in the mid 20s, when the communist party started a national trade union campaign. The communists became much more active in the union, but did not win victories until the 30s. Without social democratic mobilization very few members participated in the union meeting. Then, the communists could win minor victories. In 1933 one socialist was elected to the board. The lack of success depended on a LO-organized campaign against the communists in the late 20s and early 30s. In 1930 one communist was asked why he was so inactive on a meeting with the local unions. He answered it was hard to claim different meaning in this time. Anyway, during the depression years the communists with some success could use a rhetoric filled with discontent.

In 1935 the Komintern abandoned its ultra-leftwing policy against the social democrats for the people's front policy against the fascists. Now the communists got a manageable tool in the struggle for power. They also instituted a new campaign, which resulted in three of seven chairs in the board of trustees. In 1933 the governing social democratic party started a new welfare policy, which promised rising standards of living and social security. During the 30s this policy did not result. At the same time industry started an intense program for rationalizations. The promises of welfare and the rationalizations created discontent, which the communists could benefit. But, they could not challenge the reformist policy with the prosperous counter-hegemonic action. Maybe the hegemonic weakened.

As in the textile union the assault against Finland stirred up the emotions. The communists were kicked out of the board. During the early war years the consistent hegemony was reestablished, which strictly limited the acting space of the communists. The turn of the war

⁸ Horgby 2000; Gunilla Johansson, "Arbete och utbildning", in Nilsson 2000.

made the communists allies and they could rebuild their earlier losses. The majority remained social democratic, but the communists played an important role in the national engineering workers strike in 1945. And they also strengthened their power after the strike as they used the impatience and dissatisfaction. The anti-communist campaign in 1948 radically changed the power relations. During the 50s and 60s the hegemony was very strong. The communists were few and quiet. In the beginning of the 70s the new left movement began to influence the media debate. In Metall 12 the new left got few supporters. In 1975 a “wild” strike broke out. But, it did not change the internal relations in the union. Now the conflicts between the social democrats and the communists ended. In the 80s and 90s both parties supported the same welfare state policy.⁹

During the mid-war period the social democratic hegemony was not as solid as in the textile unions, especially not in the late 30s and in the early post-war years. The social democratic anti-communistic campaign in 1948 ended the challenges.

The Pappers 53 organized members at one major paper mill. The paper mill workers had relatively strong power resources. As all members worked in the same company the worker’s collective was very strong. But, this was not the main influence of the policy of the paper mill workers. Their militant policy was instead influenced of their tradition of struggle against the company and the employer’s association, which strengthened the fighting spirit. The members of Pappers 53 were dissatisfied, militant men. In the early period over 95 % of the members were men. In the end of the period the proportions between sexes had changed a little bit. Now about 12-13 % were women.

The militant policy not only reflected the harsh relation to the company, but also affected the heated climate in the union as the social democrats and communists from the early 20s fought each other at the union meetings. In 1921 the communist Josef Nordlöf, the uncle of Sven Nordlöf in Textil 1, became the chairman of the union. However, the support of him was a support of a militant union policy within certain limits. As the other unions the Pappers 53 also had close connections to the social democratic party. The collective affiliation of the members was not inhibited though the chairman belonged to another party. The political membership was a power resource in the struggle against the company and the employer’s association. In the mid-war period the social democrats mostly dominated the decision-making in questions about the political strategy, otherwise the union policy remained rather militant during the period dominated by industrial conflicts. And Josef Nordlöf remained the chairman during most of the period. In 1925 he left the communist party, but was as militant as before. As in the other unions

⁹ Horgby 2010

the social democrats took advantage of the depression in the early 30s. In the late 30s the communist again challenged the social democrats.

The social democrats captured power during the war, when the communists were marginalized. The turn of the war changed the relations, as in the other unions, but the social democrats could still elect the chairman. The anti-communist campaign undermined the position of the opposition, but it was never that marginalized as in the other unions. Now hegemony was established for the first time. As a sign the culture of the meetings changed. One communist leader, Evert Nordgren, was elected as trustee, but he supported a reformist strategy. The strain between social democrats and communists diminished. In the 60s he became vice-chairman of the board. During the 60s the level of dissatisfaction also went lower than before, but it did not disappear. In 1963 the workers performed a go-slow action. A wild strike in 1970 also marked discontent. Now the members could not use the board in the manifesting of discontent. The new left briefly canalized the growing militant opinion, but the social democrats easily unarmed this counter-hegemonic action. Thereafter the discontent had no institutional platform, but it did not vanish. In 1978 the discontent resulted in mistrust against the local wage negotiators, which used the same tactic as the social democrats in the Textil 9 in the beginning of the 30s, they resigned and left the field to the unorganized opposition, which was unable to mobilize candidates.

As in the Metall 12 the political conflicts nearly disappeared in the 80s. One of very few questions on the agenda was the collective affiliation to the social democratic party, which broke up in 1991. But the union still paid the fees to the party, although the trade unions lost influence on the party policy. Intensive rationalizations in the 80s increased the level of discontent. In 1989-90 the economy dipped. The discontent resulted in two spontaneous sit-down strikes. The dissatisfaction against the company and the federation continued, but it did not affect the social democratic hegemony in the union.¹⁰

To sum up, in the pioneering years the social democratic hegemony developed in two of the three unions. The continuous discontent with wages and working conditions and the intermittent conflicts created a fighting spirit in the Pappers 53, which prevented hegemony until the anti-communist campaign in 1948. Thereafter the hegemony was constant. In the 80s and especially in the 90s the unions began to mistrust the social democratic party. This may have undermined the hegemony. These changes on the local level did with few exceptions not differ from the national trend.¹¹

¹⁰ Horgby 2010

The trade-political cooperation

The anti-communist campaign in the late 40s was very successful and played an important role in the shaping and maintaining of the social democratic hegemony. The trade union movement and the social democratic party cooperated ever since the party was founded in 1889. The collective affiliation to the party further strengthened the bonds, as did the common long-time choices of strategy.¹² The development of the mutual welfare state policy created a common defined, distant goal. In the late 20s the social democrats began to defeat the communists both in politics and in the trade union movement. During the wartime the cooperation was institutionalized in workplace representatives and political clubs – the social democratic equivalent to the communist kader organization. The party organization on local and national level headed the cooperation.¹³

The goals of the trade-political cooperation were “control”, “mobilization” and “trade union influence on politics”. The purpose with “control” was to marginalize the communists and create a social democratic hegemony, so it would be possible in concert with the employer’s association to promote economical growth through rationalizations of the production. Social democratic values and long-term reformist strategies should impregnate the trade union movement. According to the aim of hegemony it was necessary to control the election processes and elect trustworthy social democrats as trustees. The goal of “mobilization” was to use the trade union movement as a political structure of mobilization for the victories of the social democratic party in the political elections to the parliament and the county councils. The trade union movement actively participated in organizing and financing the electoral work. Instead the trade union movement influenced politics by nominating their own candidates to the local party organization and to the county council and the court committees.¹⁴

The participants reached the goal of control in 1948-50 and could easily maintain that control. The local party official, the ombudsman, acted as head of the campaign. He controlled on the level of trustworthy persons the nomination processes in all trade unions and mobilized the social democratic union members in the election of trustees. He reported to the party headquarter in Stockholm about the successes. He also kept track of other local

¹¹ Horgby 2010

¹² Torsten Svensson, *Socialdemokratins dominans*. Uppsala 1994, pp 53-55; Bernt Schüllerqvist, *Från kosackval till kohandel*. Stockholm 1992, pp 42-44.

¹³ Horgby 2010

¹⁴ Horgby 2010; Gullan Gidlund & Björn Horgby, “Kollektivistisk demokratisyn i uppbrott. Förändrade villkor för facklig-politisk samverkan”, in Mats Ekström ed, *Om Demokratins villkor*. Örebro 2006 (also “Transitions in collectivist view of democracy. Changed conditions for trade union-party cooperation in Sweden”, Paper presented for ESSHC 2006; Lars Olof Lampers, *Det grå brödrskapet*. Stockholm 2002, p 272.

ombudsmen to prevent migrating communists or militant workers to get elected. In the 50s the party ombudsman less and less often had to pay attention to the union questions.¹⁵

During the war and in the early post-war period the Swedish Security Police and also the military intelligence registered communists. In 1957-58 the military forces organized a special secret security service, the IB, which had connections to the social democratic party. Both scholars and investigation commissions have tried to answer the question if the bonds were used as tools in the control of the trade unions. According to the present state of research information on the individual level from the unions and the party reached the IB-organization and resulted in a register. In few cases during the period of wild strikes in the 70s information was transmitted from the IB to the party and some unions about members in the new left. The party did not need the information from the military to control the traditional communists as it on the local level already got enough or maybe better information.¹⁶

The local trade union cooperation, the FCO,¹⁷ played an important role in the administration of the goals of mobilization and influence. In the 40s the party meetings discussed county questions. Then the union members could use the local party meeting as a political platform reaching county politics. As work formalized the demarcations became more obvious between the unions, the party and the county politics. The FCO became an important actor influencing the election processes. In the 70s especially the social democratic women movement campaigned for representation and political power. In order to strengthen the political power of the union movement the FCO started a concurring political offensive, which temporarily resulted in growing political influence. But, in the 80s the discourses of gender changed the power relations between the trade union movement and the women movement. The trade unions became more or less marginalized politically in the 90s.

An internal conflict in the social democratic labour movement also played an important role in the change. After a very fast economical growth in the early post-war period, which resulted in the development of a huge welfare state program, the economy shifted to regression in the mid 70s. In the 80s the social democratic party changed their economical policy in the attempt to start a renewed economical growth, which could be transferred to welfare goods. Instead of controlling the market the social democrats relied on the mechanisms of the free market in reaching economical growth. The trade union movement did not support this kind of economical policy. And this created tensions and conflicts, which

¹⁵ Horgby 2010

¹⁶ Lampers 2002, especially pp 305-13; Enn Kokk, *Vitbok*. Stockholm 2001, Ann-Marie Ekengren & Henrik Oscarsson, *Det röda hotet*. Lund 2002.

in the 90s resulted in the political marginalization of the trade union movement.¹⁸

The conflict between the party and the trade union movement undermined the hegemony. In the following parts of this paper I will discuss that.

The gender order

The rivalry between the women movement and the trade union movement was related to changes in the discourse of the gender order. But, in the trade unions the gender order for a long time remained very patriarchal. In the pioneering years the textile unions organized as brotherhoods. The brotherhood differed from the class-based trade union by addressing the brotherhood of the skilled men of the trade and excluding women and low-skilled men. The brotherhood was not just a masculine form of organization, but also a certain way of expressing masculinity. Skilled men who possessed the skills of the trade saw each other as equal brothers and colleagues. They possessed a mutual honour, which ranged them socially towards others. The brotherhood also used rules of honour. A brother who broke the rules not only shamed himself but also the brotherhood.¹⁹

The brotherhood of the textile workers was rather problematic as women dominated the business. The successful trade union acts as a cartel trying to organize all workers in the branch, otherwise it risks underbid competition.²⁰ When female workers mass organized in the end of World War I, the trade unions became class-organisations. Instead of excluding women the skilled men, the hegemonic masculinity,²¹ tried to subordinate women in the unions. So, the early trade unions were very patriarchal. The patriarchal organization is characterized by two metaphors. *The body of society* had the patriarch as head and the workers as feet. According to this metaphor the employer and the employees belonged to the same body, but the head governed the feet. In *the family* the good, responsible and punishing father ruled. The labour movement turned against the metaphor of the body and claimed that classes had different interests, but the metaphor of the family was incorporated. In the project of welfare state the labour movement was responsible for the members security and welfare and delivered welfare goods.

Gustav Janzén, the chairman of the Federation of Textile Workers, seated in Norrköping, headed the federation in a very patriarchal way. According to him it was not the purpose of

¹⁷ The FCO changed name first to LO-sektionen and later to LO-facken.

¹⁸ Horgby 2010

¹⁹ Horgby 1993, chapter 6; also Dag Lindström, "Skrå, ära och hantverkarkultur i Sverige ca 1350-1900", in *Historisk Tidskrift* no 1 1993 about the connection between honour and craft.

²⁰ Åmark 1989.

²¹ R W Connell, *Maskuliniteter*. Göteborg 1999.

the masses to knead the leadership. Instead the leaders should knead the masses. He also expressed that the members of the federation were his subordinates.²² The local unions were also governed in a patriarchal way. In 1914 the chairman of Textil 9 declared that the first of May was the day of the male worker. Women should stay at home and let their men demonstrate. The boards of trustees were unisexual. In the aspiration of organizing women and also representing women the boards tried to recruit one or two female trustees. One argument used against women was pleading for knowledge and qualifications.

In the mid-war period the gender order remained patriarchal. The father represented the hegemonic masculinity in the textile unions. Women were still considerably under-represented in the boards. According to the gender order the man was supposed to be the breadwinner and the woman the reproductive. The textile industry did not follow that pattern as the wages were too low for a man to support his family. During the depression the men viewed the women as unfair competitors, especially in the weaving. In the late 30s women began to combat the subordination. In the war time period they began to discuss equivalent wages. With a delay equivalent wages were realized in 1961. In 1955 the leading female members started another counter-hegemonic action. They demanded changes in the representation in the board.

The gender order just began to change in 1960 when I leave the Textil 1. The Metall 12 also began as a brotherhood. This changed in the late 30s, when a new company recruited many female workers and when the skilled men were not that dominant in the union as earlier. In the mid-war period a youthful militant masculinity challenged the paternal reformist. Both parties used different rhetoric. Force challenged responsibility. In the early post-war period the youthful militant masculinity quietened down. After the war the new companies recruited women, so in 1949 one sixth of the members were women. In 1960 the proportions had changed to one third. Now "female questions" were set on the agenda, but they were viewed as separate questions for women. The representation in the board remained unisexual.²³

During the 60s the skilled men became relatively fewer as the new big companies recruited less skilled women. In the same time the gender order began to change from the norm of the male breadwinner to a norm of two family providers.²⁴ The Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman calls the 60s and the early 70s as the gender contract of class equality.²⁵ But, in the Metall 12 there was no change. The board still was unisexual until the beginning of the 70s.

²² Horgby 2010; also *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek*, Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundet, Handlingar, Vol 16 Gösta Wennström berättar.

²³ Horgby 2010

²⁴ Yvonne Hirdman, *Med klaven tunga*. Stockholm 1998, pp 159-287.

²⁵ Yvonne Hirdman, "Genusystemet", in SOU 1990:44 *Demokrati och makt i Sverige*. Stockholm 1990.

In 1978 the female members acted counter-hegemonic by demanding gender equality. In praxis changes were marginal. In 1982 the board of trustees consisted of eight men and one woman. The union continued to represent a relatively traditional gender order. At the turn of the century though in praxis the gender relations began to change.

Just as the textile unions the Pappers 53 was very patriarchal. In the mid-war period a paternal, reformist masculinity battled a youthful, more militant. As a consequence of the fighting spirit and the discontent the paternal masculinity not become hegemonic until the late 40s. Honour played an important role in defining masculinity during the mid-war and the early post-war period. The “female questions” were put on exclusion. Instead male honour was important. In 1977 the first female trustee got elected. But she left her position after one election period. Changes in the discourse of gender order expanded the possibilities of female counter-hegemonic action. In the 80s and 90s more women participated in the debates. Thus, the board of trustees remained a male concern.²⁶

To sum up, all three unions were ruled by masculine regimes. The trade unions obviously were traditional forces according to the gender order. They began to change in the 90s when they had to. Earlier studies show my results are passably representative. Also the LO was a traditional force, who tried to maintain the previous gender order.²⁷ This traditionalism can be explained by the importance of the welfare project, where the trade union leaders acted as patriarchal providers of welfare goods. As I already has showed the different views about gender created a conflict in the social democratic labour movement in the 80s and 90s.

The project of conscientiousness in the labour movement

Did the hegemony dilute? To discuss this question I now will study two important parts of the hegemony – the project of conscientiousness and the union identity.

The concept of conscientiousness was formulated by the historian of ideas Ronny Ambjörnsson (1988) in a study of the Swedish temperance movement. He used the concept to characterize the culture and the attitudes of the temperance movement in the late 19th century. I also used the concept in a book about working class culture (1993). Thereafter the concept has been used – and discussed critically – by Scandinavian scholars.²⁸ Here I only use the concept as a characterization of the Swedish labour movement. The goal was threefold. The

²⁶ Horgby 2010.

²⁷ Hirdman 1998; Ylva Waldemarson, *Kvinnor och klass – en paradoxal skapelseberättelse*. Stockholm 2000.

²⁸ Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*. Stockholm 1988; Lennart Johansson, ”Stationssamhällets skötsamhet. Om nykterhet som symbol och kulturell markering i sekelskiftets Alvesta”, in Peter Aronsson & Lennart Johansson eds, *Stationssamhällen*. Växjö 1999; Björn Olsson, *Den bildade borgaren*. Stockholm 1994; Kennet Strömberg, *Vi och dom i rörelsen*. Växjö 2004; K Waltersson, *Bildning för livet*. Linköping 2005.

first was to *discipline* the members in conscientious norms of notions and behaviour. The second was to *educate* the members in the democratic knowledge of the organisation, so the members could build and organize a network of organizations. The third was to *cultivate* the members, so they could become cultural and social competent to govern the society. The conscientious norms were also closely connected to the labour movement morale.

The imaginary world was anchored to the concepts of the Enlightenment as reason, calculation, long-time planning, rationality and governing by rules. As these concepts were coloured by morale the first goal was to control emotions and to behave respectable. The second goal aimed to produce a responsible democratic man, who worked on long-term basis to build the network for the purpose of collective power. The third goal should create a well-educated, well-read and socially competent man. The conscientious man and the conscientious movement needed all three aspects.

In the unions democracy was an important notion. Democracy was not just a way of governing, but also morale norms as justice, equality and equal rights. The exercise of power in the conscientious organizations had to be reflexive, rational, calculable and efficient. In the labour movement the concept was a class project with a demand of individual and collective recognition and a respectful treatment.²⁹ The working class was going to take its legitimate place in society as equal to the bourgeoisie with its own standards as benchmark. The relations in the unions and other organizations were based on mutual trust.

During the pioneering years discipline was essential. The conscientious worker ought to be a morale role model. This was even more important during times of conflicts. In debates the rational argument won against the emotional. Those who lost temper also lost respect. Especially in the relations to the employers it was important to show moral superiority. Long-time planning and calculability characterized the rational discussions. Self-education, study circles and discussions characterized the union meetings. The conscientious member not only had to discuss and learn rules of governing the organization but also how to run the county council and so on. Lectures of the constitutional laws were mixed by discussions about how to address each other and how to treat blacklegs. Many leaders were autodidacts. Some of them also went to folk high schools in the aspiration of receiving the cultural and social capital, which could declare them cultural and social competent.

In 1912 the workers educational association (ABF) was founded. From the mid-war period education and cultivation was transferred from the union meeting to the ABF. The need for special competence for ombudsmen and trustees started the cooperation with folk high

²⁹ Nancy Fraser, *Den radikala fantasin*. Göteborg 2003.

schools. All these union studies were coloured by the social democratic hegemony. A growing problem in the consolidation years in the mid-war and early-post war period was the development of oligarchies. Demands of efficiency and knowledge of wage negotiations resulted in the engagement of ombudsmen. This widened the gap between the members and the leading trustees and ombudsmen and required extended trust. Now the norms of discipline were internalised, but the sometime hard conflicts between the social democrats and the communists could affect the atmosphere at the union meetings.

In the 70s the local unions merged into regional. Now the gap between the members and the leaders rose considerably. In order to widen the engagement in the unions and educating the members, they invested in study campaigns. Studies in union affairs became a channel for mobilizing members for union tasks. Other courses dealt with work environment and such things. In the latter part of the 70s the interest in studies diminished and it continued to be a problem for the union leaders. Instead of education for all, the education became much more specialized in the direction of the needs of the officials. Now the project of conscientiousness began to lose its importance, especially as humanist cultivation. The morale of the labour movement also became problematic.³⁰

The trade union identification

So, in the 70s and 80s the conscientious content – and of course also the social democratic hegemony – thinned out. Did the same process affect the trade union identification?

In the pioneering years the trade unions had special features, but also formulated the same identity. The members in the unions marked very clearly their belonging to the working class and the labour movement. The labour movement in Sweden consisted of a network of organizations. Besides the political organizations and the trade unions it included a special temperance movement, a special religious movement, the movements for The People's House and the People's Park, news papers, the ABF and folk high schools, the consumer's cooperation, producer's cooperative societies as the building producer's society (BPA), the residents' association and so on. These organizations started in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

In the pioneering years the trade unions established close relations to the network of organizations. Morale arguments and please for solidarity were used to force the members to choose these organizations instead of the commercial's. The class identification affected

³⁰ Horgby 2010; Björn Horgby, "Democratic Practices and the Project of Conscientiousness. Swedish Trade Unions in the 20th Century", Paper presented for the conference "Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in a New Global Dispensation", UNISA, South Africa 1-3 February 2010b.

norms of how a trade union member should behave against supervisors and employers. According to the patriarchal pattern the workers were supposed to subordinate, which was opposite to the identity norms. There were also norms of behaviour against blacklegs and unorganised workers. The active conscientious workers designed and wore the union identity. To activate the “passive” members the trade union fellowship fenced by common rituals and symbols as the flag and the demonstrations on the first of May. The trade union meeting also included rituals as a formalized agenda. In the pioneering years the members often started and ended the meetings univocal singing “The International” and other labour movement songs.

In the mid-war and early post-war period the class identification and especially the connection to the network of labour organizations was very strong. But a conflict in 1965 between the trade unions and the local social democratic party marked the cracks. The housing corporation of the county had in this social democratic town started to cooperate with a private enterprise instead of the BPA, which belonged to the labour movement network. This conflict created a tense relation for more than a year. According to the trade union identity the county as well as the single member was morally obligated to choose the labour movement and its institutions. This strengthened the identity. The conflict can be an example of an early conflict of the content in the social democratic hegemony. Especially in the 80s and 90s the internal bonds of the labour movement network of organization were undermined. Now it was not longer a moral obligation to buy the social democratic newspaper or to buy food at the private shops. The network of organizations waned both on the national and the local level. Another example of the thinner process is the participation in the demonstrations at first of May.³¹ According to an interview with two trade union officials the members now price the membership. During the last decades an individualization process has changed the attitudes to the membership.³²

A third expression of the thinning process is the changing relations between the social democrats and the political left. Now the differences between the parties are very small. The social democrats view the members of the left as near companions working for the same goals. At last, the forth expression of the thinning process was the widened gap between members and leaders, due to processes of professionalization and centralization, which reduced the level of activity in the unions. The trust in the leaders also diminished as the leaders had less potential to deliver welfare goods.³³

³¹ Horgby 2010

³² Interview 091016 and 091120 with Sven Ljungberg and Ingemar Dahlqvist, Metall 12.

³³ Horgby 2010

The consistent and the weakened hegemony

Lastly in this paper I will discuss why the hegemony could be that consistent and then weakened. Of course the conflict between the trade unions and the party undermined the hegemony, but this conclusion must be qualified. Here I will try and discuss different concepts.

The institutionalisation of the trade union movement

The stability can be explained by the institutionalisation of the trade union movement. An institution can be – but do not have to be – a formal organisation. It is kept together by formal or informal rules as regulations and norms. These rules restrict the space of action and affects choice of strategy.

In the pioneering years the trade union movement developed a similar system of rules on national and local level. In this sense the trade union movement institutionalised. Another expression is the mutual system of norms shown by the identity and the project of conscientiousness. The morale, which emphasized responsibility, pay one's dues, solidarity and defend the values of the movement, also characterized the collective thinking and understanding. In the mid-war and early post-war periods the welfare project served as a useful utopia mapping the road to the future. The individual and moral choosing of the labour movement organizations probably reinforced hegemony. The institutionalisation can – at least partly – explain why the trade union movement became that uniform and equivalent. Internal conflicts became internal. Strong disciplinary forces acted as defenders of the “right way”. The concept of institutionalisation also explains why the gendered order was that constant.

In the early post-war period the trade union movement integrated in society. First of all it became part of the corporative decision-making in the state and counties. Secondly it could affect politics by the close cooperation with the social democratic party. Thirdly it guaranteed the welfare system by promoting the industrial rationalization processes. These factors participated in the creation of a consistent trade union movement.

Sect like draws

Another concept emphasis the sect like draws of the trade union movement, which created uniformity and demarcations against outsiders of different kinds. Obviously the labour movement was no sect, but as I am going to show it contained some draws. A sect has to defend its uniformity, otherwise it risk the stability of the organization. I have designed an ideal type of a sect and will compare this ideal type with the praxis of the labour movement. Firstly, a cosmology unifies the sect. This imaginary world demarcates the members from “The Others”.

Secondly, the cosmology creates a need of truth-claim. Thirdly, the members are united in a common destiny. Sects often are utopian. Fourthly, a corps of leaders conveys the message and convinces the members.³⁴ Fifthly, the organization needs institutions. Otherwise the corps cannot keep together the members and lead them towards the utopian goal. Sixthly, the sect also keeps together by the identification and the belief in the utopian goal. Seventhly, it needs a righteous morale. Eighthly, the membership is an obligation. If you leave the sect you can risk ostracism.

Several of these standards can also be a part of the institutionalised perspective. The creation of institutions, the identification with the movement and the righteous morale are such standards. The other standards suit more or less. The cosmology included ideology as well as the choice of strategic action. The imaginary world emphasised concepts as democracy, equality, solidarity and mutual security. The truth-claim caused the social democrats to attempt to marginalize the communists and subsume them in the hegemony. The utopia of the welfare state mapped the road to the future. The corps played an important role in discipline the members in the values of the projects of conscientiousness. In this way the imaginary world played an important role in the formation of identity. The truth-claim can also be discussed together with the concept of trust. The corps and the morale defined the membership. Ostracism also played an important role in this definition process. In the 30s those who did not pay the trade union fee officially could be marked off in the social democratic' newspaper.

These draws mainly characterized the active members. Common members were not that affected, but they knew the limits and did not breach them, as it could result in moral repression. The draws were formulated in the pioneering years, but also existed in the mid-war and early post-war periods as a result of the conflict with the communist sect.

Individualization

Now I will discuss the weakened hegemony. The theory of individualization reaches much further than the social democratic hegemony in the labour movement. The process of individualization is no rectilinear process from collective belonging to individual liberation from social and cultural bonds, but the direction is evident as a long-term trend.³⁵ In 2007 I wrote a book about the revolting youth generation in the 60s. Here I show how youth reacted against earlier hegemonic values. As a consequence the conscientious morale was

³⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Att tänka sociologiskt*. Göteborg 1991. In sects charismatic leaders often act like the corps.

³⁵ Ronald Inglehart, *1 Modernization and Postmodernization*, Princeton, New Jersey 1997, pp 5-6, 10-33, 40-41, 65-66; Also Ulrich Beck, *Risksamhället*. Göteborg 2005.

challenged.³⁶

The justifiable about talking of individualization verifies by some social democratic innovators in the early 90s. According to them the social democratic labour movement ought to change from “social collectivism” to “social individualism”. They underlined the notion of the earlier movement as a monolith and pleaded for more freedom of expression.³⁷ In this way they affirmed the process of individualization. The earlier mentioned trade union officials I interviewed some months ago twisted the question and saw the process as a problem.³⁸

The process of individualization first of all is a socio-cultural process liberating the individual from different kinds of collective bonds. Solidarity with the working-class and the labour movement creates a collective communalism, based on mutual identification. So the process of individualisation undermines different kinds of collective organisation – especially those based on membership and regular commitments. As a consequence the trade union movement continuously has lost and is losing members.³⁹ The participation in the traditional organizations in the civic society is declining along to an increasing participation in networks and other loose forms of organizations.⁴⁰ On a general level the process of individualization can be one of many causes to the weakened social democratic hegemony in the labour movement, as fewer identify collectively, which results in decreasing solidarity. Changes in morale also affect the loosening of bonds.

The counter-institutionalisation

Another mood of explanation emphasis the tendencies of counter-institutionalisation. The trade union and the labour movements are characterized by institutionalism. But, the system of norms now is undermined. The trade union identity and the project of conscientiousness are thinning out. The conscientious righteous morale is discarded. These tendencies are expressions of a counter-institutionalisation. As a consequence the labour movement network is falling apart and the internal unifying too. Until the 80s internal conflicts were internal. Now the battle between the trade union movement and the party resulted in newspaper headlines and harsh statements.⁴¹

³⁶ Björn Horgby, *Rock och uppror. Amerikansk, brittisk och svensk rockkultur 1955-1969*. Stockholm 2007, pp 307-08.

³⁷ Håkan A Bengtsson, *En ny socialdemokrati* Stockholm 1992, pp 14-15.

³⁸ Interview 091016 with Sven Ljungberg and Ingemar Dahlqvist.

³⁹ Anders Kjellberg, *Fackliga organisationer och medlemmar i dagens Sverige*. Lund 2001

⁴⁰ Tomas Wennström, ”Öka samarbetet mellan folkrörelserna”, in Håkan Bengtsson ed, *i rörelse*. Stockholm 2006, p 29.

⁴¹ For example, the former finance minister Kjell-Olov Feldt, *Alla dessa dagar*. Stockholm 1992 and his contrahent

The disappearance of the sect like draws

The sect-like draws also disappeared. The narrative of the welfare state lost in importance in the 80s and did not longer function as a guidepost. The internal conflict in the labour movement became a conflict of the road to the goal and also were the goal was situated. The social democratic innovators criticism of the one-dimensional emphasis of materialism and pleading for humanism were consequences of the challenges of cosmology and narrative. Without a special goal the truth-claims also vanished. The counter-institutionalisation weakened the identity; the righteous morale became a joke; and the individual choices of the labour movement network ended. The process of individualization made the membership in the trade union less obligate and the democratic problems grew as the gap between the members and the leaders widened.

The epilogue

The weakened social democratic hegemony results in a declutching of the trade union movement from the political power. From being an engine in the formation of the welfare state the trade union movement no longer is viewed as an organization fighting for the common best, but for its own special interests. And this change is a part of the political marginalization of the blue-collar trade union movement in Sweden.