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Democratic Practices and the Project of Conscientiousness. Swedish Trade Unions in the 20th Century

The Swedish labour movement is a democratically founded popular movement, which has played an important role in shaping and transforming the democratic society. The future of the movement is troublesome. Firstly, the trade unions are beginning to lose members. Secondly, both members and trustees experience a rising gap between themselves. The lack of democracy has become a problem.

In this paper I discuss how the rational project of conscientiousness structured the Swedish blue-collar trade unions formation in the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In this process the trade unions institutionalised and became a national movement with local clubs and unions and national federations and the confederation of trade unions, the LO, all united by synchronized rules and by-laws. This institutionalised framework served as a manual for democratic practices as the rules were linked to the “project of conscientiousness”, which was a giant project of mass-education based on long-term action and the values of the enlightenment as rationalism, calculability and efficiency. The organized principles of rules clashed against democracy as a value-system, when the principle of efficiency became the superior value. As a consequence the ongoing processes of centralization, bureaucratisation and professionalism moved power from the members of the trade unions to the leadership, which caused the gap between the members and the leadership. As one expression of these processes the local trade union level were ranged in the pattern of the movement with stipulated levels of the organisation and centrally decided by-laws and also by firstly local and then central collective agreements on the labour market. The principle of efficiency resulted in the formation of large-scale unions and also in the fusion of several federations. In this paper I also discuss how the changing conditions of democracy were motivated and legitimated.

In the first part of this paper I will present the context of the Swedish blue-collar trade union movement. Then I am going to discuss the theoretical frameworks of the project of conscientiousness and democracy. At last, I will analysis the role of the concept of conscientiousness in the democratic practices. In the empirical studies I will use source material from the trade unions in the major industrial town Norrköping with a strong female dominated textile industry until the 1950s, with a growing engineering and metal work

industry – especially in the second half of the century – and also male dominated paper industry.

The Swedish Trade Union Movement

The trade unions began to organize labour in the late nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century. Initially the male handicraft workers and other skilled male workers organized. Female industrial workers, especially in the woollen and cotton industry remained unorganised until 1917-1918, when the working majority organized. During the mid war period most of the skilled and unskilled workers in the industrial, handicraft and transportation trades were organized. From the 1990s the measure of organisation anew has diminished.

There is a separate white-collar organization, which I not will further discuss. The blue-collar trade unions were organized in the national structure of local clubs, who organized workers at the workplace. The clubs belonged to the local unions, who were members in the national federations of labour unions and in The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, the LO (Landsorganisationen). The LO was founded in 1898. From the early twentieth century the principle of organization was the local work place instead of the trade. That is why both cleaners and skilled workers could organize in for example the Swedish Metalworkers' Union (Sv Metallindustriarbetarförbundet).

The blue-collar trade union movement was interlaced to the social democratic labour party, the SAP (Socialdemokratiska arbetarpartiet), and participated in the mutual labour movement. In 1910 the syndicalists started an own movement (SAC). During the 1910s and 1920s they were successful among unskilled labourers. But, as the members of the Confederation succeeded in creating a common collective bargaining system the syndicalists found themselves marginalized. Since the later parts of the mid-war period the syndicalists lack of importance.

From the early twentieth century until 1990 the LO-organized trade union movement was collective affiliated to the SAP. A membership in the trade union automatically resulted in a membership in the SAP. Those who denied the membership in the political party had to dissent in public. Understandably very few took advantage of this possibility. In 1917 the SAP was sliced into one major reformist and one minor revolutionary part. The latter developed in 1921 to the Swedish Communist Party (SKP). In the beginning the communists were rather poorly established in the trade union movement. But, in the late 1920s power of

the communists increased considerably, which started clashes between reformists and revolutionaries. The social democrats won this struggle of power. In the beginning of the 1940s the LO and the SAP started a tight cooperation called “the trade-political collaboration” (facklig-politisk samverkan). As a result of this collaboration the trade unions strengthened their power tools in controlling and marginalizing the communist activities in the unions; the party could use the trade unions in the mobilization of electors; and the trade unions achieved political power and could influence the policies of the party. From the late 1940s the social democrats reached hegemonic power in the trade union movement.

The hegemonic power was approved by the very successful welfare state program, which involved the trade unions during the early post war period. The trade unions developed a consent relation to the employers and their organizations in creating economical growth through the industrial rationalization movement, high productivity and rising wages, which were transformed to welfare arrangements through the tax policy. During two decades Sweden changed from a poor country in the periphery of Europe to becoming one of the richest welfare states.

The global structural economical reformation in the mid 1970s resulted in waste problems firstly for the heavy industry and then later also to the knowledge based engineering industry. The trend of economical growth was transformed to stagnation. The expectations of further welfare reforms during the 1980s could not longer be fulfilled. As a consequence “the war of the roses” between the party and the trade unions burst out. The trade unions defended the earlier welfare state policy. At the same time the party began to change policy as an aspiration of creating a new economical growth. As a long-term result of this conflict the trade unions lost their major part of political power. Since the 1950s the communists acted inside the framework of the social democratic hegemony in the trade union movement. They practiced a very precautious policy, which could be characterised as “friendly pushing” into a more militant mode. In the 1980s there were no more differences between a social democratic and a communistic trade union policy.¹

The Project of Conscientiousness²

In 1988 the historian of ideas Ronny Ambjörnsson formulated the concept of conscientiousness in a study of a temperance lodge as he characterized the culture of the popular movements in

¹ See my forthcoming book B Horgby, *Kampen om facket* (The struggles of the trade unions).

² See B Horgby forthcoming.

Sweden during the late nineteenth century.³ Five years later I used the same concept in a study of the working class culture.⁴ Subsequently the concept of conscientiousness has been used in Swedish⁷ historical research in characterising a special mode in the popular culture and the popular associations.⁵

Here I only discuss the project of conscientiousness of the labour movement as the benchmark of the giant project of mass-education. The purpose at the individual level was threefold: to discipline the members in conscientious norms of behaviour and conceptions; to educate the members in the democratic knowledge of the association, in behalf of organizing and building a conscientious world of associations; and to cultivate the members becoming cultural and social competent. The overall purpose was to create a new man, who could reach the level of knowledge and confidence of the well-educated middle classes as she used the resources of the associations in the accession of political power. The moral concepts of the labour movement structured the project of conscientiousness.

The value-system of the project of conscientiousness was based on the Enlightenment values of reason, long-term calculation, rationality, efficiency and governing by rules. The conscientious man could control his behaviour and act respectable. The democratic man was responsible and acted forward-looking in building collective power. In this aspiration it was necessary to achieve the knowledge necessary in the practicing of trade union power on the labour market and in the society. The cultivated man was as cultural and social competent to exercise power.

The project of conscientiousness was a class project. The struggle for individual and collective acknowledgement was followed by demands for respect.⁶ The working class should captivate its legitimate position in society and become equal to the bourgeoisie. However, the project of conscientiousness was not aimed for equality according to gender or ethnicity. Gender became important in the 1990s and ethnicity even later.

Democracy was not just a mode of governing, but also a system of rules and moral values of justice, equality, equal rights of power and rights for the individual to influence her own conditions of the everyday. In the democratic unions decision-making had to be reflexive, rational, calculable and effective. Decisions had to be rational, serious and trustworthy and

³ R Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*. (The conscientious worker) Stockholm 1988.

⁴ B Horgby, *Egensinne och skötsamhet*. Arbetarkulturen i Norrköping 1850-1940 (Self-will and conscientiousness. *Working class culture in Norrköping 1850-1940*) Stockholm 1993.

⁵ For references, see B Horgby forthcoming.

⁶ Nancy Fraser, *Den radikala fantasin*. Göteborg 2003 discusses the concept of "acknowledgement". The concept of honour and respect, see B Horgby 1993, chapter 6.

preferably well established among the members. The concept of efficiency would in the long-term play an important role.

Another important concept is the concept of confidence. Here I use “confidence” similar to “to trust someone” – especially in trusting the trustees to act reasonable according to calculable roles and norms. Trustees were expected to act in a “good way” for the common best.

The long-term development in the trade unions in Norrköping

The transformations of the trade union movement can be divided in three periods: the pioneering years until ca 1920, the consolidation years from the 1920s until the 1970s and the large-scale unions years from the 1970s. During the pioneering years the local trade unions developed their rules and forms of meetings, which were institutionalised in the national federation with specific by-laws. In the transition from the pioneering to the consolidation years the bargaining system changed from being local to be national. In the course of the consolidation years the welfare state project was drafted and also implemented. In the beginning of the large-scale unions period local unions were merged into bigger regional units.⁷

The concentration processes played an important role when democracy as an effective system of governing clashed to democracy as a value-system. In the pioneering years the members of the trade unions developed three ways of governing. In *the system of direct democracy* the members meeting decided all significant questions. In *the system of deliberative decision-making* the members tried to make decision as united as possible. The direct democratic way often resulted in a rapid decision-making process and in conflicts among the members. As a consequence of the deliberative way the decision-making process became slow. Decisions were made after extended discussions as the members could reach consensus. In the early years the founders of the trade union began to discuss by-laws as the activity of the union was supposed to be governed by rational and calculable rules. Several problems needed discussions, considerations and decisions. Sometimes the meeting decided how to address each other – by “You”, “Sir”, “Mister” or “Brother”. The address was a symbol of mutual respect, self-esteem and dignity.⁸

⁷ In 1948 there were 8 950 local unions and in 1974 1 897. The major change took place in the late 1960s. Leif Lewin, *Hur styrs facket?* Stockholm 1977, p 73.

⁸ R Ambjörnsson 1988, B Horgby 1993.

The third and most effective way of governing was *the representative way*, when a huge part of the preparatory work in the decision-making process were done by a small circle of trustees in the union board. The representative way could be simple or additional, as the power was delegated in one or additional ranks. The direct democracy way was most important in situations with affected feelings and mobilizations of members. The deliberate way only existed in the small unions in the pioneering years, when male skilled workers, especially handicraft workers, created brotherhoods.⁹

The concept of efficiency promoted the representative practice ahead of other practices. As the demand for rationality rose and after aspirations of efficiency the representative way of decision-making soon was eliminating the other ways – especially in its additional way. The federations began to control the local conflicts, as it was rational to prevent self-will trade unions to declare costly strikes, which the federations had to finance. The federations wanted the representative way of decision-making in making a long-term and calculable operation and to control local spontaneity.¹⁰ The rise of the collective bargaining system played an important part in this shift of power from the local to the central level. As a consequence the members' power in the struggle of wages diminished drastically during the mid-war period. In the post-war period the negotiation system was further more centralized to the LO, and the local power over the wages were even more undermined.¹¹

Though the internal culture of the trade unions was quite disparate, the project of conscientiousness structured the action.¹² The deliberative way of decision-making the decisions were made after rational, non-affected discussions.¹³ During the mid-war period this became impossible because of the continuous clashes between social democrats and communists. The concentration processes also played an important role in changing the system from deliberative to representative.¹⁴

⁹ Jörgen Westerstahl, *Svensk fackföreningsrörelse*. Stockholm 1945, pp 84 ff and Nils Elvander, *Intresseorganisationerna i dagens Sverige*. Stockholm 1969, pp 69 ff.

¹⁰ Björn Horgby, *Med dynamit och argument* (With dynamite and arguments. The History of the Swedish Miner's Union). Stockholm 1997, pp 105, 107, 109, 113, 155 ff.

¹¹ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötes- och styrelseprotokoll 1890-1920, Klas Åmark, *Facklig makt och fackligt medlemskap*. Lund 1986, pp 167-68, *Maktkamp i byggbransch*. Lund 1989, pp 27 ff, 108-33. Also Walter Korpi, *Arbetarklassen i välfärdskapitalismen*. Stockholm 1978, p 207, B Horgby 1997, pp 104 ff, 157, 274.

¹² Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötes- och styrelseprotokoll 1890-1985, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000. Also Ylva Waldemarson, *Kvinnor och klass - en paradoxal skapelseberättelse*. Stockholm 2000, pp 60, 64, 70.

¹³ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötes- and representantskapsprotokoll 1890-1988, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000. Also Y Waldemarson 2000, p 70.

¹⁴ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Träindustriarbetareförbundets avd 22 and Sv Beklädnadsarbetareförbundets avd 5. Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll.

The rise of the bargaining system contributed to the concentration process – as a process of professionalism. Some of the negotiations still remained local and then there was need for skilled competition to negotiate and interpret agreements. Local unions did seldom have necessary economical strength during the mid-war period and the early post-war period to engage specialized officials. The federations both got the knowledge and enough economic funds. So, the larger unions became during the consolidation years even further dependent of the federations when they got financial support in employing officials - ombudsmen. The processes of industrial rationalizations resulted in the 1960s and 1970s in a rising need for bargaining competence. As a consequence it was necessary to create the large-scale unions to get enough funds to employ more ombudsmen.¹⁵

The processes of bureaucratisation and professionalism were also affected by the formation of the labour movement. One aspect of the strife against the bourgeoisie was the development of a labour movement public, which could compete with the public of the bourgeoisie. The labour movement consisted besides of the trade unions and the political party and its organizations of organizations for education (ABF), entertainment (Folkets Park), sessions (Folkets Hus), temperance, residence' association, labour press, insurance companies, consumers and producers cooperation and even undertaking. Together this associations and organizations created a network connected by tight personal bonds and of a common value-system.

The development of the labour movement and the public created a bureaucratisation. Together it was possible to engage officials. The labour movement and the public were governed by the additional representative system. As a result a small group of trustees and ombudsmen from the consolidation years could dominate the labour movement. The leadership developed the special political competence necessary to attend the political public. They also shared the organization building competence that was needed for developing the labour movement to a labour movement public.¹⁶

During the 1960s and 1970s the process of professionalism rose considerably. In this time the concept “boss” began to characterize the leaders of the trade unions. Until the turn of the century

¹⁵ Christer Lundh, *Spelets regler*. Stockholm 2002, pp 214-18, W Korpi 1978, pp 259-60. Anders Kjellberg "Ett nytt fackligt landskap – i Sverige och utomlands", in *Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia* nr 86-87, 2002, 2 55-56 emphasis the centralization on the federation-level, especially after 1990.

¹⁶ B Horgby forthcoming. In B Horgby 1997, pp 276-79 I discuss changes in the competences of the ombudsmen. The protocols from The Swedish Miner's Union began in the 1970s look like protocols from a conference of medical doctors. Especially the problems in the environments of work demanded a new scientific competence.

the officials and the trustees to a very high degree were men. This was an example of the gender order in the trade union movement.¹⁷

As a consequence of the concentration of power the decisions from the consolidation years began to get established among the members according to the hegemonic social democratic values.¹⁸ This process of establishing was necessary as the individual possibility to affect the policy and the world of values continuously diminished. Instead, a small group of ombudsmen and trustees conducted the policy and the decision-making. They had to contact the members in the implementation of the policy and in getting legitimised ratification. They also were depended on the trust of the members and that the policy got the members trust. The need of establishing contributed to the strong demands for uniformity in the labour movement hegemony.

The representative decision-making

Now I will study the process of decision-making in more detail. During the pioneering years the direct democracy ways of governing was very important in the local union of Metal workers, the Metall 12. As the representative and regulated system grow during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the direct democratic governing was replaced by the representative way of decision-making. Minor questions were delegated to the board. In the first years the members meeting confirmed the decisions. Later the practice changed. Many decisions were conformed as the annual report was accepted.

As the union business grew the work of the board became more burdensome. The differences in information and knowledge widened between the trustees and other members. In the larger unions, as in Metall 12 and Textil 1, the activities were divided between the union and the union clubs. The development of the organization created a need for members' tax collectors and other kinds of officials. The elected trustees represented the union in the labour movement network.¹⁹ The clubs kept the union business closer to the members. The board and the employed officials (if they existed) controlled the business of the clubs. This knowledge gave the trustees and the officials a possibility to design the proposals.²⁰

¹⁷ I Hellberg 1997, pp 20-21, also L Lewin 1977.

¹⁸ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötesprotokoll 1890-1960, see also Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötesprotokoll 10/5 § 3 1903. Also B Horgby 1997, chapters 7 and 9 and Y Waldemarson 2000, p 63.

¹⁹ See earlier footnotes. Also Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1, Representantskapsprotokoll 1936.

²⁰ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Styrelseprotokoll 26/10 § 2 1915, Mötesprotokoll 4/11 § 5, 5/12 § 7 1915.

In the mid-war period the major unions employed officials with economical support from the federations. The economical businesses were however problematic and the institution of trust intermittently created problems. During the pioneering years and the early consolidation period it was rather common tax collectors, cashiers and ombudsmen embezzled trusted capital. The internal control was not sufficient when the members trusted each other. The members got really upset when someone did not answered to the confidence. The former chairman of the Metall 12 became dispatch clerk and cashier in 1909. Two years later he committed suicide after he had embezzled a major sum. Especially before the Second World War there were many stories like that.²¹ The scandals and the solutions of them show lack of calculable and transparent rules of how to manage and control the economic businesses.

In 1936 the textile unions in Norrköping were united in one union. To govern this organization with more than 4 000 members the members meeting substituted by a body of representative and the representative system changed from single to additional. From now on the members could not directly affect the decisions. Their possibilities to demand for responsibility also diminished, as the formal responsibility and the demand of responsibility became more complex. Who was responsible for a decision? Was the trustee the only responsible or also the representative who had elected the trustee? The order of decisions was in principle: The elected delegates from the clubs elected the board of the union. The board and the employed officials administrated the union business. The board and the employed officials also in practice made many central decisions.

The rules of the unions were very precise about the relations between the trustees and the ombudsmen and between decisions-making and executive power. But, in practice the decision-making and executive power were mixed, as the executive power designed the proposals and also achieved superior knowledge. My conclusion is: the leading trustees and the ombudsmen together possessed the real power in the local trade unions. There also was an ambiguous division of power between the trustees and the ombudsmen. The lack of transparency created difficulty when the members demanded for responsibility.

This centralization of local power and transition of power from the members to the board and the ombudsmen became even more obvious in the transitions from local to large-scale unions in

²¹ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1, Representantskapsprotokoll 1/3 § 2, 25/3 § 4a and b 1936.

the late 1960s and in 1970s. Earlier only large unions, as the Textil 1, could change from a simple to additional representative system, now nearly all unions did.²²

The representative way of decision formally guaranteed the interest of the common member and gave every member the same rights and possibilities in participation in the process of decision-making. In this way the formal rules was granted by the democratic value-system. But the additional system for example in practice no longer could guarantee the possibilities to agenda setting as the board controlled the agenda.

The culture of decision-making

The differences between the formal rules and the democratic practices resulted in a conflict between the efficient democratic governing and the democratic value-system. The transfer to practice created a culture of decision-making.

The formal rights were limited by the practical possibilities to participate in the union business. Those with shift work could not participate at meetings at working hours. Female members with the prime responsibility of their families had corresponding structural problems in participating – especially before the 1980s. Gender, the centralization of power and the culture of decision-making diminished real power of the members. An example of the culture of decision-making was the separation between a conscientious and active group of members and a more passive majority of the members, who seldom participated in the union affairs. You can differ between a group of conscientious enforcing members and members who participated according to trade conditions.²³ Sociological studies of the trade unions in the 1970s show huge differences in participation between these categories of members.²⁴

Especially during the pioneering period many workers became members in times of conflicts and then lost their membership after the conflict. From the mid-war period the very few were unorganised. Then the conflict cycle no longer affected the membership – only the activity. The conflicts between the social democrats and the communists from the later part of the 1920s grow the activity considerably. When the climate of conflict was as a highest degree of intense the most of the members visited the members meetings. Just before and during industrial conflicts the activity of the members also was very high. In between these periods those members vested

²² In the Miner's Union discussions about introducing the bodies of representatives began in 1959. The member's averseness delayed the introduction, see B Horgby 1997, p 275. Also L Lewin 1977, p 78.

²³ B Horgby 1993, pp 190-91.

²⁴ W Korpi 1978, pp 207-09, L Lewin 1977, p 136.

the union work to the enforcing members. And the enforcing members repeatedly discussed how to increase the activity of the members.²⁵

The passive members could have had good reasons. As an individual it was hard to influence the processes of decision-making. Perhaps it was enough to participate in the informal union work and the discussions at the work place. The structural discrimination also limited the commitment. Skilled men were explicitly over-represented in the active group in the unions regardless the mixture of members – skilled and unskilled, men and women. The gendered order in general promoted men ahead of women and the professional skill created prestige and self-confidence. So, skilled men were most likely to be elected to trustees. They also dominated the discussions at the members meetings.²⁶ A plausible conclusion is that skilled men likely committed a trade union policy gaining their own interest. I will expand this conclusion to the trade union movement at large. The historian Klas Åmark has made the same conclusion in a study of the Swedish policy of the social insurance system. According to Åmark the LO pushed the SAP during the 1930s and the early post-war period in the direction of a social insurance policy which gained skilled workers with a strong and stable position on the labour market.²⁷

Consequently women and unskilled men were exposed to a structural discrimination and subordination. The latter groups probably did not notice this discrimination. The communists were nearly the only ones who criticized the boards for lack of democracy. It was easier to establish the facts of gendered wages and working conditions. In the struggle of equal wages regardless gender during the early post-war period women began to react against this discriminating subordination. Probably the mobilization of women during the large-scale union period diminished this kind of subordination.

I am not the first scholar who draws the conclusion of the elite rule in the trade unions in Sweden. In 1945 the political scientist Jörgen Westerståhl remarked that fundamental problems for democracy in the trade unions were the domination of the leading men and the lack of interest among the vast majority of members.²⁸

The next step in the analysis of the culture of decision-making is the analysis of how decisions were made. The project of conscientiousness structured the way of making

²⁵ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötesprotokoll 1890-1988, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000, also B Horgby 1993, pp 191-99, 426.

²⁶ The concept of brotherhood contributed to the domination of skilled workers among the representatives. They also got possibilities to create networks. Many worked at the same work place for many years, see B Horgby forthcoming.

²⁷ Klas Åmark, *Hundra år av välfärdspolitik*. Umeå 2005, pp 83, 194-96, 204.

decisions. That is why decisions were preceded by comprehensive preparations. A certain inconsistency can be noted. This model functioned well when the members could make consensus decisions. During periods of conflicts the meeting participants got angry and made more spontaneous decisions. During the pioneering years the collective affiliation system could create such tense feelings especially in the Metall 12. Should the union affiliate to the social democratic party or not? After infected discussions the members meeting made majority decisions in an affection mood without rational deliberation. But also in these kinds of questions there was an aspiration of reaching consensus. The union tried to make decisions rooted in reasons all members could support. It did not matter if the members were pro or against the collective affiliation to the party. If the union did not have enough economical resources a dismissal could be motivated in that way.

When the political polarization diminished during the post-war period the system of consensus agreements returned in another shape. During the pioneering years the consensus agreements between the members were horizontal. In the later period the consensus agreements were more vertical. The LO, the federation, the union board and the club board, in other words those who represented “power”, tried to implement consensus. The centralization of the trade union movement, with an expanding distance between the members and the trustees and ombudsmen, resulted in a transfer of the preparative parts of the decision-making processes from the members meeting to the board and especially to the substantial leaders, the ombudsmen and the chairs of the board. The deciding institution – the members meeting or the body of representatives – increasingly had to face ready made proposals. One male textile worker claimed “*now they prepare everything in advance. ... you just can say: amen.*”²⁹ The members’ power over the agenda also weakened.

The study of the culture of decision-making also shows that the unions – especially during the large scale period – in practice were governed by a group of ombudsmen and trustees, who established the decisions among the members and aspired to appear as the legitimate of the members.³⁰ The existence of a vertical consensus – between members, ombudsmen and trustees – was probably a result of a extended work of anchoring and a strong social democratic hegemony.

²⁸ J Westerståhl 1945.

²⁹ Norrköpings Stadsmuseums arkiv, Projekt Arbetarminnen AM 61.

³⁰ Norrköpings Stadsmuseums arkiv, Projekt Arbetarminnen AM 61. Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötesprotokoll 1898-1988, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000.

The election processes

The changes in the election processes show the same tendencies as the changes in the culture of decision-making. During the pioneering years the election processes were institutionalised by using closed ballots and in making the elections in conjunction with the annual meeting. The candidates were nominated by the board or by a special nominating committee. This institutionalising limited the possibilities to get elected. The existence of discrimination by gender, age and competence resulted in favour of the union maintaining group of grown up, skilled men.

The way of nominating the candidates contributed to reinforce the power of the board and the maintaining group. The trustees tended to reproduce themselves. During mid-war years the conflicts between the social democrats and the communists power over the nominations obstructed the communists' possibilities to get elected. But, the social democrats did not always use that tool. In most cases the mobilization of members decided the outcome of the election.

The transition to large-scale unions changed to a certain degree the conditions. The clubs nominated representatives of the board. A nomination committee adjusted and directed the nominations and put up a nomination list, which the members of the body of representative could elect. An important consequence of the system of representatives was the representation of all groups of members. All work place or group of work places should be represented. Until the 1980s this model of representation obstructed the possibilities of women to get elected to the board, as the geographical and group specific characteristic were more important than the gendered representation.³¹ Furthermore, the model of election contributed to make the labour movement network social democratic.³²

Power over the union

The conclusion of the empirical studies of the structure of decision-making, the culture of decisions and the election processes is univocal. During the pioneering years the trade union business became governed by rules and also calculable. The demand for efficiency contributed to a centralization of power in the unions; to reinforcing the representative system in the local unions; and to the early creation of a maintaining group of members with a

³¹ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1890-1988, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000.

³² L Lewin 1977, pp 90-91.

relatively strong power over the union. This group consisted mainly of skilled men, who got enough power to subordinate and discriminate women and men with insufficient skill.³³

The centralization processes reinforced the system of representation; the collection of power to the active elite; and resulted in rising power to the ombudsmen.³⁴ According to some members the ombudsmen got too much power and as the gap between the members and the leadership grew the interest in participation vanished.³⁵

The ombudsmen had no power of decision – anyway not over more important questions. The power of governing, which he (it was always a he) got from the union board depended on the management of the flow of information; of the decision basis for the board and the members; and of the interpretation and implementation of the decisions. The ombudsmen not only used the privilege of information and the power of governing to influence the decision-making. They also played important roles as the trustees in the additional representative system in the labour movement network.³⁶ The role of the ombudsmen is an example of how the demands for efficiency affected the democratic governing at the expense of the democratic value-system. As a consequence it became even more important to create legitimacy by anchoring the decisions by the process I call vertical consensus. As a reasonable conclusion I will say that this need of anchoring contributed to maintain the social democratic hegemony in the labour movement.

Legitimacy and the patriarchal power

The formation of the large-scale union created a democratic problem as the members meeting was substituted by the body of representative. The Metall 12 became a large-scale union in the 1970s as the union organized not just the engineering workers in Norrköping but also in the surroundings.³⁷ As the sociologist Walter Korpi points out the large-scale union reduced the numbers of unions in the federation. This centralized power in the federation.³⁸ Then the concept of legitimisation became even more important than before. But, which tools of legitimisation could replace the lack of democracy?

³³ For example in the textile industry the male collective could appropriate relatively strong power.

³⁴ Norrköpings Stadsmuseums arkiv, Projekt Arbetarminnen AM 54.

³⁵ Norrköpings Stadsmuseums arkiv, Projekt Arbetarminnen AM 200, 248, 257. Interviews with two local trade union leaders of the Metall 12 in 20091016 and 20091120.

³⁶ For example, Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1, Representantskapsprotokoll 21/3 § 8 1937.

³⁷ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Representantskapsprotokoll 1976-1988, Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53, Mötes- and styrelseprotokoll 1920-2000, Also Gullan Gidlund & Björn Horgby "Kollektivistisk demokratisyn i uppbrött. Förändrade villkor för facklig-politisk samverkan", in Mats Ekström red, *Om demokratins villkor*. Örebro 2006, also B Horgby 1997, chapters 7 and 9.

The sociologist Max Weber describes three types of legitimate power: In the traditional legitimate power the subordinated is loyal to the patriarchal leadership. In the charismatic legitimate power the personality of the leadership is the crucial factor for legitimacy. In the legal, rational legitimate power the use of power is impersonal and the legitimacy presupposes the system of rules in the bureaucratic organization.³⁹ The trade unions mixed patriarchal legitimacy and the legitimacy of the rational organization. The prior ombudsman at the LO Olle Sahlström argue that the concept of gifts and the patriarchal organization of the labour movement has been an important tool.⁴⁰ The rhetoric of the unions often made references to the trust or the confidence in the leadership.⁴¹ This principle of legitimisation was anchored in the rational organization.

The most important principle of legitimisation became a mantra – Facklig-politisk samverkan (the trade-political cooperation). This concept connected the trade union members to the social democratic party and indirectly to the state and the municipal community. Through the cooperation the trade union movement influenced the welfare policy.⁴² On the local level the organized cooperation between the union and the party created legitimacy during the mid-war period and the post-war period as the trade union leadership got political power and could deliver social reforms satisfying the demands of the unions. For example the trade unions succeeded in introducing a new local labour market policy.⁴³ Through the trustees and the ombudsmen the members could influence the formation of the welfare society. The members self played an important role in this policy as they participated in creating the economical growth.⁴⁴ When this concept of economical growth was incorporated in the social democratic hegemony the industrial town Norrköping went through a severe structural crisis. The textile industry was eliminated in a few years in the 1950s and 1960s. Through the local perspective the labour movement ought to fight for the job opportunities. This did not happen. In the discussions at the members meeting of the local branch of the SAP during the 1960s the crisis of the textile industry was understood as a necessity. The engineering industry was the future.⁴⁵

³⁸ W Korpi 1978, p 249.

³⁹ Hans Zetterberg, "Förord", in Max Weber, *Kapitalismens uppkomst*. Stockholm 1986.

⁴⁰ Olle Sahlström *En trilogi om arbetarrörelsen*. Stockholm 2003, pp 15-16.

⁴¹ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Norrköpings arbetarekommun, Mötesprotokoll 3/5 § 2 1954. Also L Lewin 1977, s 235. Formar president of the LO Stig Malm, *13 år*. Stockholm 1994, p 26 also emphasis the concept of trust.

⁴² K Åmark 1989, Anders L Johansson & Lars Magnusson, *LO andra halvseklet*. Stockholm 1998, G Gidlund & B Horgby 2006.

⁴³ Börje Hjorth & Jan Nordström, *Norrköpings arbetarrörelses historia*. Norrköping 1989, p 82.

⁴⁴ About the economical growth and the wage policy, see Lars Magnusson, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia*. Stockholm 2002.

⁴⁵ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Norrköpings arbetarekommun, Mötesprotokoll 1960-70. Also Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1, Representantskapsprotokoll 1952-60.

The order of legitimacy was affected by the rhetoric of the union movement, which emphasized central welfare concepts as “social security” and “progress”. When the federation economist Hans Hagnell held a speech in 1967 in front of the members meeting of the Metall 12 he talked about “*More secure employment through a more active industrial policy*”.⁴⁶ Then he referred to the goal of social security. This is an example of how “facklig-politisk samverkan” was used as legitimacy anchored in the social democratic narrative of welfare.⁴⁷ This also explains why this rhetoric about “facklig-politisk samverkan” still remained important in the 1980s and 1990s when the deliverances of welfare had diminished. In the rhetoric there was also a promise of gaining of the fruits of welfare as a gift to the members. The deliverance of gifts was connected to the democratic processes in the trade union movement and as I have discussed earlier the formation of a system of economical growth. Both the gift and the democratic processes became parts of the social democratic hegemony, which supposed a superior leadership with patriarchal power. The patriarchal relation subordinated women, but also meant a liability of the good patriarchs for the subordinated. By the deliverances of welfare goods the leadership fulfilled this responsibility.⁴⁸ These connections between the gift, the policy of economical growth and the processes of democracy probably contributed to the remaining patriarchal tendencies in the trade union movement.

The centralization of power and the development of a patriarchal leadership not only structured the trade union movement. During the early post-war period – until the 1980s – some leading social democratic municipal politicians achieved similar power as the trade union bosses.⁴⁹ According to the historian Micael Nilsson the leadership of the patriarch’s in the municipality was a way of solving the municipal control.⁵⁰ This corresponded to the leadership of the patriarch’s in the trade union movement.

In the municipal politics the leadership of the patriarch’s diminished in the 1980s as one man no more could control the county as a stewardship. The global structural change made it impossible to guarantee ongoing welfare deliverances, as the permanent economical growth stopped.⁵¹ As a consequence the legitimacy of leadership in the unions and in politics was

⁴⁶ Norrköpings föreningsarkiv, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Mötesprotokoll 1112/10 § 7 1967.

⁴⁷ About the legitimacy of the narrative, see Ulf Zander, *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider*. Lund 2001, pp 26 ff.

⁴⁸ See G Gidlund & B Horgby 2006. About the patriarchy, see Christer Ericsson, *Vi är alla delar av samma familj*. Stockholm 1996.

⁴⁹ Thord Strömberg ”Mannen som alla litade på”. Media och den socialdemokratiska kommunalpampen”, in Erik Åsard ed, *Makten, medierna och myterna*. Stockholm 1996.

⁵⁰ Micael Nilsson, *Genusregim i förändring*. Linköping 2008.

⁵¹ L Magnusson 2002.

undermined.⁵² The crisis of legitimacy was reinforced by the clashes about the political choice of path between the party and the trade union movement. And the unions began to lose members.

Democratic practices and democracy as a value-system

The democratic practices in the Swedish' trade unions changed from direct democracy and deliberative democracy to additional representatives. Power was gradually transferred from the members to the employed officials, the ombudsmen, and the leading trustees. As a consequence legitimacy became more important as a democratic work model, as the leadership needed to legitimate their policies. The close relationship between the processes of legitimacy and the deliverance of welfare goods resulted in the 1980s and 1990s not only in a loss of legitimacy for the social democratic party but also the trade union movement.

The driving force in the changes in democracy was the demands for efficiency connected to the project of conscientiousness. In the turn of the century the trade unions formally were democratic, but did not anymore include the earlier democratic value-system.

⁵² Norrköpings föreningsarkiv Norrköpings arbetarekommun, Representantskapsprotokoll 19/3 § 16 1983, 15/4 § 4 1985, 14/3 § 15 1987, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12, Representantskapsprotokoll 7/6 § 5 1984.