

Transitions in collectivist view of democracy

Changed conditions for trade union-party cooperation in Sweden

GULLAN GIDLUND BJÖRN HORGBY

The strong ties between the political and trade union branches of the labour movement have characterised Swedish politics. This solidarity has, throughout its century-long history, been manifested in different ways and had various organisational expressions. In this chapter, interest is directed towards the development of the union-party cooperation as the infrastructure for the ambitions for power and influence of the two actors. The main focus is on the changed conditions for union-party cooperation, particularly regarding mobilisation and control from the 1940s onwards. It was a period in which not least social development meant challenges for union-party cooperation, and new and changing conditions confronted ideals and traditions. The strategic alliance between the trade union movement and the government party of several decades' standing changed the conditions for democracy. The long-term goal was to shape and transform the welfare state. In the course of this work, the labour movement developed a hierarchical, representative model of democracy that was legitimised by the fact that the movement's leaders could deliver welfare. When the conditions for this delivery changed, differences arose about the choice of direction, which led to a weakening of the close cooperation between the unions and the party.

The Swedish model – a background

For several decades, the power and influence of the professional and industrial organisations over Swedish politics and societal development was considerable. Also, Swedish politics was from an early stage characterised by what the national power enquiry termed a societally-centred ideal of democracy that stresses the interests of the collective at the expense of the individual's autonomy.¹ Such a collectivist view of democracy creates conditions for the state to develop corporate features which means, amongst other things, “for the ‘common good’, discriminating in favour of organisation members before other citizens, for instance by giving certain organisations economic advantages, representation in official bodies, official recognition as negotiation partners”.²

A linchpin in the collectivist view of democracy and the development of *the Swedish model* has been Social Democracy's lengthy periods in power and the solidarity between the Landsorganisationen (LO)³ collective and the party. The Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP)⁴ was founded in 1889. From the very beginning there was a close connection between the working-class movement's trade union and political branches. Up until the formation of the Landsorganisationen in 1898, both the union and political leadership lay in fact within the party. Cooperation between union and party was not least manifested by the fact that membership in the LO automatically meant membership in the SAP. The “voluntary” form of collective affiliation that was introduced a few years later came to last for the next ninety years. Other forms of cooperation have also been developed over time.⁵

¹ SOU 1990:44 Demokrati och makt i Sverige, Maktutredningen, p 408.

² Rothstein, Bo, *Den korporativa staten*. Norstedts, Stockholm 1992, p 13.

³ Swedish Trade Union Confederation.

⁴ Socialdemokratiska arbetarepartiet.

⁵ Åmark, Klas, ”Sammanhållning och intressepolitik. Socialdemokratin och fackföreningsrörelsen i samarbete och på skilda vägar”, in Misgeld, Klaus, Molin, Karl & Åmark, Klas eds, *Socialdemokratins samhälle*. SAP och Sverige under 100 år. Tiden, Stockholm 1989, p 60; Åmark, Klas, *Facklig makt och fackligt medlemskap*. De svenska fackförbundens medlemsutveckling 1890-1940. Arkiv, Lund 1986, p 60, 68; Åmark, Klas, *Vem styr marknaden? Facket, makten och marknaden 1880-1990*. Tiden, Stockholm 1993, pp 107-08; Gröning, Lotta,

In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the Social Democrat-dominated workers' movement changed its long-term policy. The main opponent was no longer bourgeois society. The goal was instead to develop a consensus-based class-bridging political line to create welfare. There, not least, the breakthrough into the salaried employees' collective came to play an important role.⁶ The "People's Home policy" (The Swedish welfare state policy) was the basis of what later has come to be known as the Swedish model. The model was built upon a tripartite alliance with set rules of play between unions, employers and the state, to create economic growth, welfare and social security.⁷

The national agreements between the labour market actors, concerning amongst other things wage determination, were significant elements of the joint rules of play. These agreements were incorporated throughout the 1950s and 1960s in a growth model that assumed consensus solutions between the state and labour market actors concerning tax-, labour market- and reform policies. A portion of the economic surplus was directed via investment taxes to growth-stimulating rationalisations, whilst the remainder was used to finance the welfare- and security system, that was closely connected to the expanding public sector.⁸

In order for the model to work, it was necessary to coordinate a strategically important alliance, namely the relations between the LO and the SAP in government. This relation was regulated with the aid of union-party cooperation. Even if the building up of the Swedish welfare state involved many actors and agreements, and consensus between several political parties and trade union organisations, this alliance has been of critical importance in the formation of the welfare state; for the way in which political activities were conducted and later for the defence of the welfare state.⁹ It is precisely this union-party cooperation and its long-term consequences for changes in the democratic society that this chapter is about.

In the 1970s, the tripartite alliance of the Swedish model for growth and reform no longer worked in the same way as previously. A global economic structure crisis meant that the delivery of increasing welfare was threatened. At the same time, the concord of wage negotiations was replaced by growing conflicts on the labour market. A consequence of this was that the coordinated centralised negotiation system successively collapsed. The actors' interest base for unity was thus weakened. What developed instead was the conflict in the labour movement in the 1980s and 1990s that was known as "the Wars of the Roses"¹⁰, and that above all was about the approach to the welfare state.

In spite of the fact that relations between the LO and the SAP were creaking strangely and that "the Wars of the Roses" periodically erupted in the full glare of publicity, the union-political cooperation was surrounded by an unmistakable style of rhetoric in the labour movement; a tribute to a successful strategy and order.

For instance, from 2004:

Vägen till makten. SAP:s organisation och dess betydelse för den politiska verksamheten 1900-1933. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Uppsala 1988, pp 28-31, 41-45; Gidlund, Gullan, "Folkrörelsepartiet och den politiska styrelsen. SAP:s organisationsutveckling", i Misgeld, Molin & Åmark eds 1989, pp 289-290, 299-303.

⁶ See Svensson, Torsten, *Socialdemokratins dominans. En studie av den svenska socialdemokratins partistrategi.* Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 1994; Åmark, Klas, *Hundra år av välfärdspolitik. Välfärdsstatens framväxt i Norge och Sverige.* Boréa, Umeå 2005.

⁷ Johansson, Anders, L & Magnusson, Lars, *LO andra halvseket. Fackföreningsrörelsen och samhället.* Atlas, Stockholm 1998, pp 17-23; Schüllerqvist, Bengt, *Från kosackval till kohandel. SAP:s väg till makten. Tiden,* Stockholm 1992; Thullberg, Per & Östberg, Kjell red, *Den svenska modellen.* Studentlitteratur, Lund 1994. Stråth, Bo, *Mellan två fonder. LO och den svenska modellen.* Atlas, Stockholm 1998, pp 18-24 considers the formation of the model not to be as rational as the Social Democratic own conception implies.

⁸ Thullberg, & Östberg 1994; Johansson & Magnusson 1998, pp 43-58, 77-99, 136 ff; see also Stråth 1998.

⁹ Compare with Rothstein, Bo, "Sweden - Social Capital in the Social Democratic State" in Putnam, Robert R. ed. *Democracies in Flux.* The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002.

¹⁰ The Rose is the Social Democratic Party symbol in Sweden.

The Sweden we live in today has to a great extent been shaped by this union-party cooperation. Demands for one, two, three, four and later five weeks' holiday, better security of employment, codetermination at the workplace, healthcare and education for everyone are proposals put forward by the trade union movement, and then carried through in cooperation with a Social Democratic government. Our union-party cooperation is based upon our sharing the same fundamental values and our dream of the good society. It is this joint basis that allows us sometimes to have different ideas about how we are to proceed along that path, without the differences upsetting our cooperation.¹¹

At the same time that "the Wars of the Roses" were being fought, the national power enquiry of 1990 could conclude that the societal development had for some time been becoming more and more distanced from the ideals that characterised the Swedish model. What could be discerned was a breaking away from a collectivistic to a more individualistic view of democracy that involved a release from traditional collectivist ties and an increasing proportion of individual political standpoints and behaviour.¹²

Union-party cooperation

Union-party cooperation is an established concept in the workers' movement and is regularly used to describe in particular the formalised institutional cooperation. In this study, the concept is used to refer to the strong organisational and economic links that have been developed at central, regional and local levels between the trade union movement and the SAP. But another important component in the union-party cooperation is the shared ideological base. A precondition for the cooperation has been a shared view of fundamental political, economic and social questions, which has made it possible to programmatically and operatively establish a policy. The aim of this policy was, especially prior to the 1970s, to develop the social welfare systems by greatly expanding the public sector. Subsequently the overall aim was to defend a welfare society that was based on shared values. This unity created long-term conditions for continued mutual loyalty, solidarity and the potential to mobilise members union-wise and politically.

Union-party cooperation requires different kinds of *mobilisation* and *control*. This meant developing at an early stage an organisation structure and organisation culture that could handle that. This applies not least to the early cooperation to prevent the Communists gaining influence and commissions of trust in the trade union movement. The building up of the workplace organisation as a local form of cooperation between the trade union movement and the party had two main purposes. In part it was about creating a more efficient organisation to control the unions' Social Democratic character, and in part about developing a cooperation that could influence politics and the shaping of the welfare state. For the latter purpose it was important to develop the workplace organisation into a mobilisation structure where people could be informed, educated and activated, not least during the political election campaigns. Over time, union and party congresses have also adopted special programmes intended to reinforce the coordination, mobilisation and control.

Even though the cooperation between the two branches of the workers' movement is doubtlessly part of the lifeblood of Swedish politics, with consequences that are hard to take in, knowledge about the growth and development of this *infrastructure*¹³ for the cooperation

¹¹ Speech of the Social Democratic official Håkan Meijer, 2004; About the War of the Roses see for example Larsson, Gudmund, "Komplicerat syskonskap. LO och SAP på 1970- och 1980-talen", in *Arbetshistoria* 1998:1-2.

¹² SOU 1990:44, p 403.

¹³ The concept of infrastructure often is used as a description of "hard" societal structures, as the communicationsystems in the society. These systems are the fundamentals in society. Here we widen the concept from "hard" to also contain "soft" infrastructures.

is fairly limited. There is not least a lack of empirical research on union-party cooperation from the aspects we take up below.

Purpose

The focus of our interest is on the development of union-party cooperation as an infrastructure for ambitions of power and influence in the political and union branches of the workers' movement. The main emphasis is on the changed conditions for union-party cooperation, particularly regarding mobilisation and control. Here, the internal lines of argument for union-party cooperation are examined, particularly the development and final fate of collective affiliation. Additionally, the question is asked as to how and why the long-term effort by Social Democracy to marginalise the Communists' role was changed. The institutionalisation of the union-party mobilisation structure, chiefly the workplace organisation, is also mapped out. Finally there is a discussion, on the basis of assumptions made in the theoretical frame of reference, about changes in the union-party cooperation.

The cooperation that was built up between Social Democracy and the salaried employees' collective is consequently not included in this study.

Theoretical points of departure

Union-party cooperation involves complex relations and has, as has been pointed out earlier, been going on for over a century. The changed conditions for cooperation cannot therefore be analysed from one particular perspective. Instead, several different perspectives and approaches are necessary. The relation between the unions and Social Democracy is coupled to the social level, to the state, and societal development, and according to our premise is to a great extent interwoven with the building up and changing of the welfare system. This means that structuring factors and differences form an important framework for the understanding of how the conditions for the cooperation changed.

During the period under examination here – roughly 1940-2000 – there were two types of organisation systems. The first is characterised by industrial society and is hierarchical and patriarchal. Power is to a great extent formalised and centralised. It is a question of distributing the resources of the welfare state. In post-industrial society, the other organisation system emerges, which is less hierarchical (cf. “flat” organisations), more boundary-transgressing, and includes network solutions. Power structures change in post-industrial society. Power becomes less distinct, less hierarchical and places more responsibility on individuals and different kinds of network. This general development naturally also affected the cooperation between the trade union movement and the SAP. Various structural changes in society, not least improved economic and social conditions, raised education levels, urbanisation and technical progress have influenced people's values and lifestyles. Traditional collective identities are reconsidered and individuals to a greater extent choose their affiliations, their lifestyles. This affects, as mentioned previously, views on democracy, where the freedom of the individual is ever becoming more central. The question of who is to represent individuals and groups is not as predictable as previously.¹⁴ Parties are confronted more and more with voters who do not have life-long loyalty to a particular party.¹⁵

¹⁴ See for example Castells, Manuel, *The Power of Identity* (The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume II, Second Edition). Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2004. For the Swedish discussion, see SOU 1990:44 Maktutredningen; SOU 2000:1 En hållbar demokrati. Demokratiutredningen.

¹⁵ See for example Gidlund, Gullan, "Folkrörelsepartiet i kunskapssamhället" in Ruin, Olof ed, *Politikens ramar och aktörer*. Femton uppsatser om vårt politiska system tillägnad Ingvar Carlsson, Hjalmarsson & Högberg, Stockholm 2004.

An important point of departure is that union-political cooperation is based on a *hegemonic power relation*, and it is from that the rules of play are formulated.¹⁶ Here, the creation of identity plays a central role in the activities and in the development of organisation structure and organisation culture. The pointing out of a “We” and a “They” is a link in the hegemony – and in the identity. With that, one can defend what one has in common against the Enemy, which creates conditions for a successful mobilisation.¹⁷

Theoretically, it can be assumed that under certain circumstances, for example crises, structural conflicts and changes in terms of values, *formative moments* arise that make it possible to change and redefine the rules of play. This can be seen as applying to various kinds of organisation. Bo Rothstein has formulated the hypothesis that at certain formative moments in history, it is possible to identify strategically skilful actors that can shape the political institutions in such a way that interest organisations and their relations to the state go into a positive or negative development spiral. In the Swedish corporative model, the labour market parties in particular certainly developed important positions and influence.¹⁸

At the same time that we can assume that there are such formative moments in the relations between the union and political branches of the workers’ movement, from an organisational theory perspective it can also be assumed that there are countering forces that slow down the abandoning of old ingrained interaction patterns and ways of cooperating. Organisations are *path dependent*, that is, they tend to keep to ingrained patterns and traditions. They could be termed “tenacious structures” that are slow to change.¹⁹ Path dependency is influenced and reinforced by the identity-creating processes that amongst other things manifest themselves in language, rhetoric and rituals.²⁰

From an actor’s perspective, power can be analysed and seen as a relation between two parts with different resources and with the potential to mobilise these power resources. In the literature on political parties it is usual to assume that parties are driven by the aim to *maximise votes*.²¹ Ultimately it is a question of acquiring such positions of power that the programme can be implemented. For this purpose, the creation of a mobilisation structure is a necessary prerequisite. This structure needs a strong economic and organisational base. It is also important that this power resource can be utilised swiftly and effectively.

Power- and interest analyses give opportunity to discuss what goals and interests drive organisations to cooperate, and under which preconditions the goals are reconsidered. In this context, the point of departure is that the SAP and the LO initially had coincidental and distinguishing interests to institutionalise their work. The most important joint interest was that both strove to create a welfare state. The party’s and the LO’s interest in the welfare state certainly coincided, but they had different origins. For the Social Democrats, the short-term goal was to maximise votes in the general elections, so that they could gain and retain the political power. The long-term goal was to use this position to create a welfare state that could give all citizens a good life. The LO organised the working class, and its goal was restricted to securing good life conditions for the working class. While the political power was thus a goal

¹⁶ Horgby, Björn, ”Rädslans regim” in Blomberg, Eva, Horgby, Björn & Kvarnström, Lasse eds, *Makt och moral*. En vänbok till och med Klas Åmark. Linköpings Universitet, Linköping 1998.

¹⁷ Bauman, Zygmunt., *Att tänka sociologiskt*. Korpen, Göteborg 1992. About hegemony and the relation between communism and anti-communism, see Schmidt, Werner, *Antikommunism och kommunism under det korta nittonhundratalet*. Nordic Academic Press, Lund 2002.

¹⁸ Rothstein 1992, s 19.

¹⁹ Pettersson, Thomas, *Att kompensera för avstånd*. Transportstödet 1970-1995 Ideologi, ekonomi och stigberoende. Umeå Universitet, Umeå 1999, see also Ilshammar, Lars, *Offentlighetens nya rum*. Teknik och politik i Sverige 1969-1999. Örebro universitet, Örebro 2002.

²⁰ Josefsson, Olle red, *Arbetarna tar ordet*. Språk och kommunikation i tidig arbetarrörelse. Carlsson, Stockholm 1996; Johannesson, Kurt red, *Agitatorerna*. Carlsson, Stockholm 1996.

²¹ Sjöblom, Gunnar, *Party Strategies in a Multiparty System*. Studentlitteratur, Lund 1968; Mair, Peter, *Party System Change*. Approaches and Interpretations. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997

for the party, it was a means for the unions. That conditions for labour should be as good as possible was the goal of the union movement, but not the party.²²

The most significant difference between union and party was their dependence upon somewhat different social bases. The unions needed only to consider their members, whilst the party, in striving to maximise votes, also needed to act so that other groups – and not least middle-class groups – could be included among their voters.

Mobilisation and control undergoing change

In connection with our studies of the changing conditions for union-party activities from the 1970s onwards, we formulate three premises that in turn are based on conclusions drawn from previous research results. One such conclusion is that the unions changed their strategy during the 1970s. When changes in conditions for working life could no longer be achieved through agreements with employers, in accordance with the Swedish model, the LO sought to make changes through politics instead.²³ This did not change the trade union movement's need to take part in the shaping of the welfare state through politics.²⁴ This leads to the premise:

1. Until now, union interest in shaping the welfare state has made it necessary for the unions to mobilise for political elections in order to secure a Social Democrat government.

In the same way, the SAP still needs to use the unions for mobilisation and as a resource in connection with elections. This is because the party is driven by the goal to maximise voting support.²⁵ As was mentioned earlier, a conflict of interests arose, above all in the 1980s, that is known as “The Wars of the Roses”. This development meant, according to our premise:

2. That the rising conflicts of interest and the emphasis on election apparatus reduce the party's need to work for Social Democratic unions.

Previous research has shown that it is the long-term differences of interest between the party and the LO about the management and development of the welfare state that lay behind “the Wars of the Roses”. For the unions, their earlier interest remains, in working for full employment, equal sharing of the economic resources and the security that the welfare state guarantees. The party's overriding interest in retaining political power has meant that, in the 1980s and 1990s, government finances were weighed against welfare policy. This puts security policy at risk. Besides which, in order to maximise voter support, the distribution of income policy was slanted towards middle groups rather than the LO.²⁶ A premise that will be taken up in the final discussion concerns:

3. That as a consequence of these differences of interest, the nature of the hegemony has changed. It is no longer politics that lies behind the cooperation, but common values instead.

²² Compare with Åmark 1989 and 1993.

²³ Esping Andersen, Gösta, ”Jämlikhet, effektivitet och makt. Socialdemokratisk välfärdspolitik”, in Misgeld,, Molin & Åmark eds 1989, pp 241 ff; Korpi, Walter, ”Den svenska arbetarrörelsens förutsättningar och strategier”, in Thullberg & Östberg 1994, pp 25-26; also Rothstein 2002; och Åmark 1989.

²⁴ Compare with Larsson 1998.

²⁵ Åmark 1989.

²⁶ Esping Andersen 1989, pp 243 ff; Andersson, Jenny, ”Mellan tillväxt och trygghet. Idélinjer i socialdemokratisk socialpolitik”, i *Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia* 2001 no 82-83; Åmark, Klas, ”Sammanhållning och intressepolitik”, in Misgeld, Molin & Åmark 1989; Larsson 1998. Compare with Benner, Mats, ”Arbete – trygghet – utveckling. Arbetarrörelsen och näringspolitiken under efterkrigstiden”, i *Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia* 1999, no 75-76.

During the previous period, the set of common values were central in the construction of the welfare state in that the delimitation of values played a central role in the way in which power was exercised. In the later period, the need to make fenced-in delimitation was reduced. Coinciding interests in the continued building of the welfare state were replaced by the cohesive strength of the historical legacy and the common values in themselves.

Lines of argumentation in the defence of union-party cooperation

There was, quite early in the workers' movement, an idea that strong organisational bands between the union and political branches of the workers' movement would reinforce the political movement. This also meant that mass union membership was seen as a prerequisite for political power. When the organisational separation of the political and union branches became absolutely essential in practice, *compulsory party membership* for LO members became, in the early years, a distinguishing-mark for that idea. The primary arguments, apart from the ideological accord, were the connection with the struggle for the right of association for workers at the turn of the 19th/20th century. Even if the party executive welcomed the first LO decision – not least from a solidarity aspect - there were, above all in the trade union movement, differing opinions both about compulsory membership and whether it was necessary to collaborate with the party at all. The larger trade unions were among the critics. An important basis for the criticism was the fear that compulsory membership and close collaboration with the party would make organisation more difficult. This fear was also confirmed when 60 per cent of the trade unions did not join the newly-established LO. The strong reaction in the trade union movement prompted the LO-congress of 1900 to abolish compulsory membership and instead introduce *voluntary collective affiliation*, whereby all trade unions were recommended to join the party. Eight years later, the LO-congress decided to introduce the *right of reservation*, which meant that every member of an affiliated association had the right to remain outside the party.²⁷

In 1948, the proportion of affiliated members that were in the party was 67 per cent. The equivalent figure for 1957 was 71 per cent, and ten years later it was 75 per cent.²⁸ Up until 1990, when collective affiliation was ended, the proportion was relatively stable at about 75 per cent.

Collective affiliation has undoubtedly been an important factor in the mobilisation of economic resources for the party. The system yielded membership fees, but also laid the foundation for substantial union subsidies for the party. The party's justification for the union subsidies from the LO and the trade unions was based on the idea that this giving of subsidies is a special case, and thus is not to be compared with the kind of contributions that trade and industry make to non-Socialist parties. The latter kind of contributions have been defined as contributions that create unsatisfactory dependence upon powerful financiers. At the extra party congress of 1967 Prime Minister Tage Erlander, for example, expressed his gratitude for the economic support from the trade union movement, and emphasised that the party had nothing to be ashamed of, and that instead they should be really pleased about the support. He continued: "We are pleased that those who have the same values as us are able to support us economically, but also through initiatives, suggestions and ideas".²⁹

An overall motive for union-political cooperation is, according to the actors themselves, their *common values and shared view of society*. This solidarity "has created conditions for

²⁷ Gidlund 1989, s 289-290.

²⁸ Utveckling av organisation och verksamhet. Rapport från arbetsgruppen i organisationsfrågor. Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartis 26:e kongress 1975. Tiden, Stockholm 1975, p 28.

²⁹ Gidlund, Gullan *Partistöd*, LiberFörlag, Lund 1983, pp 197-198, 248-249. The quotation from Protokoll från SAP:s extra kongress 1967, p 31.

the united workers' movement to be the driving force in the development of society." At the party congress of 1978, this very common line of argument and the role of collective affiliation were expressed in the following way:

A close cooperation between Social Democracy and the trade union movement is a precondition for social development that is in the interests of the great majority of the population. (...) It has been established beyond doubt that collective affiliation has increased the political influence of the affiliated trade unions and been advantageous both for members and for society. It has also been established beyond doubt that the future will demand an ever-stronger solidarity between the party and the trade union movement.³⁰

In the above quotation, it is stressed that collective affiliation has meant greater *political influence*. In organisational terms, this could also be expressed as collective affiliation giving "the union organisation the same status as the party organisations and a direct influence in the party".³¹ This meant in reality that the LO could "place orders for social reforms and take part in the shaping of them."³²

Apart from *the common legacy* as a basis for continued cooperation, the existence of *a common enemy* is often pointed out in the argumentation for union-party cooperation. It is necessary to struggle together against these forces, particularly "the bourgeoisie", "conservative forces", "the employers' association", a right-wing oriented press" etc. This is quite evident in the following words from the working group that investigated primarily the local union-party cooperation in the run-up to the party congress of 1984:

It was Social Democracy and the trade union movement that together built the welfare state, often in a hard struggle against bourgeois and conservative forces. This historical legacy is an important foundation for the continuing work.³³

It is interesting to note that the working group mark limits both to the left and the right in defending union-party cooperation. For instance, one message is that "the bourgeoisie are not on the side of the wage earners". Non-Socialist parties have, according to the working group, "attempted union encroachments", but have at the same time engaged in political "double-dealing". Concerning Communists in workplaces, the working group states that their influence in the trade unions has been weakened, and that at the moment, it is "practically insignificant".³⁴ A further important line of argumentation is that union-party cooperation is *a necessary precondition for successful mobilisation*. The working group of 1984 took the 1982 election as an illustrative example of both the strength and significance of union-party cooperation:

Against the workers' movement were ranged the collected non-Socialists, supported by the Swedish Employers' Association and other right-wing trade and industry organisations, backed up by the bourgeois press. But through a forceful and coordinated union and political mobilisation, Social Democracy was able to regain governmental power. When the Social Democratic Government came into office in 1982, the programme "the future for Sweden", worked out jointly by the two branches of the workers' movement, was the basis of the government programme.³⁵

³⁰ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport från arbetsgruppen angående det lokala facklig-politiska arbetet, Socialdemokraterna, Stockholm 1984, p 3.

³¹ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 17.

³² See footnote 5.

³³ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984.

³⁴ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 10.

³⁵ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 10.

From this line of argument, any attempt to criticise collective affiliation or union-party cooperation can be seen as an attempt by the enemy to “disarm” Social Democracy that in the long term could lead to defeat.

The principle of self-determination has been important for the party regarding the question of collective affiliation. The party decision to discontinue collective affiliation was expedited after a real threat of legislation. In autumn 1986, the Swedish Party of the Left, the Communists were prepared to vote with the non-Socialist parties in Parliament for a law prohibiting collective affiliation. To avoid the risk of being forced to make changes, just before the vote was to be taken, the party executive announced that it had been decided that another form of affiliation would be proposed at the 1987 party congress. The congress decided to discontinue collective affiliation, and introduce organisation affiliation instead. The new form of affiliation meant that membership in the SAP could only be based on individual affiliation. It was recommended that all the union organisations (group, club, section, branch or equivalent) should decide about organisation affiliation to the party. This kind of membership meant that the organisation obtained a basic mandate with representation in the local branch of the party, and additionally had the right of representation based on the number of members that were individually affiliated to the party. Apart from the membership fee, what was known as the organisation fee was introduced.³⁶

The role of collective affiliation in the union-party cooperation should not be underestimated. The system gave a stable economic and organisational base for cooperation for a lengthy period, but over time it became more and more troublesome, especially from the democratic viewpoint. The argument for collective affiliation lost cogency, and the burden became greater than the advantages.³⁷

The struggle for the unions – Social-Democratic fence-building

The stressing of the hegemony as a precondition for cooperation not only meant that the party and the trade union movement defended a shared set of values and a historical legacy, but also that clear limits were drawn up against those who had differing views. On the one hand were “the bourgeoisie” and on the other “the Communists”. A fundamental condition for the working of union-party cooperation when consensus politics was pursued was the marginalisation of the conflict-oriented Communists, so that they could not compete with the representatives of the consensus approach.³⁸ The Social-Democrat-led workers’ movement chose to fight this battle in the union movement. The initiative was taken by the party executive. Initially, the LO leadership was sceptical. The strategy seemed risky, since it could lead to civil war in the unions.³⁹ However, it would soon prove to be a very successful strategy.

The competition for the unions began after the splitting of the SAP in 1917. A conflict of aims then arose for the union movement. Should the unions and the Social Democrats continue to cooperate; should the unions be an arena where the political competitors struggled for power; or should the unions avoid the struggle by remaining neutral to the different political movements? Neutrality was recommended by a trade-union line that had strong support in the Swedish Metal Workers’ Union. The chairman, Edvard Blomberg, who was also a Social-Democrat MP, wanted to make a sharp distinction between union and political questions. In many trade unions and branches the question was unproblematic, since the Social-Democratic hegemony was not threatened. The radical separatists, who from 1921

³⁶ Gidlund 1989, pp 299-303.

³⁷ Gidlund 1989, pp 299-303.

³⁸ Compare with Schmidt 2001 and 2003.

³⁹ Compare with Schüllerqvist 1992; Norrköpings Arbetarekommuns arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1940-1960, Föreningsarkivet i Norrköping (FAN).

onwards were organised in the Communist party (SKP), had in general comparatively weak union support, apart from in a few unions – among them the miners’ and the paperworkers’ unions.⁴⁰

The miners’ union was split in two - red in the North, and social-democrat in Central Sweden. This union can therefore be taken as an example of those that were marked by the struggle. The local example is taken from the working-class town Norrköping, where the Social Democrats dominated. In Norrköping, the Communists began a relatively large-scale agitation campaign from 1922 onwards. They had little success in the dominating textile union, but did better in the local branch (No. 53) of the paperworkers’ union.⁴¹

Nationally, in the mid-1920s, there were quite large Communist groups in the miners’, paperworkers’, metalworkers’, building workers’ and transport workers’ unions, and also in some of the smaller unions. The union line they pursued was militant. They were against central agreements, which they considered to be too disadvantageous. They also agitated against the Social-Democrat-dominated trade union executives, which they thought pursued consensus politics. As a step in the revolution, the trade union movement ought to organise a general strike.⁴²

The Communists were critical of the LO. It was therefore recommended that the LO, the syndicalists and other union organisations not affiliated to the LO should begin to cooperate, so that eventually they could amalgamate. In this context, the 1926 Unity Conference and the establishment of the coordinating Committee for Unity can be understood. The goal of the Committee was that the Communist would take over the militant trade union movement and organise the factional work. The LO saw the Committee for Unity as a union rival, and therefore in 1927-28 began to systematically combat the Communist dissidents in the trade union movement.

The Communists’ strategy was to try to get Communists elected in trade union and association executives. This party-political work was opposed by the LO. According to the LO line of rhetoric, it was the most suitable members who should be elected for commissions of trust. In a circular, the LO claimed that the Communists (SKP), using disloyal methods, were trying to gain influence over the trade union movement, in order to make “them a tool for the Communist International controlled by Russian politicians”.⁴³

The Communist branches in the North took over the miners’ union in 1927 and started collaborating with the Soviet mineworkers’ union. The LO reacted against this in a formative way. The representative assembly of the LO threatened to expel the union if they did not break their agreement. The miners gave in and replaced the Communist-dominated executive with a Social-Democratic leadership. Subsequently, the union’s Social-Democratic leadership could disarm the Communists in the North by quite simply expelling them. At the end of the 1930s, they were able to re-join after having signed a declaration of loyalty to the union.⁴⁴

The Communists were successful because they were so well organised and prepared for the union meetings. As a countermeasure, the Social Democrats tried to organise a similar contact

⁴⁰ Horgby, Björn, *Med dynamit och argument*. Svenska Gruvindustriarbetareförbundets historia. Stockholm 1997, p 107; Olsson, Tom, *Pappersmassestrejken 1932*. En studie av facklig ledning och opposition. Arkiv, Lund 1980. In the union Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avdelning 12 in Norrköping the trade union policy was important, Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1894-1920, FAN.

⁴¹ Horgby, Björn, ”Identitet och vardagsliv”, in Nilsson, Hans ed, *Norrköpings historia 1900-talet*. Norrköping 2000, pp 420-25; Norrköpings Socialdemokratiska Vänsterkommun (from 1921 Norrköpings Kommunistiska Arbetarekommun), Protokoll 1922-23; Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1917-25; Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1922-25; Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1917-25, avd 2 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1917-25, FAN.

⁴² For the local union policy of the SKP, see Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Mötes- och styrelseprotokoll 1925-35; also Horgby 1997, p 195; and Åmark 1986, p 112, 127.

⁴³ LO-cirkulär 618, also Horgby 1997.

⁴⁴ Horgby 1997, pp 195-202, 205-06.

network in the trade union movement, so that they could win the union elections and hinder Communist successes. A fence strategy was also devised that involved marking a clear boundary to the left. One part of this strategy was the plea that it was not possible to belong to the Committee for Unity and an organisation affiliated to the LO. On the basis of their union strength, it was then possible to carry out this strategy in places where they had that power – in Norrköping, for instance.⁴⁵ When the Communists were stronger – as in the Communist miners' union branches in the North, the strategy failed.⁴⁶

The splitting of the Communist party in 1929, a Social-Democratic union mobilisation and the economic crisis contributed to the Communists losing a large part of their union base in the early 1930s. The Communists were only able to maintain their positions in the union organisations where they had previously been strong.⁴⁷ Before the Second World War, the mobilisation of Social Democrats in the unions seems to have been done informally. During the war and immediately afterwards, the work was formalised as “union-party cooperation”. At the end of the 1930s, the Communists had strengthened their position somewhat.⁴⁸ This changed as a result of the Winter War in Finland. Thereafter, Communists were branded as presumptive traitors. The LO issued a circular (no. 1144) recommending the trade union organisations to set up a united front against the Communists, and to see to it that no Communists were elected to commissions of trust. Several unions interpreted this to mean removing Communists that had already been elected to such positions.

Further developments in the Second World War resulted in the Soviet Union being on the anti-Nazi side. From 1942-43 the Communists were accepted again. The coalition government's unpopular wages and prices freeze meant that the Communists (SKP) won many new supporters. The metalworkers' strike of 1945 and the election in 1946 indicated that the party successively reinforced its position. In 1948, there was a new turning-point. A massive Social-Democratic union mobilisation and the Prague coup led to the loss of everything that the Communists had previously regained. The pattern was the same, regardless of whether the Communists were relatively weak or strong – as they were in the North.⁴⁹

The new Social-Democratic mobilisation was different from previously. Now they began to organise themselves just like the Communists, in workplace organisations - Social-Democratic union clubs. From 1946-7 onwards, an organisation of Social-Democratic union clubs and workplace representatives was built up. It is important to note that it was the party and not the trade union movement that achieved this workplace organisation, and that it was

⁴⁵ See last footnote and also the trade union sources from Metall 12, Pappers 53 and the textile workers unions in Norrköping, FAN. About Social Democratic progress at the national level, see Åmark 1986, p 141.

⁴⁶ Horgby 1997, 202-03.

⁴⁷ Andersson, Sten, *Mellan Åkarp och Saltsjöbaden*. En studie av arbetsfredsfrågan i minoritetsparlamentarismens Sverige 1923-1928. Almqvist & Wicksell International, Stockholm 1990; Horgby 1997, pp 187-91, 195-203; Olsson 1980; Åmark 1986, p 138, 141; Gröning 1988, pp 162-66; Lodenius, Anna-Lena, *Tvåfrontskrig*. Fackets kamp mot nazism och kommunism. Hjalmarsson & Högberg, Stockholm 2002. For an example of a trade union influenced by the Communists in the 1930s, see Pappers 53, Horgby 2000, pp 425-26.

⁴⁸ Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1936-39, Styrelseprotokoll 1936-39; Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1936-39; Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1 arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 1936-39, FAN.

⁴⁹ Horgby 1997, pp 304-06; Åmark 1986, pp 148-54; Kanger, Thomas & Gummesson, Jonas, *Kommunistjägarna*. Socialdemokraternas politiska spioneri mot svenska folket. Ordfront, Stockholm 1990; Lodenius 2002. 1938 a Social Democrat union club started in the Textile workers union in Norrköping. The most active time was the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, see Sv Textilarbetareförbundets avd 1 arkiv, Norrköpings Textilarbetares Socialdemokratiska Fackklubb, Mötesprotokoll 1938-59, FAN.

the party centrally – through the trade union secretary Paul Björk – that coordinated the activities.⁵⁰

Locally, the regional trade union organisation (FCO) and the ombudsman for the local body of the SAP that cooperated. Through this, the party ombudsman in Norrköping had a very active role in the early stages of the anti-Communist campaign – 1948-49 – by establishing union clubs and by mobilising the members so that the Social Democrats won the union elections. Subsequently the situation was monitored through annual reports to the party executive and correspondence with other ombudsmen, to find out if newly-arrived workers had Communist backgrounds. The following letter to an ombudsman in Luleå illustrates this:

Brother,

Referring to your telephone conversation concerning ..., I can, after having made enquiries, relate the following, that he has not taken part in any union or political work. But does he have a political standpoint – and according to what my informant tells me – he is probably inclined towards the Communists. But it is hard to say for certain when he has not shown it. Otherwise he is said to be a good worker, but he does like his drink, I've heard.⁵¹

Apart from working with the union elections and checking up on Communists, they tried to school their members politically by arranging joint conferences and courses that were directed at Social Democrats that were active in the unions. Paul Björk took part in the establishment phase of this on several occasions. The regional organisation (FCO) also played an important role in this schooling.

To a certain extent, the unions used the opportunities for cooperation to get the right people (*our people*) in the party and in local government activities. The union organisations also played an important role in the economic and personnel mobilisation in the run-up to general elections. For instance, Branch 12 of the metalworkers' union paid for a three-week engagement for a Social-Democratic election worker in 1958.⁵²

The result of the changes in relative strengths in the 1950s was that the Communist opposition was silenced in those areas where they had previously been comparatively weak, such as in Norrköping. In the miners' union, where the Communists had been strong, the Social-Democratic social responsibility and consensus line beat the Communistic confrontation line in the mid-1950s. The next decade saw the return of the Communists. Branches 4 and 12 of the miners' union in the North held what were quite simply party elections.⁵³

From the 1970s onwards, the fence strategy had played out its role. The consensus line collapsed when the conflicts on the labour market grew larger. This resulted in a decrease in the union antagonism between the Social Democrats and the Communists. In the 1970s, political discussions began again in the big union organisations in Norrköping. But the Social-

⁵⁰ Norrköpings arbetarekommuns arkiv, Utgående skrivelser, 19/4 1949 Brev till ombudsman Paul Björk, FAN. Björk could in 1950 with great pleasure certify that the Social Democrats now had won the war against the Communists in the trade unions, Norrköpings arbetarekommuns arkiv, Mötesprotokoll 16/1 § 6 1950, FAN. About the Social Democratic struggle against the Communists in the trade unions, see Lodenius 2002; and Kanger & Gummesson 1990.

⁵¹ Norrköpings Arbetarekommuns arkiv, Utgående skrivelser 15/2 1950 Brev från ombudsman Rune Johansson till ombudsman Ture Dahlberg, Luleå, FAN. See also next footnote.

⁵² Sv Textilindustriarbetareförbundets avd 1 arkiv, Norrköpings textilarbetares socialdemokratiska fackklubb, Styrelseprotokoll 1938-54; Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Avdelnings- och styrelseprotokoll 1920-1988, especially Styrelseprotokoll 28/2 § 4 1952, 27/10 § 5 1955, 28/8 § 5 1958; Sv Pappersindustriarbetareförbundets avd 53 arkiv, Styrelseprotokoll 1922-58, especially 8/4 § 6 1942, 16/5 § 5 1944; also Norrköpings Arbetarekommuns arkiv, Mötes- och Styrelseprotokoll 1938-1975, Utgående skrivelser 1948-60, FAN.

⁵³ Horgby 1997, pp 304-09, 373 ff, 455 ff. About Norrköping see the sources from Metall 12, Pappers 53 och Textil 1, FAN.

Democratic hegemony was so clear that the local branch of the metalworkers' union was guaranteed 18 regular places in Norrköping's newly-established Social Democratic representative assembly. The Social Democratic union club at the branch had the task of selecting the candidates for election at the annual general meeting. Party activities were thus woven into ordinary union activities. This certainly is path dependency. The centralisation of the unions in the early 1970s meant that it was even easier for the Social Democrats to control the union elections. For Branch 12 of the metalworkers' union, centralisation meant that they instituted a representative assembly as their highest decision-making body. After that, the representatives were elected by the clubs. On the basis of their size and their Social Democratic union clubs, the party could control elections.

From the 1980s onwards, collective affiliation to SAP was called into question, as previously mentioned. Instead, the Social Democrats reinforced their local union organisation by starting political clubs at larger workplaces. When these political activities were well established, at the end of the 1980s, discussions about discontinuing collective affiliation could begin.⁵⁴ The material indicates that the second premise we make above is confirmed. For quite some time, the fence strategy worked as a path dependency. In the wake of the structural crisis, the Social Democrats engaged in union work and members of the Left Party discovered that they had the same views regarding the defence of the security system and the welfare state. This tendency seems to have grown successively stronger.⁵⁵

The institutionalisation of a union-party mobilisation structure

For decades, the SAP and the unions have cooperated to build an effective and powerful mobilisation structure, intended primarily to be used in political elections, but as has been shown, also for winning union elections in order to beat the Communists. Even though over time there have been ambitions to create conditions for informal meetings and personal contacts, the structural pattern for union political cooperation has followed the traditional socialist model characterised by a strong belief in a formal organisation and a hierarchical chain of command. The mainstays have therefore been *a formalised organisational structure* and a strong accent on *education*. In addition, *streamlining of the organisation* together with recurring *training of the forces* have been important elements in "maintenance" and development work.

Early on, the workplace became an important base for the building up of the mobilisation structure. Workplace organisation has, however, changed over time due to the fact that the purpose and conditions have changed. The union and political activities of the 1940s were of course greatly affected by the specific questions and issues of the war, but even so, work was going on to improve the union and political work between the big organisations. In 1941, the party executive could report that cooperation with the LO in particular was "even more lively". This was also confirmed in one of the rarer comments on cooperation with the party in the LO annual report, where this cooperation was described as being "more intimate than previously".⁵⁶ The local organisations of the party and the LO were urged to set up *cooperation committees* "in every town" in 1941.⁵⁷ The purpose of this organising was the coordination and planning of joint propaganda and information activities for the workers' movement. Apart from the unions and the party, these cooperation committees also included

⁵⁴ Horgby 1997, pp 304-309, 373 ff, 455 ff; Sv Metallindustriarbetareförbundets avd 12 arkiv, Mötes- och Representantskapsprotokoll 1970-88, FAN.

⁵⁵ See last footnote and also LO-tidningen 1990-2000.

⁵⁶ LO Verksamheten 1941, p 6.

⁵⁷ Partistyrelsen verksamhetsberättelse 1941, p 37-40. Those kinds of committees already was started.

the local youth- and women's organisations, but the idea was that there should be an even distribution between union and political participants in each committee. A programme for the cooperation committees' activities was drawn up at central level. There, it was stated that an important goal was the activation of the members, to see to it that the union people actively took part in the political work, and that the politically organised members took part in the union work.⁵⁸ There was also a cooperation committee at central level between the LO and the party; a committee that amongst other things supplied the local committees with educational and information material. Activities seem to have been quite intense, at least in some periods.⁵⁹ In 1950, after discussions, the SAP and the LO decided to formally set up the *Workers' Movement Cooperation Committee*. This committee was at the highest leadership level, and from the party, apart from Tage Erlander, Torsten Nilsson, Sven Andersson and Sven Aspling took part. Already after the first year it was reported that several meetings had taken place concerning amongst other things union-political questions.⁶⁰

The early local workplace organisations that were called *Social-Democratic Union Clubs* and that were formed during the 1940s were initially the linchpin in the union elections where the Communists were the main opponents. When the Communists' influence no longer had the same power, the union clubs changed focus and had a broader range of political activities.⁶¹ The *Social-Democratic Workplace Associations* arose largely to "organise and improve the political activities", but there was also an ambition to gather members both of the LO and the salaried employees' groups. This later proved to be unsuccessful. Instead, separate workplace associations were developed with members either from the LO or from the salaried employees' groups.⁶² The party's activities for salaried employees started in the 1940s and 1950s.

Another important cog in the mobilisation machinery was the *workplace representative*. In addition to the Social Democratic union clubs and associations, the party continually tried to develop this ombudsman function and make it more efficient.

One of the fundamental ideas was that the Social Democratic union clubs and the workplace associations would work closely with the trade union concerned, but also with the local branch of the LO. An important component in the coordination was the *union committees* developed both in the local branches and the party districts. The main task of the local branch union committees was quite simply to ensure that there was a functioning workplace organisation at the local branches.⁶³

During the 1960s, special arrangements were developed for coordinating the union and political work in the election campaigns. The trade unions appointed *contact men* to consult with the party officials concerning different election matters. These people were then trained and groomed for their assignment.⁶⁴ During the 1980s in particular, it became more and more common that the unions coordinated union-party activities in the union *political organisation*, that is, in the *local and regional union-party committees*.⁶⁵ Sometimes the party district also engaged special *election organisers* whose job it was to work within the union organisations.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1943, pp 37-40

⁵⁹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1943, p 26

⁶⁰ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1950, p 90.

⁶¹ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 20.

⁶² Facklig-politisk samverkan, Rapport 1984, p 20.

⁶³ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 20; Partistyrelsen verksamhetsberättelse 1973, p 18.

⁶⁴ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1960, 1962, 1964.

⁶⁵ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1980, p 20.

⁶⁶ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1966, p 15.

The party congress of 1964 gave the party executive the task of “finding the most suitable forms and methods to further reinforce union-party cooperation”.⁶⁷ The union-party cooperation was, to a great extent concentrated on reinforcing the connection between the central and the local in the cooperation. This was not least about strengthening the contact organisation at the workplaces, and attempting to raise the level of union members’ interest in political questions.⁶⁸ Consultation, study campaigns, conferences and study groups were important elements in the union-party work during the 1960s.

According to the assessment of the party executive, what the intensified union-party cooperation during the 1960s led to above all was success in the elections – both in union and political elections. In the 1968 election, this cooperation worked very well, and according to the party executive, it was of “decisive importance for the big election success and showed the strength and force that the united workers’ movement could develop”.⁶⁹ The party executive also observed that vigorous political activity had developed in the trade union movement, and that courses and conferences on political issues had increased in number.

It seems that the workplace organisation, with the establishment of not least union committees expanded in the 1970s. In 1970, the party executive judged that the workplace organisation was not working very well – in spite of the fact that it had been being built up systematically for several years. It was true that the organisation had been successively expanded, and “constitutes an important instrument at election times and at the annual union executive elections”, but at the same time there were shortcomings that needed remedies before the next election.⁷⁰ The drive to establish union committees was an important task for the next few years. In 1973 for example, it was reported that union committees had been established in almost all local branches of the SAP.⁷¹ Over the years, there were a number of courses and conferences to train the members of these union committees. In the mid-1970s there was a campaign to establish new Social-Democratic union clubs/ Social-Democratic associations at workplaces.⁷² For example, in 1976 there was a campaign of this type at hospitals and other care institutions. The campaign included posters at workplaces and the production of special information material.⁷³

A new phase of union-political cooperation

When the Social Democrats lost power in 1976, it gave the LO and the trade unions a powerful impetus to redouble their efforts at union-political cooperation. At the end of the 1970s, a new offensive was launched in the development of the mobilisation structure. The overall goal was to get the Social Democrats back into power. These efforts were important not least to ensure that the legislation strategy could be completed, and in order to establish wage-earners’ investment funds. During this phase, a number of enquiries were set up to map out, evaluate and propose measures to improve the effectiveness of the mobilisation structure.

The trade unions were engaged on a broad front in the work to build up and improve the effectiveness of the workplace organisation.⁷⁴ In 1978, the party, together with the LO and the trade unions overhauled “the election-and workplace organisation” in the different unions.⁷⁵ During the election campaign in 1979, there developed an apparently unique coordination and

⁶⁷ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1964, p 10.

⁶⁸ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1967.

⁶⁹ Partistyrelsen verksamhetsberättelse 1968, p 24.

⁷⁰ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1970, p 18. According to the annual report of 1969 from the party council the organization of the trade-party cooperation was going to be strengthened on all levels..

⁷¹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1973, p 18.

⁷² Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1975, p 28.

⁷³ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1976, p 17.

⁷⁴ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1983, pp 26-27 and 1984, pp 49-51.

⁷⁵ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1978, p 35.

mobilisation of the union-party axis. The workplace organisation played an important role in this, and the organisation was to be reinforced not least by means of various focused information drives. The *union election committee* that on the central level coordinated the union-party activities during the 1979 election worked out an “action plan” to coordinate efforts and bring in a Social-Democratic government. The most important areas in this action plan were the workplace organisation, the political activities at the workplaces, an increase in political features in union activities and “increased awareness about party policy of those active in the unions”.⁷⁶

The party executive maintained that the new political situation with a bourgeois “anti-wage-earner” government, together with an increasingly politically active employers’ organisation made special demands on the union-party work. Amongst other things, this required an intensified collaboration “in political actions as well as in organisational and information issues”.⁷⁷

During this period, the central organisation was also institutionalised for coordination in the election campaigns. The purpose was to strengthen the role of the union election committee. According to the new directives, the name of this committee was to be changed to *The Social Democrats’ Central Union Committee* (or, as it came to be known: *The Central Union Committee, CFU*). Among other duties, the committee was to develop proposals about the union-political activities on central, regional and local levels, to support the union committees and coordinate activities.⁷⁸ For the 1982 election, CFU was given the key role of drawing up the plans for the election campaign and activities. CFU’s *election plan* seems to have been worked out in great detail and contained a large measure of early study activities, member recruitment drives (particularly focused on union organisations and workplaces), an outward-turned union-political action for a number of issues, and moves to increase personal contacts and information at the workplaces. Important spiders in the web were the union-political committees and the union committees.⁷⁹ Even during the year after the election, considerable efforts were made in the entire union-political mobilisation structure, with regular meetings, conferences, courses and information activities.

The union committees’ activities and duties were the subject of an enquiry in the early 1980s; an enquiry that amongst other things was intended to concretise their role. Suggestions were also made about the general principles for the work of the union organisations’ local and regional union-party committees.⁸⁰

For the party congress in 1978, the party executive appointed a working group whose special task was to overhaul the organisational forms of the local union-party cooperation. Certain limited trial activities using new organisational forms for cooperation were begun.⁸¹ The working group submitted a report to the 1984 party congress.

In the report it was established that one of the best resources for union-party cooperation was the contacts with the workplaces. The continual development and expansion of the workplace organisation was therefore of the utmost importance. The working group emphasised the *personal contacts* and the discussions. The following guiding principles were presented in the report: There should be Social Democrat representatives at all workplaces, and at larger workplaces it was recommended that there should be several such representatives, with a head representative that maintained contact with the other representatives and with the union and

⁷⁶ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1979, pp 18-19.

⁷⁷ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1980, p 19.

⁷⁸ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1980, p 21. The CFU included among others central contacts for the LO, the SAP and other parts of the labour movement.

⁷⁹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1981, pp 33-37; 1982, pp 18-23.

⁸⁰ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1981, pp 36-37.

⁸¹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1980, p 21.

the party. Each representative should be responsible for not more than 25 workmates. The guidelines were that the representative should:

1. Wear the party badge and work openly.
2. Inform people about the party's policy through discussions, distributing information material, and by personal influence.
3. Stress the necessity of union-party cooperation.
4. Take part in the organisational work at the workplace.
5. Maintain contact with new employees.
6. Maintain contact with immigrants.
7. Recruit new party members.
8. Propagate for the movement's newspapers.
9. Pass on workplace discussion issues to the party.⁸²

The number of Social-Democratic representatives was estimated to be 100,000 and the goal was to double that number within five years.⁸³ Another goal was to more than double the number of Social-Democratic union clubs and workplace associations in a five-year period; that is, an increase from about 450 to 1,000.⁸⁴ The enquiry observed that the expansion of the political contact organisation in the trade unions had resulted in more political activity. It was also observed that the union training undertaken in the 1970s had largely been focused on labour legislation, and that more recently it had seemed important to expand the ideological training.

During the next few years, some work was aimed at realising the goals set up at the 1984 party congress concerning amongst other things doubling the number of Social-Democratic representatives, union clubs and workplace associations.

The development project period

It was, however, questions concerning collective affiliation, trial projects and organisational affiliation that increasingly came to the fore during the second half of the 1980s and some way into the early 1990s. In fact the transition from collective affiliation to other types of affiliation became a major task for the union political cooperation when collective affiliation was finally ended.⁸⁵

Even though there was an ambition to strengthen the role of the trade unions in the union-political work, it seems that the unions were engaged to varying degrees in this work. The *drafting group* that was formed for the central union committee included, apart from party's union group and representatives for the LO, one representative from each of the big unions – for metalworkers, trade, and local government. According to the party executive reports, the wood/timberworkers' unions had “a very well-organised cooperation”. The builders' unions

⁸² Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, pp 18-19.

⁸³ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, pp 19

⁸⁴ Facklig-politisk samverkan. Rapport 1984, p 21.

⁸⁵ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1990, p 36.

had “an established cooperation”, while the various service unions had “a loose cooperation”.⁸⁶ Meetings with the trade union executives became more common.

After about a year, the CFU drafting group was replaced by a *working committee* whose task was to intensify the union-party work. This included, amongst other things, recruiting members to the party and “making the workplace a political forum for the long-term *influencing of public opinion*”.⁸⁷

A partly new way to develop and intensify union-party cooperation was begun in 1992 with a project involving six unions. The project included agitation, recruitment of members, influencing opinion, training and involving more trade union members in politics.⁸⁸ Other development projects were also carried out. One such project was for instance started in 1993 in three party districts, the purpose was, amongst other things, to develop and reinforce the union committees.⁸⁹ The questions discussed in these development projects concern how the union-party work is to be developed and reinforced in future. These questions are about form and content, but also about what long-term changes in society and amongst people that need to be taken into account. In the mid-1990s, special working materials for the development projects were prepared, particularly in the trade unions.⁹⁰

In conclusion, there was not the same large-scale initiative to build up and make effective the workplace organisation in the 1990s as there had been in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Instead, in the early 1990s it was the *Social-Democratic associations* that were at the centre of interest. According to the party congress decision, the party’s organisational work was namely to be concentrated on developing the associations both politically and organisationally. The associations had apparently been given a decisive role concerning the party’s future prospects to engage people politically.⁹¹

Concluding Analysis

The point of departure for the union-political cooperation between the LO and the SAP was to take political power, create the good society and later also gain strong influence over the welfare state. The formation and transformation of the welfare state assumed that the party held political power. A crisis therefore arose when the party lost power in the 1976 election after a lengthy unbroken period in power. This crisis was deepened by the global structural economic change in the early 1970s, when a long period of growth was interrupted, and also by the fact that the union consensus solutions were replaced by a period of conflict, which contributed to the LO no longer being able to reform working life through agreements.

Cooperation between the party and the union movements presupposed both mobilisation and control. Additionally, a joint organisation structure and organisation culture were needed. The workplace organisation was built up from the 1940s onwards to steer the Social-Democratic character of the unions, organisationally develop the cooperation between the unions and the party on a local level, and as a mobilisation structure, so that union members could be informed, trained and activated – particularly in connection with the political election campaigns. Besides this, the cooperation created local, regional and national channels for union influence over policy content. The initiatives were taken centrally, and then the party and the union leadership tried to implement the policies in the way that hierarchical organisations worked at that time.

⁸⁶ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1990, pp 37-38.

⁸⁷ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1993, p 53.

⁸⁸ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1993, p 53.

⁸⁹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1993, p 54.

⁹⁰ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1996, p 343.

⁹¹ Partistyrelsens verksamhetsberättelse 1990, pp 33-34.

During the 1970s, it seems that the workplace organisation and training were expanded. Mobilisation efforts increased considerably after the election defeat of 1976. Above all, attempts were made to involve more members in the activities, and to make the workplace organisations more effective in order to facilitate mobilisation for a Social-Democratic government. In addition, the movement strove, with the aid of training and identity campaigns, to strengthen the Social-Democratic hegemony. The “anti-wage-earner” bourgeoisie was portrayed as the main enemy.

When power was regained in 1982, it was possible to change the mobilisation strategy. This became all the more important when collective affiliation ended in 1990. Collective affiliation, which from the very beginning had been a cornerstone of the union-party cooperation, finally became a millstone for the party. Historical explanations and general information efforts could not outweigh the democratic shortcomings of the construction. Path dependency was, however, so strong that the threat of legislation was a necessary condition for the abolition of this affiliation method. An important factor in this context was that since the close of the 1960s, collective affiliation had only played a limited economic role for the party. Other actors, the state and local authorities, took over the economic commitment with the aid of party support.⁹²

From the 1990s onwards, the union-party cooperation was to a great extent carried on through development projects – directed and limited efforts that were above all intended to create conditions for local activities. During this period of general decline and crisis for the party and organisation activities, it was important to encourage activities at the base level. Another part in the new mobilisation phase was that in the early 1990s, the party chose to put less effort into the workplace organisations and more into the geographically organised Social-Democratic associations. Also, the union-political cooperation was in part moved from the LO to union level. There may be several reasons for that. One is that the LO’s power over the trade union movement was weakened after the wage negotiation model dominated by the LO broke down during the 1980s and was replaced by individual union negotiations. The new cooperation with the unions was primarily concerned with member recruitment and other types of support for party activities. In a currently ongoing research project we are making a more detailed analysis of this matter.

The structural crisis of the 1970s created conditions for a formative moment in union-party cooperation. However, instead of rearranging the rules of the game, it was decided to concentrate on reinforcing and intensifying the cooperation, so that it would be possible to regain political power. This striving for political power in order to continue the transformation of the welfare state was path dependent.

At the same time that the organisation structure was upheld and to a certain extent transformed, the mobilisation contributed to the reinforcement of the hegemony and thus also to the identification with the workers’ movement and its welfare construction. These identity-creating processes, with the marking of a clear enemy – the ruling bourgeoisie and big business – worked in the same direction as the path dependency. The defence of the Social-Democratic hegemony also required that there was no competition within the workers’ movement that would threaten solidarity and the creation of one identity. For this reason, from the 1940s onwards, the party and the union movement worked actively to build a “fence” against the Communists and at the same time delineate their own identity. The identity features that were held in common were the historical legacy; a joint union and political set of values; and the Social Democrat-coded workers’ movement activities in social life. These included political activities for all ages within the fold of the movement, an own temperance movement, own religious cooperation, own mass media, own political, recreational and entertainment arenas, an own consumer cooperative, an own tenants’

⁹² Gidlund 1983 and 1989.

association, own construction companies, an own insurance company, and even an own funeral undertakers.⁹³ Affiliation and identity gave both a network and a set of norms for how a good Social Democrat ought to be. The network meant that people could rely on each other, and that it was possible for them to let themselves be represented by “*our people*”, both in organisations and in politics.

The transition from union consensus to confrontation politics during the 1970s meant that the need to put up fences against the Communists diminished. Even though the conflicts died down, because of the Social-Democratic hegemony, Communists were still seen as “Them” far into the 1980s. One reason for this was that the need of mobilisation for election campaigns remained. Our investigation shows that the unions and the party built up an extensive and well-organised mobilisation apparatus, and that this mobilisation structure was successively changed. The first premise, that the unions had/have a considerable interest in mobilising for the political elections, in order to secure a Social Democratic government, proved to be well founded. As can be seen, the political elections play an increasingly important role in union mobilisation. This is in line with the second premise, that the party’s need to work for Social Democratic unions has diminished. The premise is also supported by the local union development, and by the party’s organisational changes. The shift in priorities from workplace organisation to Social Democratic associations indicates that the party’s interest in the unions as such has decreased through the 1990s. Prime Minister Göran Persson’s statement that he saw the unions as a special interest is indicative of the same trend. Previously, it would scarcely have been possible to reason in such a way. This issue will be further illuminated in the research project.

The third premise is based upon the fact that the common interests have been weakened by the differing interests. As a result of this, “*the substance of the hegemony changes. It is no longer politics, but rather the common values base that lies behind the cooperation.*” This premise is supported both by previous research and by our results. It should be noted that the hegemonic substance, at least until the mid-1980s, was of a clearly masculine nature. It would have been – at least theoretically – possible at that time to manage the cooperation in brotherhood coded public places. The women were, up until this time, almost completely absent as visible actors. There now arose a conflict between a union movement that continued to be to a great extent male-dominated, and a political organisation where “equal terms for the ladies” was becoming more and more important. This conflict must have coloured “the Wars of the Roses”.

Union-party cooperation was begun at a time when the approach to democracy was collectivist and hierarchic. This was probably heightened by the masculine nature of the hegemony. The organisational expression was that the local organisation was both initiated and steered by the central level. Processes leading towards a more individual- and network-oriented view of democracy contributed to changing the democratic rules of play. The possibilities for steering activities centrally were weakened. This may be one of the reasons why the forms of cooperation changed, particularly during the 1990s. The increased efforts to defend the hegemony may be connected with the need to “seal the leaks” in the construction of identity that had arisen in connection with the change towards a more individualistic view of democracy.

⁹³ Horgby 2000.