

Data on variations in industrial conflict between the turn of the 20th century and the outbreak of the Second World War are analyzed in relation to the trade cycle, the structure of employment and the organizational structure. Industrial conflict is also analyzed in terms of type, frequency, size, duration and geographical location. Short-term variations are largely explained by fluctuations in prices and earnings, while some of the similarities in the conflict activity between the three countries are explained by the dependence on international trade cycles.

However, there are major differences between the three countries in question. There seems to be less industrial conflict in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden. This is largely explained by higher union density and more centralized control from both the employee and employers side. The General Agreement in Denmark was established as early as 1899 – seven years prior to the first regulation of collective bargaining by law. In Sweden and Norway, on the other hand, the legal framework to minimize industrial conflict and to impose a peace obligation for the duration of an agreement was introduced first, and the first General Agreements were not concluded before the 1930s. For the period in question, Danish industrial relations is therefore characterized as more mature, by nature of its being more self-regulating. That is to say, industrial peace is self-imposed and there is a higher degree of internal organizational control.

All three Scandinavian countries experienced a significant fall in conflict activity after the Second World War. The conflict rate is now regarded as low in a European context. Two different types of explanations have been put forward to clarify this. Mikkelsen refers to an institutional school which emphasizes new mechanisms for conflict resolution, and the growth of both individual and collective labor law.

Tilly, amongst others, is an exponent of a different explanation. Tilly understands strikes as a form of political action. As the labor movement gains power through political parties, the need to take strike action as a form of political protest is reduced. The conflicts are instead transformed from the industrial to the political arena.

Mikkelsen favors the latter explanation, but sees the need for a more dynamic understanding of how political interests are shaped. Tilly's concept of interest is too structural for Mikkelsen – defined through an individual's social position. Instead, Mikkelsen emphasizes how organizations play an important role in transforming interests into collective action. The trade unions' and employer organizations' early mutual recognition, and the high degree of centralization on both sides, are some of the explanatory factors behind the pattern of industrial conflict in Scandinavia.

Mikkelsen's study of industrial conflict in Scandinavia is impressive, and deserves a wider audience than just scholars whom command the Danish language. In this respect, the study would benefit from a shorter presentation than the voluminous book Mikkelsen presents us with here. At times the treatment of quantitative and qualitative data has primarily a national historical interest, and could be omitted from a discussion of collective bargaining and industrial conflict in Scandinavia.

Torgeir Aarvaag Stokke, Norwegian Trade Union Research Center

Daniel Fleming (red.): *Industriell demokrati i Norden*. Lund: Arkiv Forlag, 1991, 435 pp.

This study presents the first report from a joint project on industrial democracy in the Nordic societies. It is organized as an anthology with contributions from researchers in all the five Nordic countries. The aim of the project is to compare

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the different forms of co-determination in working life and the research traditions in this field in the Nordic countries.

Industrial democracy is given a broad definition, comprising co-determination at the societal as well as at enterprise level; legally as well as agreement-based co-determination; formalized and non-formalized class-cooperation; centralized and local co-determination and within both the private and the public sector of the economy.

In spite of this comprehensive point of departure, the empirical contributions almost exclusively focus on the co-determination of industrial workers within the private sector. Thus, the study can be said to have a rather conservative bias, and it clearly belongs within a theoretical tradition that focuses on class struggle, and with less attention paid to the theoretical problems posed by co-determination within the public sector – especially when governments are led by Labour parties.

In my view, the reconstruction of the processes shaping the various forms of employee influence in and on working life represents the particular success of the project. It is kept as an issue and is comprehensively described and discussed throughout all the national contributions. Employee influence is analysed as the result of an interplay between, on the one hand, objective historical forces, and the spontaneous and strategic actions of organized actors on the other. Consequently, not only are the historical “timing” of the development of modern industrial economies, the industrial structure, the technological development and economic business cycles, vital for the formation of employee influence, but also spontaneous strikes, the bargaining strategies of unions, the division of tasks between the trade union confederations and the labour parties and even the opinions of social scientists.

Iceland and particularly Finland were late-comers and had serious problems in establishing national sovereignty. This historical experience is a significant factor in explaining why labour relations in these countries are embedded in legislation, rather than in collective agreements as in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. However, in all five countries, whether by law or collective agreement, the institutionalization of labour relations implied nothing but a codification of already existing patterns of cooperation. In all cases co-determination did not come as a gift, but as a result of the class struggle.

In the individual contributions, the development of employee influence in working life is discussed along two dimensions. The first is that of economic versus industrial democracy, and the second is the tension between direct versus indirect democracy. Economic democracy is defined as institutionalized influence on the disposition of the profits from production, whereas industrial democracy is understood as institutionalized influence on work organization, work environment, work-time arrangements, etc. On these dimensions, the Nordic countries can be placed within the following table.

Table 1. The Forms of Employee Co-determination Within the Nordic Countries.

	Economical democracy	Industrial democracy
Direct democracy	1. Non-existent in the examined countries	2. Institutionalized in Denmark, Norway and Sweden
Indirect democracy	3. Strong in Sweden, formerly also strong in Denmark and Norway	4. Institutionalized in all the examined countries

The direct form of economic democracy, implying profit-sharing and/or employee control over the economic dispositions of the enterprises, was never realized in the Nordic countries, but it was at times a strong demand raised by the labour movement in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. With the labour parties in government during the 20–30 years after the war, the state policies in Denmark, Norway and Sweden pursued elements of indirect economic democracy (type 3). This implied a bias in favour of central planning, redistribution of income and the establishment of a comprehensive welfare state. The trade union confederations in all countries supported this policy, and in fact contributed to it by favouring centralized wage bargaining with a solidaristic and redistributive profile. Thus, wage differentials between industries became smaller by international comparison, and the centrally negotiated wage increases had a significant rationalizing effect on the economy as a whole. The companies unable to pay the wage increases disappeared from the economy, and Sweden is doubtless the most typical representative of this kind of economic policy. As to category 4, the indirect, industrial democracy – giving employees a varying influence through elected representatives within the companies – is institutionalized in all the Nordic countries.

The most recent type, the direct, industrial democracy, was differently institutionalized in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In Iceland and Finland this kind of employee co-determination only exists informally. In Denmark it is based on an agreement between the Employers' Association and the Trade Union Confederation. In Norway it was partly based on collective agreements, partly on legislation (the Work Environment Act, 1978). In Sweden, direct co-determination was at first based on legislation (the Co-determination Act, 1977), but in practice delayed until it was supplemented by a collective agreement (the Company Development Agreement, 1982) between the Employers' Association and the Trade Union Confederation. According to the author of the Swedish contribution, the agreement in some points implied a modification of the preceding law. However, the co-determination Act in itself is regarded as a breach in the Swedish class-cooperation as such. This was due to ideological radicalization in the wake of 1968 on the one hand, and the grass-roots reaction to the centralized monitoring of the economy on the other. The trade union confederation and the Labour Party lost control of the development and had to move left to regain it.

As to the development of industrial democracy, the development in all Nordic countries has been quite similar during the last 15–20 years. The more indirect and centralized forms of co-determination have been complemented and partly replaced by more direct, company-oriented forms. In Sweden and Denmark this happened during the 1980s, in Norway as early as the 1970s. Therefore, Denmark and Sweden can easily be subsumed under the development in most advanced market economies in this period. Technological development, the corresponding necessity of organizational adaption and the internationalization of the economies exerted a pressure on the employers to invite employees into a closer, company-based cooperation. But what prompted the employees and their unions to accept?

The answers given are not convincing. And the studies do not offer a comprehensive discussion of the matter. In Sweden, the explanation given is to point to the radicalization of the union rank-and-file, leading to a revolt against the centralized economic regime. The labour leaders had to provide something for the ordinary member – and that became local co-determination or direct industrial democracy. In Denmark the authors seem to be of the opinion that it was the weakness of the trade unions after years of unemployment and the inability of the Labour Party to win sufficient electoral support to challenge the conservative

government that forced the unions to accept the kind and extent of co-determination offered; direct industrial democracy. This was all they could get – and better than nothing.

However, it is the Norwegian case that provokes a questioning of the explanations offered. In Norway the trade unions had the initiative by the development of agreements and by pushing legislation for direct local co-determination. The general agreement on co-determination by the implementation of information technology dates back to 1975 and the Work Environment Act to 1978. This was long before the employers had realized the necessity of closer company-based cooperation. On the one hand, this strategy implied the danger of corporate localism, which is generally regarded as a threat to nation-wide unions. On the other hand, later research has shown (among others FAFO 1985) that the possibilities of co-determination only to a minor degree have been exploited by the employees. This is exactly the point demonstrating what kind of analysis is missing, namely an analysis of the strategic interests and actions of trade union actors at different levels. One might, for example, in the Norwegian and the Swedish case, speculate that the trade union confederations pushed for wide rights of co-determination to avoid direct economic democracy and a real decentralization of their own organizations. If this is really so, they have in both countries won the game. Granted rights and liberties are very rarely fully exploited.

Another question not treated in the book, but one, that nevertheless presents itself to the reader, concerns the limits to co-determination in complex market economies. Is there, by functional reasons, a point of convergence of formal and informal co-determination? And what about the further existence of trade unions if their members are to a too high degree invested with managerial responsibilities? In the Norwegian case, the extensive rights of co-determination are not exploited. In Finland and Iceland there are no such formal rights, but, according to the authors, informal company-based cooperation is widespread. Could it be that the cooperation in all three countries actually encompasses identical matters and items and implies about the same weight for employee interests by important decisions?

Very regrettably, the authors did not take the opportunity to discuss this issue, which might have led to some very interesting propositions. The lack of homogeneity in method, issues and subject matters treated is a weakness as well as a strength of this book. It is a weakness because the reader is excluded from making exact cross-country comparisons. But it is a strength because it leads the interested reader to realize what is still to be done in terms of further research. As a chronicle of Scandinavian industrial and economic democracy this book is of doubtless value. But personally, I hope this project will continue, and provide the researchers with the opportunity to dig deeper into the important and interesting issues in this field.

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