



Faculty of Social Sciences



Matching Danish Shop Stewards' Service Demands – Union Strategies and Mergers over a Decade

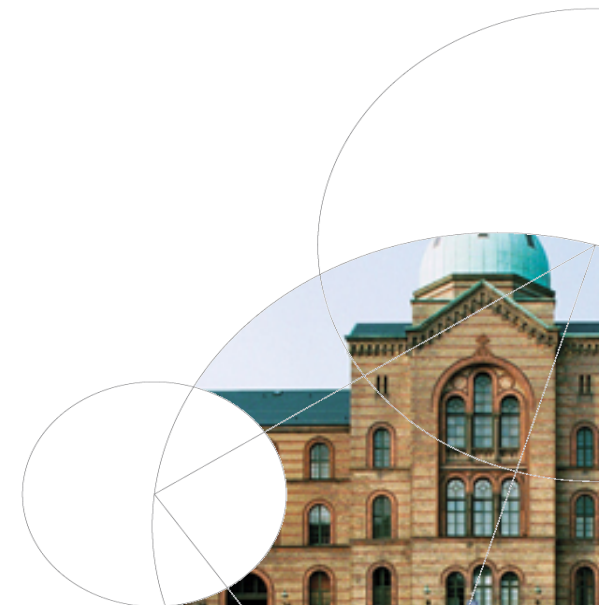
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Dias 1



The Danish model of Industrial Relations

Most labor market issues regulated through collective agreements → voluntaristic model

The Danish bargaining model in numbers - in per cent (2010)

Signed collective agreement	75
Union density	67
Shop steward coverage	52
Companies in employers' organisation	58

→ *Thoroughly regulated labor market*



Trends in Danish Industrial Relations

From centralization to centralized decentralization:

- Quist for flexibility →
- Collective agreements on central (sector) level → sets the frame
- Local negotiation → fill out the frame
- Shop steward & management → takes the lead locally

Trends in Danish Industrial Relations

Leaning of unions:

- Fewer members
- Union mergers → fewer and bigger unions
- Fewer local branches

Trends in Danish Industrial Relations

Leaning of unions:

The Danish Confederation of Union – LO (1.3 mio members):

	1998	2010
Affiliated unions	22	18
Local branches	886	334

Discrepancy – decentralization versus union leaning? Research questions:

to what extent is it possible to maintain or even improve the service level from unions and shops stewards influence on union politics in times of merger and restructuring.

Three hypotheses:

1. Due to the reduction of local branches shop stewards experience *less satisfactory service* from unions as the unions are not physically accessible in the local city or area
2. Due to the reduction of local branches and union mergers towards larger entities, shop stewards assess that their *influence* on their unions policy is reduced
3. Due to the decentralisation and an enhanced number of tasks, shop stewards are more stressed and *less satisfied* with their job as shop stewards in 2010 than in 1998.



Data – the LO shop steward survey 1998 versus 2010

The Shop Steward Survey 1998:

- Shop stewards only in survey
- 21 unions
- 7,406 responses from 10,400 shop stewards (response rate = 71 per cent)
- 50 qualitative interviews with shop stewards, managers and colleagues

The Shop Steward Survey 2010:

- Surveys only
- 15 unions
- 7,877 responses (response rate 48 per cent)
- Pilot interviews with union reps
- Supplemented with surveys on managers, colleagues and local branches of the unions



1. Union Service

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you overall with the service you as a shop steward get from your union? (per cent)

	SSS1998	SSS2010
Highly satisfied	42	51
Partly satisfied	36	32
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14	12
Partly dissatisfied	5	3
Highly dissatisfied	2	1
Do not know/N/A	1	1
Total	100	100

SSS1998: n = 7205, SSS2010: n = 7874

At the significance level of 0.05, the proportions were significantly different.



2. Influence – union democracy

To what extent can you influence your branch or union? (per cent)				
	Local branch		Federal union	
	SSS1998	SSS2010	SSS1998	SSS2010
To a high/very high degree	23	29	4	9
To some degree/ neutral	34	37	14	40
To a low degree/very low degree	29	17	60	31
Do not know	15	17	22	21
Total	100	100	100	100
SSS1998: n = 7406, SSS2010: n = 7668				
SSS1998: n = 7205, SSS2010: n = 7874 At the significance level of 0.05, the proportions were significantly different.				



2. Union democracy - nuances

To what extent you can influence your branch or union? (per cent)

	<i>Local branch</i>		<i>Federal union</i>	
	To a very high/ high degree		To a very high/ high degree	
	SSS1998	SSS2010	SSS1998	SSS2010
Big unions*	21	29	3	8
Medium forbund**	24	28	5	10
Små forbund***	46	:	11	43
<small>Big and mid-size unions: SSS1998: (branch): n = 6135, (federal union): n = 5521, SSS2010: n = 7668 Small unions: SSS1998 n = 310, SSS2010 n = 206</small>				



3. Shop stewards' satisfaction

All in all, how satisfied are you with you job as a shop steward? (per cent)

	SSS998	SSS2010
Very satisfied	17	32
Partly satisfied	56*	57*
Neutral	22	11
Partly unsatisfied	3	0
Very unsatisfied	1	0
Do not know	2	0
Total	100	100

SSS1998: n = 7292, SSS2010: n = 7874
 * At a significance level of 0.05, the proportions were not significantly different.



The hypotheses tested

Hypothesis no. 1:

Lower service from the unions due to fewer branches

→ *Rejection*

Hypothesis no. 2:

Lower level of democracy due to bigger unions

→ *Partly rejected*, however level of influence bigger in small unions

Hypothesis no. 3:

Decentralization → more work → stress and dissatisfaction

→ *Rejection* – shop stewards happier than ever!



Local branches still important to many shop stewards

How would you prefer to have contact with your union? (multiple answers possible - per cent)

By phone	74
Via e-mail	69
<i>Visiting the union office</i>	59
<i>Union rep visiting the work place</i>	53
Via the unions home page	27
Via traditional mail	22
Other ways	1
Do not know	1

SSS1998: n = 7205, SSS2010: n = 7874

At the significance level of 0.05, the proportions were significantly different.



Why these results? Possible explanation

The happiness of shop stewards:

The consequences of decentralization

- More local discretion
- More local negotiations
- *More local influence on own labour conditions*
→ ***interesting to be shop steward***

Union service and democracy:

Restructuring was accompanied with

- Alertness to possible consequences
- Increased professionalization of union service

→ ***Equally close rapport btw. shop stewards and unions in 2010 as in 1998 - or even closer***



Limitations and further research caution

- Are there areas where the service is less good?
- Differences between shop stewards in merged unions and not merged unions?
- What happens to the trade, the guild, the profession, the metier in big, merged unions?
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- Big = political influence, but less experienced influence from the base
- Small = limited political influence, but close rapport btw. union and members

