Social Control in Europe

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CHAPTER 3

Social Change, Popular Movements, and Social Control in Scandinavia, 1864–1914

ULF DRUGGE

Introduction

In 1862, the Norwegian sociologist and social anthropologist Eilert Sundt (1817–1875) visited England. His biographer, the American sociologist Martin S. Allwood, noted that the size and wealth of England impressed and depressed Sundt: “[S]ome people cannot admit that new and foreign things surprise them, but I admit that I was almost overwhelmed at the sight of the power and might of this country, yes, that I felt sick at heart at the thought of my poor Norway, whose entire glory in comparison collapsed to (forgive me the word)—wretchedness. I knew from before that England was a great and powerful country compared with Norway, but I had never been able to imagine the difference so great.”

After complaining about England’s neglect of Norway as an independent nation because it “fused Norway and Sweden into one realm,” Sundt apparently recovered somewhat from his feelings of inferiority: “[S]oon the oppressive feeling before this greatness and power was turned into anger at the pride and arrogance that were more and more evident, and from now on I was able to see somewhat better what was inside the surface, and in my anger (it was not right, but this is what happened) I more than once had occasion to rejoice at certain perversities and questionable things which disfigure this proud country.”

Then Sundt expressed his pride in being a Norwegian: “As conditions in our country are so burdensome and hard, so tight and precarious, so outright poor . . . it is most remarkable that, even so, things can be as they are. . . . That these few people who are spread out over our vast country have been able to stick together so well, that they have been able to create and maintain through the
ages a civilized society, these peasants, these workers (there is no nation in Europe that so completely answers to the notion of a people of workers), who must fight so hard for their daily bread—this is indeed remarkable."

Sundt noted the differences between the Scandinavian countries and England. However, Scandinavian countries, underdeveloped relative to England and in a west European perspective, developed during the nineteenth century into three welfare states.

This essay reflects on some specific historical aspects by focusing on social-control-related phenomena with an accent on the establishing stages of the most prominent Scandinavian popular movements. First, key concepts are discussed. Second, the emergence of Swedish popular labor movements is analyzed with respect to Swedish historical conditions. Third, some topics from a case study of interested party activities and union efforts in a sawmill community situated in the most northern Swedish county (län), Norrbotten, are analyzed to illustrate the way these stages took form. Finally, the Swedish case will be compared to similar movements in Denmark and Norway.

Social Control and Some Related Concepts

In this essay the concept of social control is broadly applied. As the concept has already been discussed elsewhere in the book, some corresponding concepts will be introduced. Swedish historical analyses of popular labor movements have focused on the culture’s promotion of orderly, steady workers. The historian Ronny Ambjörnsson, for example, points to the desire to have orderly and steady workers as a significant project among sawmill owners in the first half of the twentieth century. Among certain key actors he found a tendency to move away from exterior means of controlling worker behavior and toward the kind of education that promoted self-control.

Another historian, Björn Horgby, proposes the concept of a “workman’s culture.” He contrasts traits among workers that were significant with an orderly lifestyle with those that are more directed by personal desires. To Horgby, the concept of culture means “a collection of control mechanisms like plans, recipes, rules, instructions.” Furthermore, he states that “culture is created—and changeable—when people with their experiences are faced with new realities as it helps them to structure their actions both in mental and concrete terms.” Horgby also directs attention to the concepts of discipline and honor. Discipline, for example, could imply a two-sided social process initiated by both the elite and the masses. He regards honor as a “moral filter utilized by workers when they were encountering new realities and other cultures.” Examples related to a workman’s concept of honor are easily found in early-twentieth-century labor
unions. Unions repeatedly emphasized honesty. A worker who accepted and then appeared in a way subordinated to consequences of decisions made after a fair discussion was regarded as honorable. Moreover, a worker who strove to defend someone’s rights before his self-interest was seen as honorable.

Patronage and paternalism have been applied to working conditions and working relationships between workers and their employers. Although traditionally referring to social relationships, these concepts have been referred to somewhat different historical conditions. In Sweden, patronage has been mainly applied to relationships in the seventeenth century between a patron and his client in which their informally settled exchange may mean protection provided by the patron in exchange for service and loyalty. Paternalism have in later centuries been applied in similar ways. In this essay, paternalism refers to a model of benevolent care and paternal considerations.

The Swedish Case: Historical Background

Until about 1870, Sweden was primarily a rural society with a sparse population that was relatively stable and firmly controlled. In 1850, about 90 percent of the Swedish population lived in rural areas, and the land-owning peasants played a significant political role. In addition to being represented as one party in the Diet of the Four Estates, they were active in the local decision-making processes as jurors (nämndemän) in district courts and as members of Church courts and parish meetings. It has often been stated that the influence of local decision making, in combination with the relative equality among the various social classes, prevented Sweden from the kind of conflicts apparent between a dynastic upper class of landlords and the peasants that characterized the social situation in many other European countries. The relatively high literacy rate in Scandinavian countries contributed to this political situation. Sweden as well as Denmark and Norway had fewer illiterate people per capita than the rest of the world.

From a formal social control perspective, Sweden had a dual legal situation, at least until about the 1860s. The prevailing authorized legal systems were either linked to state laws or ecclesiastic law. Despite their different ideological foundations, these two legal systems existed with fairly similar demands on the population and included both formal and informal means to exert social control.

The Swedish Evangelic Lutheran Church depicted its ideas of social order in terms of a strictly hierarchical social system in accordance with The House Table. These ideas influenced social life in such a way that religious discipline and master domination became distinct features within Swedish society. These ecclesiastical laws aimed to promote godliness, but most important, they
upheld social order. Various local arrangements had been established to support church control over private life matters. For instance, parish meetings and church councils were aimed at dealing with both strict church matters and with problems related to the family sphere.

The next period, which coincides with the beginning of the industrial era, started comparatively late in Sweden compared to western Europe. It included industrialization, secularization, and urbanization, processes that started almost simultaneously and changed social conditions in rural areas. Economic conditions that existed until this stage were characterized by far-reaching trade restrictions. The beginning of the new industrial era resulted in a gradual decline of these restrictions as capital, goods, and labor were released from old restraints.

Due to the relatively low gross national product in the mid-nineteenth century, with weak domestic demand for most products, and due to an inferior infrastructure in terms of transport, the easiest economic strategy for a country such as Sweden to improve its standard was to develop export industries. Moreover, such a strategy would certainly also lead to multiplier effects of various kinds. Thus, the development of a functioning infrastructure began, which in turn led to a steady expansion of the lumber and iron industries. As a result, there was rapid growth in mechanical and industrial enterprises.

While other countries went through a similar industrial expansion at the beginning of the 1870s, Sweden was able to keep this process going in a fairly steady way, which was comparatively unique in Europe. During the period that started in 1860 and ended at the beginning of World War I, only Germany showed a similar expansion. One explanation was that Sweden started its expansion from a lower industrial level than many other western European countries. Furthermore, the wage level was far lower compared especially to England, while the education level was comparatively high. Primarily, however, Swedish industrialists derived advantages from their import of technical skill from abroad, which prepared them to mechanize and apply their production apparatus to meet the demand of lumber and iron products from abroad.

Modern Sweden is often characterized as a well-organized society with respect to how popular movements become significant forces in society. Moreover, employers and employees formed associations or unions. Industrialization meant popular movements with reform and social control ambitions. Free Church Societies were started by the 1860s, and temperance societies appeared somewhat later. The first labor unions—at least in a more modern sense—began in the mid-1880s. Initially, these movements were related and had at least one common goal uniting their efforts, namely to fight alcohol abuse.

Swedish popular movements were not formed from state interests or from exterior interests, as was the case with many politically and religiously oriented move-
ments in the rest of Europe, but they were formed by society at large. Moreover, they did not represent nationalistic forces, a phenomenon that often dominated the political scene in many other countries. The bulk of their members were recruited among the lower class. Therefore, their social base was fairly similar. However, leaders of the temperance and Free Church movements were mostly recruited from the middle class.

Temperance and Free Church Societies were undoubtedly influenced by activities abroad, while the Swedish labor movement seemed to have been a national movement. When the industrialization process proceeded, and when economic and social conditions worsened, popular movements were supported by more Swedes, and a number of workers apparently also found it necessary to form labor unions. However, it was hardly the industrialization process as such that increased the influence of labor unions in the Swedish society. Instead it was the power relations between employers and employees and certain work conditions that directed these collective efforts. These conditions were characterized by competition between employees and employers and between members within each of these groups. To fight for jobs was a significant factor behind the formation of unions.

In fact, a number of workers' associations were established during the 1870s. They were mostly related to certain categories of craftsmen influenced by middle-class attitudes with a trend to cultivate and educate and to deliver lectures on craftsmanship and general knowledge issues. Gradually, however, more social class oriented labor unions emerged, which were focused on working-class issues such as shaping strategies in order to act with unified efforts in their struggles in southern Swedish cities and towns. In 1898, the labor unions formed a central union, Landsorganisationen (LO, The Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions). Its relative strength was manifested in 1902 when about 20 percent of all Swedish workers outside the rural sector protested for universal suffrage by striking. This strike also marked the turn of the tide as their counterpart, Svenska Arbetsgivareförbundet (SAF, The Swedish Employers Confederation), was formed.

However, after 1900 the majority of workers in unions were no longer skilled workers but were industrial semiskilled workers. Labor unions developed into a movement with mass appeal. In 1906, the number of Swedish workers in unions per capita was larger than in any other country.

The Swedish Case: The Sawmill Labor Union Context

In its initial stage, the Swedish sawmill industry produced wood products and sawed lumber primarily in northern Sweden. This industry developed into the
largest lumber exporter in the world.37 Two decades later, the pulp mill industry emerged in southern Sweden with few ownership connections to the sawmill industry along the north Swedish coast.38

Most sawmills were located far away from population centers because the Swedish lumber industry produced mainly for the export market. Furthermore, as industrial efforts of such a large scale were a fairly new element in Sweden, industrial plants in general had very few old industrial centers in which to locate. Thus, access to raw products and natural harbors became the two main factors that influenced their locations. This was the case with the main Swedish sawmill district around the city of Sundsvall, where the number of sawmills within a fairly small area was relatively large.39

In Sweden, sawmill owners and concerns were not influenced by traditions with bonds back to preindustrial enterprises.40 Most sawmills were owned by merchant family businesses and were also, in a practical sense, directed by members of these families. In other words, they were not directed by professional managers as was the case with the steel industry in the south. Furthermore, each of these families concentrated on one sawmill, and its local bonds were striking.41 In fact, this has often been regarded as a major factor why relationships between the employer and employee were relatively tense.42

Union activists were forced to consider what moves their employers would make and were to a great extent also involved in internal union affairs about how to unify employees into a strong entity capable of cooperating for common goals. Klas Åmark believes that labor union activities should primarily be understood as efforts to improve working conditions and to limit the competing elements among the employees themselves due to the limited supply of job opportunities.43 This interpretation seems to hold for union activities in sawmills, too. In addition to daily working conditions, mobilization problems dominated the union’s agenda.

Initial Sawmill Organization Efforts in North Sweden

In this section, data from a case study of a sawmill situated in the county of Norrbotten at the most northerly part of the Gulf of Bothnia, close to the Finnish border, will illustrate some topics related to the process of forming unions. In about 1900, a number of sawmills were already established in this area. The sawmill in Båtskärsnäs was established in 1867 on a peninsula where just a handful of peasants had their homesteads.44 One of its founders, P. A. Svanberg, still ran it until 1901 when his second oldest son, Gustaf Svanberg, took it over after being educated in England. At this time the sawmill had about seven hundred workers. P. A. Svanberg was a son of a land-owning peasant from a neighboring village. Due to his social back-
ground and with relatives who were sawmill owners, too, Svanberg was actually an insider in this area in more than one respect. Thus, he was certainly culturally competent enough to handle various locally bound problems.

Although the sawmill workers in Båtskärsnäs opposed a strong counterpart, that is, the Svanberg family, this factor did not restrain them from strike actions. This was true even though only a small number of workers joined labor unions. The majority of the workers in this part of Sweden were not union members. Among the five strikes that occurred in Båtskärsnäs between 1903 and 1907, nonunionists were the majority of strikers in four of them. During this period, strikes and other actions against the sawmill owners turned from loosely organized at the beginning of the 1900s into being fairly well organized at the end of the 1900s. All but two union activists in Båtskärsnäs—whose identities were in fact easy to distinguish after having checked the local debates recorded in union records—learned valuable lessons from union activities at sawmills in other north Swedish counties.

At the time when unions finally became forces to reckon with, sawmill owners showed open hostility toward all union efforts. If an employer was informed about someone’s union membership, this usually meant he was fired. In this respect, the Svanberg family was no exception. This forced union activism in secrecy. Interestingly, the first item on every union meeting agenda in Båtskärsnäs was to elect a door guard. The tactics employers used to counteract union activities by employees did not seem very coordinated in the 1900s. Some, like the Svanbergs, whose actions were fairly modest compared with many of the other sawmill employers, varied their messages from time to time. Others were persistently harsh and interfered with collective actions by unions.

Union meetings were formal, a mode that presumably originated from what union activists had experienced from meetings elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the meeting protocols were not completely new elements among the Swedish population in general. Some of the union activists had probably gained experience from local authority assemblies. Moreover, it seems reasonable to assume that these protocols helped activists to do the following: (1) Maintain coherence among members by widening their perspectives in order to include not only petty, individual problems but to consider also those that represented the workers as a collective. (2) Create a feeling of security among union members as well as prepare them to arrive at fair decisions of what strategies to choose in struggles with employers.

Union activists considered all workers as part of a larger entity even though the workers at sawmills represented a fairly heterogeneous group of people. This was also true as far as the employees at sawmills were concerned. Some of the employed were physically strong and experienced, while seasonal workers, who were far from settled in the community, possessed a relatively low social status. While the employers found the former relatively skillful, others were more or
less regarded as interchangeable. There are a number of examples of attempts by
the Svanberg family, for instance, to show partiality toward certain workers. This
gave rise to distressing internal conflicts among union members.

Union efforts were often countered with paternalistic steps staged by the sawmill
owners. In practice, these steps meant that the sawmill owners provided work-
ers with housing facilities, health care, and so forth and that wages were some-
times paid for with food coupons. Consequently, the employees were either forced
to shop at company stores, or to convert coupons into money at a lesser value.
These arrangements kept the employees dependent on the company and had far-
reaching social control implications. Blacklisted employees were not allowed to
buy anything at these stores. Because housing was offered to employees, the threat
of eviction was repeatedly applied as a way to manipulate the Social Democratic
Party and labor union members to cease their activities. However, the coupon
system had another purpose, namely to prevent employees from abusing alco-
hol. Union activists were also forced to tackle this problem because it threat-
ened the discipline among union members. Some of the most prominent
activists were involved with their local chapter of the temperance society.

Union activists looked on their organization as a kind of moral movement
that oversaw discipline problems and controlled behaviors at the workplace. However,
union activists did not support ideas that workers regarded labor unions as chan-
nels for discussing broader, political issues in ideological terms in the way many
of their Continental contemporaries apparently did, or for promoting an over-
all revolutionary movement.

Considering the early-twentieth-century labor disputes, union activists have
often been regarded as the aggressor. With the wisdom of hindsight, it is obvi-
ous that labor unions often played a moderating role with regard to nonunion-
ists and to undisciplined union members. For nonunionists in key positions at
sawmills, it was far easier to deal with conflicts with their employers than for
union members. In principle, they just had to focus on their own interests. Union
members, on the other hand, were forced to focus their interests within the col-
lectives, and furthermore, representatives sanctioned their actions at the next level
of the union hierarchy. Simultaneously, representatives among the parties had
opportunities once more to evaluate the arguments presented and, moreover, to
reflect upon relative strength versus the arguments of their counterparts. These
considerations promoted new initiatives by both employees and employers in
order to bring about an end to labor dispute.

There is still one question to reflect on with respect to these power relation-
ships: What roles did women play in this male-dominated power play? About a
hundred years ago, Swedish popular movement activities were almost completely
dominated by men. Except for leisure activities, women seemed to be completely
absent. However, labor union protocols are presumably misleading guides if one
is searching for aspects of life that concerned topics related to women, family
life, and reproduction, although a number of women were actually present in their communities. Some wives, single women, and children were also employed at sawmills. English historical research of communities representing the same patriarchal settings as characterized the Swedish sawmill communities indicate that wives played significant roles in the spheres of kinship, marriage, and work.46

The Swedish labor union party lost a general strike in 1909.47 This meant that a large number of members left their locals, which in turn meant that locals lost almost all the influence they had previously gained.48 Not until the end of the 1920s did they regain their influence.49 In the 1930s, the labor unions began to play a significant moderating role in the Swedish labor market. Mutual understanding and desire for agreement informed their strategies.50

Sweden in a Scandinavian Context

Scandinavia has often been regarded as one single entity with few nuances. Without a doubt, there are obvious social, cultural, and political similarities in various respects if one compares Denmark and Norway with Sweden. For example, a common belief in Scandinavia is to organize interests and activities by way of forming popular movements; the Social Democratic and the Liberal parties in each of these countries developed a reform agenda within the framework of the political process; and finally, but not least, the languages in these three countries are fairly similar.

However, there are also some apparent differences to consider in the present context. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison have analyzed what they call “new social movements” by comparing social conditional factors in various countries. They have also pointed to differences between Denmark and Sweden regarding the traditional roots of their current environmentalist movements. They have described these two traditions as follows:

[T]here is a tradition in Denmark of alternative politics, primarily based in the countryside. That tradition was influential in the process of Danish industrialization through a network of cooperative dairies and people’s high schools and it was revived in the resistance movement during the Second World War. It was largely because of such a tradition that the environmental movement was able to “mobilize” the population against nuclear energy, and it is an important reason why Danish environmentalism has merged into a broader movement of alternativism and rural collectivism. In Sweden, on the other hand, the environmental movement has been, almost from the beginning, much more
parliamentary in orientation. . . Where Denmark has had a tradition of extraparliamentary “movements,” those in Sweden have been all but integrated into parliamentary parties. It is this kind of difference that has also affected the ways in which social movements are conceptualized in the two countries. In Denmark a movement is located on the grassroots, while in Sweden the movement merges into the party, whether it be the social democratic “movement,” the farmers’ “movement,” or for that matter the green “movement.”

Eyerman and Jamison state also that:

[I]n Sweden, the influence of the established political culture was extremely strong, and particular movement identity had difficulty in forming itself; . . . environmentalism was largely incorporated into the established institutions. By contrast, in Denmark and the Netherlands the cognitive praxis of the new environmental movement could continue to develop in its own space throughout the 1970s and even beyond.

It is tempting to extend Eyerman and Jamison’s analysis even further by way of expressing features that distinguish Sweden from Denmark with respect to public debate. By comparing historical aspects related to the popular movement and social control prerequisites, however, the aim below is to exhibit some of these differences between the Scandinavian countries that persist.

Denmark, 1864–1914

Denmark’s economy is based more on agriculture than Sweden’s economy. The Danish linguist Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen states that Danes are at heart still farmers. Copenhagen’s population compared to the rest of Denmark and its central intellectual and political position in the country are important factors to consider. In addition, Copenhagen was important to the modernization process in general.

Before describing significant features of modernization, however, some background factors related to Danish history are worth considering. At the end of the 1840s, the royal autocracy ended, which meant that Denmark changed to a constitutional monarchy with the distribution of power similar to the two other Scandinavian countries. The main issue in Denmark in the mid-nineteenth century, however, had to do with the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. This issue led to an open conflict with Prussia. Two wars broke out in which Denmark— with little support from the other Scandinavian countries—was finally beaten.
by the united Prussian and Austrian armies in 1864, and the two duchies were lost. This left the Danes feeling degraded and confused.

The Danish modernization process was above all an agricultural affair. In the mid-1860s, agricultural products mainly consisted of grain. The rural social structure included a fairly small number of influential landowners, a large number of small farmers, and a growing number of craftspeople and farm laborers. The situation in the countryside was characterized by social disruption. In fact, it was fairly similar to the situation in southern Sweden. However, from the beginning of the 1870s through the 1890s, both the production and the social structure of the rural areas changed. The production of grain decreased due to the protectionist policies in potential markets like Germany and England, leading to a rapid increase in the export of refined agriculture products like bacon, eggs, and butter for the seemingly ever increasing English market.

The transformation of the farming sector was provided by popular movement efforts. Cooperatives started and were initially supported by the most powerful rural groups consisting of the landowners and successful farmers. However, the more that other segments of the population such as small farmers and tenants took part in this transformation process, the more they were engaged in cooperative societies, with social relational implications for the various social segments involved. Some types of self-regulated informal social controls took form. A fairly self-confident class of small producers emerged to become a vital social force within the democratic process of the country.

The Grundtvigian movement, rooted in Denmark in the 1840s, and named after its initiator N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), influenced rural development and social reform. This movement challenged the National Danish Church’s monopoly as the legitimate interpreter of how to view the society, of what is good or evil, and of blessing all politicians, a monopoly that broke down within a few decades. Due to its positive attitude to life and its desire for a wider spiritual freedom in the churches and schools, Grundtvigianism was a unique phenomenon within the Scandinavian context. Due to its emancipation impulse, with its theological and religious broad-mindedness, and with its informal character, this movement should have been a fairly impossible phenomenon within the principally conservative context that existed in Sweden in the mid-nineteenth century. However, like most of the other revivalist movements in Denmark and Norway, which also included orthodox Lutheran variants in both these countries, Grundtvigianism remained within the national Lutheran church. This was not the case with many of the Swedish Free Churches such as the most influential one, the Pentecostal movement.

The Danish industrial process started at about the same time as it did in Sweden—in the beginning of the 1870s. This process was not as rapid as in Sweden and was mainly located in and around Copenhagen, and to a far lesser degree in smaller cities such as Odense, Århus, and Ålborg. The Danish enterprises produced mainly
for domestic markets in order to support both rural areas with equipment and cities with food products and building materials. With few exceptions, Danish factories were relatively small.

A large number of workers were living in Copenhagen and its suburbs where influences from abroad easily provided their leaders with ideological and organizational tools. Initially, mostly directed by publishers and other intellectuals, their messages addressed individual concerns to a greater degree than their Swedish equivalents. In fact, labor unions as well as political efforts related to working-class interests took form about one decade earlier than in Sweden and with clear Marxist elements. Rather soon, however, after setbacks in the mid-1870s, these movements obtained a reformist character that resembled Swedish movements. While the Danish equivalent of the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions, De samvirkende Fagforbund, was established in 1898, the first Social Democratic members of the Danish parliament (Folketinget) took office in 1884. In any respect, the close links between labor unions and the Social Democratic Parties have been a distinctive feature within all three Scandinavian countries. Later, the cooperative movement became a vital part of the labor movement.

Norway, 1864–1914

The Norwegian Eidsvoll Constitution of 1814 was the end of Danish rule and the start of a royal union with Sweden. It was surprisingly radical in its details: the right to vote was more radically elaborated than elsewhere in Europe at that time. Norway had its own government, its own domestic administration, and its own parliament, the Stortinget. Furthermore, the scope of the king's authority became weaker in Norway than was the case in Sweden. Norway's role as a national unity was far more independent in its union with Sweden than it had been earlier with the Danish monarchy. Despite this, the Norwegian elite found it necessary to get rid of what they regarded as their surviving Danish social, mental, and cultural dependence.

Allwood describes the new Norwegian era as one in which "freedom from Danish domination released a tremendous outburst of creative activity in the population of Norway." Nationalism began to make its way into the national consciousness. By combining radical liberalism with national self-assertion, this new era became a force that could hardly be underrated in the long run although the governance of Norway was primarily a bureaucratic one ruled by an official class not counterbalanced by other forces as in Denmark. In 1884, however, Norway became the first parliamentary country in Scandinavia when the liberal political party, Venstre, directed by its popular leader, Johan Sverdrup (1816–1892), won the general election. The participation in the general election in 1882 that
preceded this event was as high as 72 percent. As a confirmation of the political radicalism in Norway, universal suffrage was introduced as early as 1898.

What strikes one when comparing Norway with both Denmark and Sweden during this time is its heterogeneous social, economic, and cultural character. For example, a farmer’s situation in southeastern Norway was completely different from a farmer’s situation along the west coast or in the north. This heterogeneity was a result of historical, cultural, and above all, geographical reasons. Similar to Sweden, Norway is long and narrow and sparsely populated. Norway’s topography, however, with mostly thin strings of settled rural countrysides along the fiords, valleys, and the south, west, and north coasts, make it unique for a European country.

As with Denmark and Sweden, it seems necessary to start analyzing the period in Norway between 1864 and 1914 by examining its rural setting. Unlike Denmark and the southern parts of Sweden, the Norwegian countryside was not dominated by politically influential landowners. Many tenants who were leasing areas owned by the Church had the opportunity to buy property according to a law of 1821. This meant that freeholders owned almost all landed properties in rural areas, as was also the case in the northern part of Sweden. Therefore, there was no correspondence in Norway to the Danish peasant liberation process. While urbanization, combined with the extremely large emigration surges,\(^6\) was common in the southern and middle parts of Norway, especially from 1884 to 1915, these tendencies were not seen in the north.

The urbanization and industrialization processes started later and not as rapidly as in Sweden. Furthermore, these processes were not concentrated only in urban areas as was the case in Denmark. It is true that the population of Oslo increased considerably during this period, and so did many of the other cities and towns, but there was also a parallel growth of new water-powered factories located a bit outside of cities and towns.

In general, Norwegian popular movements had more in common with Swedish movements than with Danish ones. However, activities related to such movements, mainly concentrated in southeast and central Norway, were initiated earlier in Norway than in Sweden.\(^68\) Besides labor unions, the most significant popular movements in Norway consisted of Christian domestic missionary associations, temperance societies, and unlike the Swedish tradition, societies that were concerned with national identity issues.

Until the first years of the 1880s, labor unions were primarily local. Their members, who were primarily craftspeople and skilled workers as in Sweden, were often described as having fairly individual concerns that were too difficult to handle as collective actions.\(^69\) Due to influences from abroad, however, both unions and political parties gradually turned to more national issues. The paternal social conditions that existed in older industries in Norway resembled those in Sweden.\(^70\) However, there are some interesting features that distinguish Norway
from Sweden in these respects. First, the Social Democratic Party was established earlier in Norway than in Sweden and dealt with union obligations, which lasted until the Norwegian Confederation of Labor Unions was formed in 1899. Second, while Swedish unions were almost totally demolished after having been defeated in the general strike and lockout in 1909, the Norwegian unions not only persisted but turned out to be considerably radicalized, as was the case with the Norwegian Social Democratic Party. Third, the role of women in Norway as union members seems initially far more prominent than in Sweden. More men emigrated than women. This resulted in a population surplus of women in Oslo and in some other cities, where textile and match factories employed large numbers of female workers.

Some Concluding Remarks

The relatively homogeneous Swedish population and the population’s high degree of involvement in local decision making at the end of the nineteenth century are important factors when considering Sweden from a social control perspective. Practical experiences at the local social level concerning decision-making processes, including discipline and meeting records, are essential factors that help to explain why the kind of formal character of the labor union meetings was salient. Furthermore, Sweden was sparsely populated, the urbanization process occurred relatively late, and the rapid industrialization process was linked less to old, crowded city centers in Sweden than in other parts of Europe. All these conditions meant that social class differences did not cause the kind of threats in terms of far reaching social conflicts and disorder that from time to time appeared elsewhere in Europe during this period. These conditions led to a social structure that was less permeated with social pressure than was the case in many other European countries.

The social, political, and cultural conditions in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden and the popular movements that grew out of these conditions are features that distinguish Sweden’s popular movements from Denmark and Norway. The formal character of Swedish popular labor movements and the informal character of the Danish popular movements (grundtvigianism) resulted in general in different movements in Denmark at the grass roots level than in Sweden. The Danish popular movements were impossible in the Swedish conservative context and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the fairly provincial, more heterogeneous, and fairly open-minded Norwegian popular movements were also unsuited for Sweden. The question is whether these various elements from about a century ago were forgotten as historical relics, or whether these features still remain. The Danish priest and educator Poul Engberg argues that “harmony, social order, and law-
fulness have always been the frame of reference that restrains the Swedish process of change.” Engberg concludes that this is the state of affairs because Swedes did not experience historical breakdowns, revolts, and catastrophes, or people such as Grundtvig, who realized that attempts to organize the real spirit of the community could result in major political risk. If Engberg’s statement is true, one should not be surprised to find Swedish popular movements of today to be organized in orderly, formal, centralized, and hierarchical ways, irrespective of what issues they are dealing with.

Consistent with Eyerman and Jamison the following conclusion can be made: To exert one’s influence on the Swedish public means primarily to represent ideas or interests that have come to light within the scopes of established popular movements. To advocate for specific positions, one must be accepted by the political party system or the prominent formal organizations, or in other words, the establishment. If this is true—even though almost every Swede is a member of a number of organizations of different character, and though organizing abilities are and have been a manifest feature within the Swedish society—the civil conversation tends to be fairly orderly in Sweden without displaying much spontaneity or civil disobedience. These features to a greater extent characterize the Danish public scene and could be at least partly explained by referring to historical conditions.

Notes

This essay uses data from The Research Archives, University of Umeå, Umeå, and The Archives of Popular Movements, Luleå. This research was partially supported by a grant from The Swedish Research Council.

2. Ibid., 79.
3. Ibid.
4. The concept of popular movements means here all kinds of collective actions that are more enduring than spontaneous, temporary mass operations. See for example Therborn, *Europa, det moderna*, 399–400.
5. See especially Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren*, whose book title in English translation is “The Steady Worker.” From documents, Ambjörnsson has studied workers and their leisure activities as they appeared in the first half of the twentieth century in a sawmill community just outside the city of Umeå, in the northern part of Sweden.
6. Ambjörnsson’s analyses are consistent with ideas proposed by Elias, *The History of Manners*, vol. 1, although Elias’s scope is, from various respects, far broader than
Ambjörnsson’s. With respect to his data, Ambjörnsson has been criticized for having overestimated the role of steadiness among workers. See Franzén, “Egensinne och skötsamhet,” 3–20.

7. Horgby, *Egensinne och skötsamhet*, 20 (author’s trans. into English). Although the nature of this definition of the concept of culture is fairly narrow, it suits the purpose of the forthcoming analyses.

8. Ibid., 21 (author’s trans. into English).

9. Ibid., 156 (author’s trans. into English).

10. After Frédéric Le Play, and in a French history tradition, industrial relations like these are regarded as tantamount to *patronage*. In modern English usage, they are denoted as *paternalistic* ones. See Brooke, *Le Play*, 29. See also Noiriel, “Du ‘patronage’ au ‘pater nalisme’,” for applications of the concept of patronage.

11. See Droste, “Språk och livsform.”


14. However, Swedes rarely knew how to write; it was almost exclusively attributed to individuals in authority positions. See Johansson, “The History of Literacy in Sweden.”

15. In western Europe, Sweden was actually one of the last countries to introduce freedom of religion, initiated in 1860.

16. The Swedish Church has afterward often been called a state church but is formally viewed as a public church although until recently in close alliance with the state. The concept *unity church* is presumably the most adequate one for this period. See Martling, *Fädernas kyrka och folkets*, 21–22.

17. The Lutheran Small Catechism, in which The House Table was a part, was widespread among Swedish households in the nineteenth century.

18. Whether these influences were internalized among the Swedish population, or whether other secular influences replaced The House Table during the nineteenth century, is a question that has been debated among Swedish historians. See Harnesk, “Patriarkalism och lönearbete,” 326–55; and Pleijel, “Patriarkalisms samhällsideologi,” 221–34. For a survey of this debate, see Lindmark, *Uppfostran, undervisning, upplysning*, 151–222.

19. However, the Swedish secularization process had its main roots in rural areas. See ibid.

20. Here, it must be added that Sweden/Finland was the least urbanized country in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In cities and towns, the number of inhabitants seldom exceeded 2000. See Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 27. While the population in Stockholm was about 93,000 in 1850, the third most populated city in Sweden, Norrköping, had only about 17,000 inhabitants. However, the number of people who lived in cities and towns increased from 10 percent to 21.5 percent between 1850 and 1900. *Historisk statistik för Sverige*, 45, 66, 61–65.

21. The aim of the guild system, for example, was primarily to regulate the supply of goods and services. See Åmark, *Facklig makt och fackligt medlemskap*, 22.
22. The Swedish gross national product per capita was rated far lower than countries in western Europe like Great Britain, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Denmark. See Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 26, and sources referred there.

23. Ibid., 28.

24. The Swedish lumber industrialists illustrate this. They were recruited from a fairly small group of mostly wholesale merchants, often with fairly wide international views. From their international experiences they understood how to stabilize an industrial expansion by addressing long-term considerations, that is, by establishing stock corporations and by buying, not always in the most honest of ways, large areas of forests to satisfy their need for raw materials.

25. Ibid., 39.

26. Those engaged in the free church movement were Protestants who belonged to Christian societies that were independent of the state. These societies primarily appeared in Sweden after religious freedom was proclaimed in 1860.

27. Lundkvist, “Folkrörelser och reformer, 1900–1920.”

28. Lundkvist has found that regions with strong working-class movements also had strong elements from the other two principal movements. See ibid.; and Cornell, Sundsvallsdistriktets sågverksarbetare, 1860–1890.


30. Lundkvist, “Folkrörelser och reformer.”

31. See Åmark, Facklig makt, 18–22, 39–40; and Ekdahl, Arbete mot kapital, 13–15.

32. The first Swedish strike of any national significance—spontaneous and with no unions involved—broke out in the Sundsvall area in 1879. About 5,000 sawmill workers walked out due to a 20 percent wage cut. The sawmill owners blamed the wage cut on a temporary recession. In order to end this strike, regional authorities called for military help. Finally, the workers lost, as many as 36 among them were detained, and a large number of the temporary hands became subject to police measures as they were regarded as defenseless according to the Vagrancy Act. Interestingly, members of Free Church Societies took an active part in this strike.

33. Åmark, Facklig makt, 61–62; Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 40; and Hirdman, Vi bygger landet, 62.

34. As was the case in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, worker parties and labor unions appeared almost simultaneously. See Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 41.

35. Until then, the most extensive labor market action was a lockout that occurred in 1905 and was initiated by employers. Among all the labor disputes in the year 1908, one-third were lockouts, or lockouts in combination with strikes, that started at the same time. Hirdman, Vi bygger landet, 84–86.

36. Kjellberg, Facklig organisering i tole länd, 50, 52.

37. See Glete, Ågande och industriell omvandling, 160.

38. Ibid., 181, 199.

39. Ibid., 67–70, 142–45, 164.
40. Owners of preindustrial businesses had little influence on the Swedish industrialization process. Ibid., 79.
41. Ibid., 91, 106, 141, 168.
42. See Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 41; and Therborn, “Socialdemokraterna trädde fram.”
43. See Åmark, Facklig makt, 20.
44. Compared with every other county in north Sweden, and with reference to the various measures utilized to specify strike frequencies, strikes were comparatively frequent among industrial enterprises in the county of Norrbotten. Furthermore, when comparing strike frequencies among the four largest sawmills in the county, with respect to either the number of conflicts or the number of days on strike, the frequency of strikes in Båtskärsnäs was the highest. See Arbetsstatistik E:1. Arbetsinställare.
45. Some of the sawmill owners were still hostile until the end of the 1910s.
47. This strike was the greatest labor union mobilization ever in the world until the 1968 events in France. In fact, one-third of all Swedish workers outside the rural sector were on strike. See Therborn, “Hur det hela började,” 45.
48. During the following two years, the number of members in labor unions dropped by half. See Åmark, Facklig makt, 20. See also Montgomery, Industrialismens genombrrott i Sverige, 128.
49. Åmark, Facklig makt, 11.
50. The new Swedish labor market era has been called saltsjöbadsandan (the Spirit of Saltsjöbaden), a designation pointing to the moment in 1936 when representatives of labor unions and employers sat down in a corporate body to form the negotiation order for the future.
51. Eyerman and Jamison, Social Movements, 35
52. Ibid., 67.
53. This part is primarily based on Rerup, Danmarks historie, Bind 6. Concerning comparisons with Norway and Sweden, see Norborg and Sjöstedt, Grannländernas historia.
56. In Sweden this occurred in 1809 and in Norway in 1814.
57. In fact, there were only 400 volunteers recruited from Norway and Sweden.
58. Larsen, Det levende ord, 90.
59. Mörch, Den ny Danmarkshistorie, 256.
60. This was mainly achieved by Christen Kold (1816–1870) in a number of People’s High Schools (folkehøjskoler) and led later to similar adult educational activities in the
other Scandinavian countries. See Bergstedt, *Den livsupplysande texten*, 280.


62. In Denmark, one of these variants was the Inner-Mission (*Indre Mission*) founded in 1861 by the publisher Vilhelm Beck (1829–1901). One Norwegian equivalent was the neoorthodox/Pietist Society of Johnson's Christianian Inner-Mission (*Johnson Christiania Indremissionsforening*) founded in 1855 by a professor of Theology, Gisle Johnsson (1822–1894), who in 1868 also established the Norwegian Luther Foundation (*Den norske Lutherstiftelse*). See Flint, *Historical Role Analysis*, 34–59.

63. For a survey of union and political activities among Danish working-class people during the nineteenth century with a description of their initial problems, see Erichsen, *Om arbejderbevægelsen*, 50–56.

64. This part is mainly based on a survey of the Norwegian history presented in *Norges historie*, Bind 11–12. Comparisons with Denmark and Sweden are based on Norborg and Sjöstedt, *Grannländernas historia*.


66. In fact, the Norwegian parliamentary government was established seventeen years before it took form in Denmark and thirty-three years before it was established in Sweden.

67. During the nineteenth century in Europe, only Ireland had a greater emigration rate per capita than Norway. See Flint, *Historical Role Analysis*, 10.

68. Vivid illustrations of union activities in the 1850s can be found in essays by Hvamstad, “Rikt foreiningsliv på Hadeland”; and Granqvist, “Tröndelags-bygderna.”

69. For analyses of initial union efforts among carpenters in Bergen, see Ågotnes, *Frå handverkar til lønnsarbeidar?* 164–69.

70. See Furre, *Vårt hundreår*, 25, 63.

71. In 1918, the party proclaimed itself as revolutionary and became a member of the Third Communist International, a membership that lasted until 1923.

72. Author's trans. from the Danish.

73. Engberg, *Grundtvig*, 85–86.

74. See, for example, Therborn, *Europa, det moderna*, 401–3.