

Does the future of unions depend on the integration of diversity?

Hansen, Lise Lotte

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:
Rainer Hampp Verlag

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Hansen, L. L. (2004). Does the future of unions depend on the integration of diversity? *Industrielle Beziehungen : Zeitschrift für Arbeit, Organisation und Management*, 11(1/2), 129-142. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-344631>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Lise Lotte Hansen*

Does the Future of Unions Depend on the Integration of Diversity? **

The article relates gender equality problems with a wider agenda of challenges to the labour movement. The main argument is that unions have to reflect the diversity of their membership base in order to maintain their legitimacy among members and their strength in the labour market. The article concludes that transformative changes in union policy and practices could benefit both the labour movement and gender equality. The empirical focus is on gender equality policies in the LO (Denmark) and in UNISON (UK).

Hängt die Zukunft der Gewerkschaften von der Integration der Verschiedenheit ab?

Der Beitrag verknüpft Gleichstellungsprobleme mit der weiteren Agenda der Herausforderungen für die Arbeiterbewegung. Das Hauptargument lautet, dass die Gewerkschaften die Differenziertheit ihrer Mitgliedschaft reflektieren müssen, um ihre Legitimität gegenüber den Mitgliedern wie ihre Stärke auf dem Arbeitsmarkt zu behaupten. Die Schlussfolgerung lautet, dass ein solcher Wandel in Politik und Praxis der Gewerkschaften sowohl der Arbeiterbewegung wie der Gleichstellung der Geschlechter zugute käme. Empirischer Fokus des Aufsatzes ist die Gender-Politik in der LO (Dänemark) und der UNISON (Großbritannien).

Key words: **Gender equality, membership problems, transformative strategies for change, organic solidarity, participatory democracy**

* Lise Lotte Hansen, MA in Cultural Sociology, Lecturer and Ph.D. student, Department of Social Sciences, Roskilde University, Building 25, PO-box 260, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark. E-Mail: Liselh@ruc.dk.

** Artikel eingegangen: 28.2.2003
revidierte Fassung akzeptiert nach doppelt-blindem Begutachtungsverfahren: 22.12.2003

Does the Future of Unions Depend on the Integration of Diversity? By putting the question this way I want to change the usual way of understanding and doing community and solidarity in unions: instead of regarding diversity and community as opposites I want to discuss if, and how, the integration of diversity can strengthen unions in the future.¹ The main argument is that although the pressure for place and voice from women is one part of the challenge to unions, gender equality policies could also be looked on as ways to strengthen the labour movement if it is carried out 'the right way'.² Integration can be accomplished very differently, either as a strategy of normalisation in which women learn how to participate in union policy making the right way *or* as a strategy of transformation which changes union structures and culture in order to establish new ways of making union policy. However, in the first case integration strategies do not break up the opposition between diversity and community; instead they serve to dissolve diversity into homogeneity. While in the latter, diversity and community both will change into something new. But why do unions have to renew themselves? And why in a transformative way?

In this article I will discuss two different although closely related answers to these questions: (1) that gender equality policies until now have had limited success, *and* (2) that membership problems force unions to rethink how union policy is done. Moreover, I will discuss how both problems could be solved by the same strategy. The empirical focus is on gender equality policies in the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (the LO) and on the British union UNISON.³

Challenges to the labour movement in Denmark and in Great Britain

The challenges the labour movements⁴ in Denmark and Britain face are both similar and different at once. The most obvious difference is that the scope and art of the challenges in the British labour market and in the labour movement are much more comprehensive. These challenges have changed the premises for unionism considerably. Denmark is still in the period of unionism (Lind 2000), while in Britain the ques-

¹ In the article (and my thesis) I focus on women and gender equality policies, but most of the problems, arguments and conclusions could also apply to questions of diversity as such.

² Colgan/Ledwith 2002a have a similar argumentation; their focus is however on how gender and diversity transform union democracy.

³ The article builds on my Ph.D.-thesis: Gender Equality Policy Problems – and possible solutions. Gender, power and change in the LO and UNISON. The thesis is due to be finished winter 2004.

⁴ In this article the labour movement is equivalent to LO (Denmark) and TUC (the UK). In Denmark unions organise as a principal rule on the basis of education. LO is the confederation of unions for skilled and unskilled workers. There are two more confederation: the FTF (middle-educations e.g. nurses, Dansk Sygeplejeråd, and nursery and kindergarten teachers, BUPL) and the AC (long university education e.g. university teachers, primarily Magisterforeningen, and lawyers and administration, primarily DJØF). The British union, UNISON, is a public sector union. It organizes in principle all employees from cleaners to leaders. But public sector employees can also be members of other unions like for instance nurses who can choose between UNISON and the Royal College of Nursing.

tion is whether unions are recovering from the neo-liberal assault of the past two decades (Waddington 2000).

Being a union member is still common for Danish employees, and approximately half of LO's members are women.⁵ Despite widespread membership, the Danish labour movement is under pressure from Denmark's right-wing government and from a falling membership. At the same time the LO and some of the affiliated unions are in a process of reorganisation. The reorganisation is meant to meet those problems as well as answer the demands for organisational change following the decentralisation of bargaining procedures. Two of the largest unions (KAD and SID) are negotiating to merge. Within the LO, the FIU (the LO's internal training system) has been divided into two and has become more demand-oriented. The emphasis is on meeting the needs of an even more individualised membership (Udviklingsplan for FIU-systemet, undated). The Danish labour movement is thus in a stage of political unrest. This unrest might cause instability in established power relations and hierarchies within the LO. Unrest could also be followed by openings for the integration of the 'diverse' and hereby for even more and more comprehensive transformations of the Danish labour movement (see also Ledwith/Colgan 2002).

Instability and a lack of power and influence have been the everyday experience of the British unions for the last twenty years. Membership has declined by 40%. The extent of the collective agreements has fallen from covering 75% to 40% of the workforce and some of the Conservative anti-union laws are still in force (Cully et al 1999; Millward et al 2000 Labour Research Jan. 2000). Despite this bleak picture, things are changing for the better in Britain. In 1999 and 2000 new laws were introduced that secured labour minimum rights. The laws provided the unions with a legal foundation for getting acknowledged as a negotiating partner at work places. In addition to legal changes, the attitude towards unions has become more positive among both workers and employers. In the employers case this is partly due to the rising popularity of the social partnership strategy. Many unions have renewed both their organisational structures, policy goals and strategies, too (Cully et al 1999; Millward et al 2000; Labour Research 2000; Waddington 2000). Union membership had stabilised, and even started to slowly rise again in 2000. The rise is mainly due to the increase in female part-time working members (Labour Research July 2000; Today's Trade Unionist 2001). Despite this development in the British labour market, the pressures upon unions are still much more comprehensive than in Denmark.

Women in the labour movement

The situation of women in the labour movement in Denmark and the UK are in part, different. Most female workers in Denmark are members of a union whereas large parts of the British female workforce are working in workplaces that are not unionised. Despite this difference, female union members in Denmark are like in the UK underrepresented in leadership positions. The aim of the labour movement in both

⁵ 83% of all employees are union members. LO consists of 48% women and 52 % men, but with huge differences among the affiliated unions where some are male dominated others female dominated.

Denmark and the UK is to integrate women. While in the UK this also means getting more female members, in Denmark the integration is mainly a question of getting more women into leadership positions.

In the LO, the equality in female and male membership is not reflected in a corresponding equality in representation. Neither in the unions affiliated to the LO nor in the LO is the representation equal. At the level of shop stewards, the share of women and men are almost equal, women 42% and men 58% (Jensen et al 1998). In the more important and centralised positions there are far less women. In LO's executive committee the share of women is 19% (CASA 1999; Jensen et al 1998; LO 2000).⁶

Figure 1

Women's representation in LO's central committees. Percent	Women	Men	
Equal opportunities and family policy	58	42	100
Environment and health and safety	39	61	100
Youth policy	35	65	100
Refugees and immigrants	33	67	100
Social policy	30	70	100
Work- and employment law	25	75	100
Labour market and education/training	24	76	100
Economical policy and collective agreements	21	79	100
Business and development policy	20	80	100
Europe policy	19	81	100
FIU (internal training system)	17	83	100
Organisation policy	14	86	100
Membership distribution	48	52	100

Reproduced from CASA 1999: 22

In most British unions women are underrepresented. Out of 27 unions affiliated to the TUC only 2 carry out decision making in proportion to the membership. And only 6 carry out decision making that is nearly in proportion to the membership's gender.⁷ The numbers are a little better when it comes to parity between officers and members. Twelve unions are proportional or nearly proportional. The amount of female members who take part in TUC congress has continuously risen from 16% in 1987 to 35% in 1999. In the TUC Executive Committee the percentage of women has improved from 15 % (1988) to 33% (1999), but the progress has been very slow since 1993 when it was 31% (SERTUC 2000). The last edition of the SERTUC Women's Rights Committee report on the state of women in British unions discusses the central question of whether women are moving forward or backward. The conclusion of the study is both ways.

⁶ A new report by CASA shows that there has been almost no progress in women's representation since 1999 (Ugebreve A4 13/10 2003).

⁷ Decision making structure is here equal to conferences and executives.

'The answer is, as ever, more difficult. 'Moving forward': too unreal; 'going backward': far too negative. 'Standing still': too boring and depressing. The problem is that there is lots of impressive work going on, at the same time as lots of retrenchment and power storing. So we celebrate the progress that has been made by sections of the movement, and look forward to more' (SERTUC 2000:3).⁸

Most British unions have some kind of gender equality policy, some making use of rather radical strategies. Those use methods such as reserved seats for women and self-organisation e.g. UNISON. In Denmark women's self-organisation is very rare. Self-organisation is generally regarded as being in opposition to equality and there is a strong resistance to other radical strategies like reserved seats for women (also Borchorst/Dahlerup 2003).⁹

At the LO congress in 2000 it was acknowledged that a change in the approach to gender equality was needed if the amount of women in leadership positions should ever rise. It was decided to introduce two new strategies: gender mainstreaming and the Starlet Programme. The Starlet Programme is a network (horizontal and vertical), a leadership training course, and a strategy to empower younger women in the LO. It is a women-only course and it provides childcare facilities.¹⁰

Membership problems

The labour market in Britain has changed in the direction of more service production, more small enterprises, and more part-time work. This has resulted in a fall in male union membership while women's membership has almost stayed the same (Mann et al 1997). In Britain the question of integration of women is closely related to the membership problem as service and part-time employees are mainly female. This gives quite different opportunities for integration as it is important for the British unions to be more attractive to women. In Denmark the integration strategy could be more difficult 'to sell' as getting more female leaders in Danish unions means a challenge to established power positions. Making unions more attractive to women could however also be the basis for conflicts in the UK depending on which strategy for integration that will be chosen. The more radical strategies the more resistance (Ledwith/Colgan 2002).

Although union membership problems in Denmark are not as severe as in the UK, membership is also declining in Denmark. This is especially so amongst the younger people in the LO covered sectors.¹¹ Membership problems concern a lack of

⁸ The 2000 edition includes also other minority groups.

⁹ An exception is the Danish women-only union KAD.

¹⁰ I will in the following focus on the Starlet Programme. The mainstreaming strategy has only been partly successful; it has not yet been implemented in the LO committees, and the re-organisation of FIU has meant a break down in a rather radical approach to mainstreaming.

¹¹ Fewer younger members in the LO is not only due to a lack of interest in unions, but is also a result of more young people being more educated which means that they enter the labour market later *and* that many become members of one of the unions affiliated to either the FTF or the AC. But this does not explain the whole problem. Nielsen 2002 refers

interest in taking up leadership positions and a limited interest in taking part in union activities and training (Lind 2000; LO 2001; Nielsen 2002). Nielsen concludes that younger people do not, as did earlier generations, take union membership for granted. Younger people are more unstable members and are more likely to question the way the unions works compared to its elder members (Nielsen 2000, 2002). Additionally, solidarity is not something that the young people attach great importance to (Bild et al 1993; Nielsen 2000). A study into young unskilled female workers largely confirms these conclusions (Andersen 2002).

Women's under-representation and fewer younger people in the Danish labour movement

There are many explanations for the unequal representation of men and women in the LO. These include long working hours and weeks and difficulties in combining family responsibilities with a leadership position. There are problems with moving from home to take up a position in the capital. Women have to deal with stereotypical ways of thinking and gender myths (CASA 1999). Other studies focus on that fact that the organisational structure and culture reflects traditional male norms (Jensen 1994). The studies show that the priority of bargaining demands is about the overrepresentation of middle-aged men in the policy committees (Aunbirk 1994). They depict the working hours and culture is a token of a 'Tarzan culture' (Billing/Eriksen 1995). The studies report that gender 'gets in the way' both in formal and in informal bargaining situations and that some members have very traditional gender conceptions and are resistant to gender equality policies (CELI/KAD 2003). My research indicates two different, albeit related, problems in the LO and the affiliated unions. Firstly, union policy praxis, and gender discourse are related in ways that make it very difficult for women to do union policy in the right way. Secondly, there is broad resistance to gender equality and many different strategies for maintaining power. This includes ridiculing women who want to discuss and improve gender equality, slowness or lack of implementation of policy decisions. The gender equality officers are often overloaded with work on other policy areas and frequently the rules of the game are changed when women are elected to committees.

Nielsen's research into young people's democratic participation in unions shows a decisive motivating factor for participation. Members were motivated by a feeling of belonging to a community and to being welcomed; gaining new social relations. The young people also regarded membership as becoming active in policy making and having influence upon the form and content of the community. This was in contrast to the labour movement's membership understanding. To become active in the union, you have to be elected to a position otherwise, you are part of the latent, passive, po-

to a lot of different surveys which come up with rather different numbers. One shows that young unskilled workers are less likely to be member of a union than the older ones, young 71%, all 91%. Another survey shows a fall in the percent of membership among young people from 78 % - 66 %, and a third one a fall among young unskilled workers on 27%. Numbers from the LO in 1993 and 1998 show a minor fall in the share of younger people, but that these still make up almost one fourth of the total membership (Nielsen 2002:19-20).

litically alert. One could be mobilised for activity (strikes, demonstrations) when necessary, but was otherwise silent. Nielsen concludes that there is an opposition between the young people's cultural model and the labour movement. He also points to problems within the way democracy works such that it hinders young people's participation (Nielsen 2002). In order to become more attractive to young people the FIU has introduced new types of courses directed to both younger members and young potential members e.g. Mindscope and Grænsejægerne (Boundary-Hunters). These activities have been quite successful in attracting the young people and in taking up new problems and discussions. Despite this, the activities and the experiences done with these are neither integrated in the FIU system nor in mainstream union work (Nielsen 2000).

Nielsen's results fit quite well with the way the three youngest women in my study, think, and act. They are all union members and in different ways involved in union policy but at the same time they are critical of the way the labour movement works. One of the women points at problems with the hierarchical structure, mainly the problem that members have to be elected to a position if they want to be active. Once elected, they have to dedicate most of their time to union work. These problems are in direct opposition both to the needs and wishes of young people and to the family obligations of women. Such a woman works directly to change the way union policy is carried out, for instance she opens meetings to all interested and let members join in on the subjects they are specifically interested in. The women also have two other things in common. Firstly, they have all been active in LO's or their respective unions youth-work in which the labour movement has opened up for new ways of doing union policy. These experiences they have brought with them into mainstream union policy. Secondly, they partake in union policy with a natural ease. They take their participation for granted and are self-confident and strong. If these women meet problems they do not give up or blame themselves.

Both the research into gender in the labour movement and into young peoples' democratic participation point to problems. They indicate problems with the way union policy is carried out, with the representative democracy, and with the organisational structure and culture. It could thus be interesting to discuss how new ways of doing union policy, solidarity, and democracy could contribute to solving at least part of the membership problem and the gender equality problem.

Transformative strategies for change

Several researchers discuss problems concerning the way unions work. There is an emphasis on the need for change in how to understand and perform community and solidarity (e.g. Briskin 1999; Hyman 2001, 2002; Valkenburg/Zoll 1995; Zoll 1999). Traditional worker solidarity and the understanding and practising of common interests are criticised for excluding diversity and for reflecting the existing distribution of power within the working class (i.e. mostly the interests of white men in manual production) (Forrest 1993; Hyman 2001, 2002; Jones 2002). Instead union solidarity and community of today have to reflect the diversity in interests and identities if unions shall survive. Even though such a (organic) solidarity is not easy to create, it is important to construct an agenda that will unite instead of divide (Hyman 2002), and which

will create networks and a feeling of belonging to the community (also Kelly 1998). This could be done through unity in diversity as for instance coalition building (Briskin 1999).

New forms of solidarity and community can not be constructed from the union top, as an administrative decision, or even by majority vote – they have to come from the bottom (Hyman 2002). Solidarity is also a reflexive project in which the differences and similarities of the members' daily practises are regarded as a process of constantly ongoing dialogue among members and between members and the union. People do not only look for solidarity in the content of shared views, but also in the way these views are established (Valkenburg/Zoll 1995:132). Consequently, more participatory forms of democracy will be necessary. Solidarity and community could be constructed either in relation to special themes and problems or as a part of the individual's identity construction project. The construction of self-identity and the construction of new forms of community and solidarity would be a mutual process. This joint process would not only result in new forms of community and solidarity, as its result would also become an example of itself. So unions should no longer do something for the members, but do something together with the members (Valkenburg/Zoll 1995).

Community and solidarity are context-dependent conceptions which are constantly created through daily union policy practices. Thus the construction of a diverse solidarity and community becomes a project of union transformation.

A transformative gender equality strategy introduces a new problem definition and a different agenda for change. A transformative strategy wants to change the very inequality creating processes which are localised in the gender discourse and embedded in union policy praxis. The objective is not to 'give pride' to women or to enforce womanhood, but to deconstruct the binary opposition between male and female in order to create new ways of doing gender and union policy. In order to obtain this, gender equality policy has to be seen as a constantly on-going destabilisation process directed alternately towards identification of problems and dilemmas *and* the development of tools to create change. This process is combined with an element of mutual learning between the marginalised meanings and practices (mostly carried out by women) and the normal ones (mostly carried out by men). This allows one to see and use the resources and experiences of both practices instead of normalising women or overruling important elements in the way union policy is carried out.¹²

The transformative strategy opens up the possibility for a close relation between the gender equality policy and a membership policy. The strategy builds on the establishment of new ways of doing union policy, new organisational structures and democracy. A transformative approach set the scene for a re-thinking of community and solidarity through mutual learning processes.

¹² The transformative approach has its origin in Fraser 1997. For an elaboration on transformative gender equality strategies please see Hansen 2003.

The New LO and the Starlet Programme – Liberal strategies with a touch of radicality

In the LO the approach to the challenge from a diversified membership is very much regarded as a problem of individualisation. It is individualisation that is in opposition to the solidarity and community of the labour movement. The effort is put towards meeting the needs of the individual members better and on making the organisation more streamlined (business like). The organisational development strategy is closest to the service union model, and the structure of democracy is unchanged (representative democracy). Solidarity and community are seen as a superstructure holding together the diversified members.

The Starlet Programme relates to a liberal strategy for change as it is directed towards changing the individual woman. The programme neither gives the starlets access to a leadership position nor does it question the organisational structure or union policy. The programme still has elements of a more radical strategy. The vertical network could be looked on as 'hidden' affirmative action, because it is supposed to create close links between the individual starlet and one of the leaders in her union or in the LO. This vertical network is established in order to ensure that the starlet will be 'seen' and used in the future. The horizontal network goes beyond the liberal strategy's women-only course and carries elements of the radical strategy's self-organisation, although this is in the limited form of the Deficit-model (Briskin in Briskin/McDermott 1993). The Starlet Programme is mainly supporting the women's career in union policy, but also gives the individual woman knowledge and tools to become an organisational change agent. The Starlet Programme relates very well to the service union model and a representative democracy, although it carries elements of new strategies for influence. The Starlets are not regarded as being without resources, but these are not used to establish a transformative agenda for change.

Radical strategies for change in UNISON

UNISON is not only a new union (established in 1993). It is also a new type of union based on active membership and gender equality, both written into the rulebook. Article B 2.2 and 2.3 state:

'2.2 To promote and establish a member-led union and to carry out and fulfil decisions made by members in a spirit of unity and accountability.

2.3 To promote fair representation in all the Union's structures for women, members of all grades, black members, members with disabilities and lesbians and gay men' (UNISON rules, 2000).

Self-organisation, fair representation and proportionality are the tools that should carry out the objectives of the rulebook. There are self-organised groups for women, black members, disabled members, and for gays and lesbians on all levels of the organisation. The self-organised groups are secured resources and rights to put forward proposals and motions. The self-organised groups can decide form and content of their work as long as it is within the established policies and rules (get yourself organised). Proportionality is the representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant numbers of female and male members in the electorate (get yourself or-

ganised:2). In order to obtain proportionality a complicated election system has been established. Fair representation is the broad balance of representation of members in the electorate, taking into account factors as the balance between part-time workers and full-time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills qualifications, responsibilities, race, sexuality and disability (get yourself organised:2). Fair representation is like proportionality 'a numbers game', but it also something more. It contains more 'soft and qualitative' methods and practises like the possibility to share the post as branch officer and ideas to facilitate the participation of ordinary members in meetings and policy making (playing fair). Self-organisation, fair representation and proportionality are affirmative ways of doing gender equality policy, but self-organisation and fair representation hold elements of a transformative strategy, too, as they promote new ways of doing union policy.

In the making of UNISON, it was acknowledged that new ways were necessary to create a union that was inclusive to all members. To reach this goal, it was necessary to create new forms of democracy and community. The challenge to the traditional union was thus regarded as coming not from individualisation, but from hitherto marginalised groups. It is these groups that are seen as in opposition to traditional union solidarity and community. Moreover, the new merged union should try to overcome/reduce this challenge by creating a diversified solidarity and community. The scene was set for radical change; not only for the purpose of creating equality, but also to be able to attract new members and strengthen the influence of the union. The interest in the gender equality policy and the interest in union renewal were very much the same.¹³

The UNISON strategy bears elements of both the organising model and the service union model. Resistance to change have still not completely disappeared in UNISON. In order to keep UNISON on 'the right track' gender equality agents repeatedly use the organising strategy and the priority to this given by the TUC (Roundtable Meeting, Ruskin College 1/3 2002). Another problem is that the gender equality goals have not been reached although women's representation has been rising. Some of these problems could be regarded as being included in the same question: has the change in UNISON been radical enough? Anne McBride identifies a conflict between the democratic form in UNISON and the intentions of the gender equality policy. The effectiveness of the radical strategy of self-organisation is limited when implemented in a liberal democratic organisation (McBride 2001).

Does the future of unions depend on a transformative strategy for change?

The LO and the UNISON follow very different paths when it comes to labour movement renewal and gender equality. LO prefers a mostly liberal strategy for change and holds on to the service union concept and representative democracy. UNISON draws on a much more radical strategy for change and includes elements from organising union principles and from participatory democracy. The LO does not

¹³ Or became the same because of strategic acting from gender equality agents in all three unions during the negotiations and merger processes (see also Colgan/Ledwith 2002b).

establish new ways of doing union policy or a new gender agenda while the UNISON works its way towards both.

One major reason for this difference is the difference in contexts. As already stated in the beginning, the pressure on the British labour movement is much stronger than on the Danish. The Danish labour movement does not feel an urgent need for transformative change, rather quite the opposite as it has maintained a strong institutional basis through the Danish IR-model. Re-organising to more participatory ways of doing union policy could challenge the organisation of the Danish industrial relations. Another difference is that the Danish democracy model builds on an ideal of social equality, but also on a (hidden) premise of homogeneity. The British liberal democracy model has meant a relatively high acceptance of principles of diversity (Christensen/Siim 2001). The general resistance to radical tools for gender equality in Denmark and on the opposite the experience with self-organisation and affirmative action in the UK make up parts of the explanation, too. It should however also be noted that the change in gender equality strategies at the LO 2000 Congress has made it possible to press for more radical changes at the LO Congress in 2003.

If the pressure on the Danish unions is limited, then why insist on the transformative track? Firstly, because changing neither organisational structures nor democratic practises will reproduce gender inequality creating processes as they are embedded in the very way union policy is done. Secondly, it is a question of whether the labour movement will be able to attract and hold on younger people, as well as to benefit from their and women's resources if union policy practises are not changed. Just as important is the creation of new forms of solidarity and community, if unions should be able to hold together a diversified membership.

On one hand, the UNISON strategy has been able to increase female representation, to create more membership activity, to put new issues at the policy agenda, to get diversity groups into mainstream union activity, and to establish a feeling of belonging to the union (see also Colgan/Ledwith 2000a+b). On the other, the strategy also reveals a lot of problems that can be very informative for the development of transformative political change (and for the study of this).

Three problems are particularly interesting. The organisational culture has in many regions and committees stayed the same as before UNISON was constructed, which in some places has meant an indirect resistance to change and in other became restrictive towards developing new practices. Following directly from this is the problem of power, as not all leaders agree on (parts of) the strategy and others feel their position in the hierarchy threatened. Finally, UNISON balances between service and organising union principles and between representative and participatory democracy which give some strategic instability and clashes between the different models and principles, but might also reflect an adaptation to the context: How radical a strategy is it possible to carry out? How will it be possible to fit in at the labour market and in relations to other unions? Which are the immediate and the longer term needs of the membership?

The UNISON strategy points at a way to transform union policy and practise, but it also raises a lot of questions for further research, among these the very important one of how resistance can be overcome and a solidarity which rests on diversity can be created in reality. One way could be to implement the theoretically laid out strategy of constantly on-going mutual learning processes which however has to be further developed before it can become a strategy in praxis.

Abbreviations

AC: Confederation of Professional Associations
 FTF: Salaried Employees' and Civil Servants' Confederation
 KAD: Women's Workers Union in Denmark
 SID: General Worker's Union in Denmark
 SERTUC: Southern & Eastern Region TUC
 TUC: Trade Union Congress

References

- Andersen, Pernille Tanggaard (2002): Det fælles kvindelige til debat. En analyse af profil og strategi i kvindeligt arbejderforbund. In: Borchorst (ed): *Kønsmagt under forandring*. Hans Reitzels Forlag (The shared female to discussion).
- Aunbirk, Annette (1994): Lønmodtagerorganisationernes forældrepolitik i 90'erne. In: *Social Kritik* 30/94 (The employee organisations parental policy in the 90's).
- Bild, Tage / Jørgensen, Henning / Lassen, Morten / Madsen, Morten (1993): *Fællesskab og forskelle*. LO & CARMA (Community and differences).
- Billing, Yvonne Due / Eriksen, Karina Estrup (1995): *Kvinder og mænd i køn forening*. PMF (Women & men in gendered union).
- Briskin, Linda (1999): Autonomy, diversity, and integration: union women's separate organization in North America and Western Europe in the context of restructuring and globalization. In: *Women's Studies International Forum* 22 (5): 543-554.
- Briskin, Linda / McDermott, Patricia (eds) (1993): *Women Challenging Unions: Feminism, Democracy, and Militancy*. University of Toronto Press.
- Borchorst, Anette / Dahlerup, Drude (eds) (2003): *Ligestillingspolitik som diskurs og praksis*. Samfundslitteratur (Gender equality policy as discourse and praxis).
- CASA (1999): *Ta' lige stilling*. LO's repræsentationsundersøgelse. Udarbejdet til LO Kongres 99. LO (Decide on equality).
- CELI / KAD (2003): *Når kønnet taler med – et bidrag til mainstreaming af KAD's overenskomstarbejde*. Del 1-3 (When gender is part of the talk – a contribution to mainstreaming of KAD's collective bargaining process).
- Christensen, Ann-Dorte / Siim, Birte (2001): *Køn, demokrati og modernitet*. Mod nye politiske identiteter. Hans Reitzels Forlag (Gender, democracy and modernity. Towards new political identities).
- Colgan, Fiona / Ledwith, Sue (2000a): Diversity, Identities and Strategies of Women Trade Union Activists. In: *Gender, Work and Organisation* 7 (4): 242-257.
- Colgan, Fiona / Ledwith, Sue (2000b): *Women in UNISON*. Summary Report.
- Colgan, Fiona / Ledwith, Sue (2002a): Gender and Diversity: Reshaping Union Democracy. In *Employee Relations Journal* 24 (2): 167-189.
- Colgan, Fiona / Ledwith, Sue (2002b): Gender, diversity and mobilisation in UK trade unions. In Colgan & Ledwith (eds): *Gender, Diversity and Trade Unions*. International perspectives. Routledge.
- Cully, Mark / Woodland, S. / O'Reilly, A. / Dix, G. (1999): *Britain at Work*. As depicted by the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey. Routledge.

- Fraser, Nancy (1997): From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age. In: Nancy Fraser: Justice Interruptus. Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition. Routledge.
- Get yourself organised (undated). Booklet. UNISON's Equal Opportunities Department.
- Hansen, Lise Lotte (2003): Er det muligt at skabe ligestilling i fagbevægelsen? – to nye strategier og en teoretisk vision. In: Tidsskrift for Arbejdsliv vol 5 no 4 (Is it possible to create gender equality in the labour movement?).
- Hyman, Richard (2001): Understanding European Trade Unionism. Between Market, Class & Society. SAGE Publications.
- Hyman, Richard (2002): Imagined Solidarities: Can Trade Unions Resist Globalization? In: Dialogo Solidaridad – Global – Solidarity Dialogue, www.antenna.nl/~Waterman/hyman2.html, 6/9 2002.
- Jensen, Carsten Strøby / Navrbjerg, Steen E. / Lubanski, Nikolaj / Due, Jesper / Madsen, Jørgen Steen (1998): Tillidsrepræsentantundersøgelsen 98, LO (The Shop Steward Study).
- Jensen, Susanne Fast (1994): Samarbejdsaftalens historiske og politiske baggrund. Set i et kønsperspektiv. FIU-centret (The historical and political background of the co-operation agreement between employers and employees in a gender perspective).
- Kelly, John (1998): Rethinking Industrial Relations – Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves. Routledge.
- Labour Research. January 2000.
- Labour Research. July 2000.
- Landsorganisationen i Danmark (LO) (2000): LO Magasinet. Tema: Kønspolitik. Marts 2000 (The LO Magazine. Theme: Genderpolitics).
- Landsorganisationen i Danmark (LO) (2001) Samlet medlemskab pr.1 januar 2001. Available on: www.LO.dk (Membershipnumbers).
- Ledwith, Sue / Colgan, Fiona (2002): Tackling gender, diversity and trade union democracy: a worldwide project? In: Colgan / Ledwith (eds): Gender, Diversity and Trade Unions. International perspectives. Routledge.
- Lind, Jens (2000): Still the century of trade unionism. In: Waddington & Hoffmann: Trade Unions in Europe – facing challenges and searching for solutions. ETUI, Brussels.
- Mann, Marian / Ledwith, Sue / Colgan, Fiona (1997): Women's Self-organising and Union Democracy in the UK: Proportionality and Fair Representation in UNISON. In: Pocock (ed): Strife: Sex and politics in labour unions. Allen & Unwin: 194-221.
- McBride, Anne (2001): Making it work: supporting group representation in a liberal democratic organisation. In Gender, Work and Organisation 8 (4): 409-429.
- Millward, Neil / Bryson, A. / Forth, J. (2000): All Change at Work? British employment relations 1980-1998, as portrayed by the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey series. Routledge.
- Nielsen, Jens Christian (2000): Unge i bevægelse. In: Bering et al: Ude af trit? – forandringer i arbejdsliv og fagforeningsuddannelse. Roskilde Universitetsforlag (Young people in movement).
- Nielsen, Jens Christian (2002): Ungdom, demokrati og fagbevægelse – ny (arbejder)ungdom & demokratiske læreprocesser. Ph.d.-afhandling. Institut for Uddannelsesforskning, Roskilde Universitetscenter (Youth, democracy and unions – new (worker)youth & democratic learning processes).
- Projektbeskrivelse for et vækstlugs-forløb i FIU. Notat. April 2000. LO (Projectdescription).
- SERTUC Women's Rights Committee (2000): New moves towards equality – new challenges. SERTUC.
- Today's Trade Unionists: Union membership holds firm as unions win women. Notice. 22/6 2001.
- Udviklingsplan for FIU-systemet. Notat (Developmentplan for the FIU-system).
- Ugebrevet A4 13/10 2003. LO (The Weeklyletter A4).
- UNISON rules – as amended at the 2000 Conference.
- Valkenburg, Ben / Zoll, Rainer (1995): Modernization, Individualization and Solidarity. In: European Journal of Industrial Relations 1: 119-144

- Waddington, Jeremy (2000): Recovering from the neo-liberal assault? In Waddington & Hoffmann: Trade Unions in Europe – facing challenges and searching for solutions. ETUI, Brussels.
- Zoll, Rainer (1999): Differenz und Solidarität – oder: Was aber ist Solidarität heute? In: Kaiser et al (eds): Auf zu neuen Ufern. Gewerkschaftliche Organisationsmodelle in Österreich und Europa. Wien, OGB-Verlag.