

Collective systems, unions, and broad participation

Trial lecture 6th May 2011

Geir Liavåg Strand, IØT, NTNU



NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Outline

- Subject for the lecture
- The “collective system” vs. union
 - The “collective system” among workers
 - The role of the unions in contemporary Norway
 - Compare and contrast the two systems
- Broad employee participation – merely a cooptation of employees by management?
 - For and against this position

Subject

- You have acknowledged in your writing that what Lysgaard identifies as the “collective system” among industrial workers continues to function.
- In your lecture, please compare and contrast the “collective system” among workers with the role of the union in contemporary Norway.
- In addition, reflect critically on the argument that broad employee participation is merely a cooptation of employees by management, presenting the case both for and against this position.

Norway in the 1950s

- Characteristics
 - Rebuilding after World War 2
 - Social Democrats (Labour Party) in power 1945-1963
 - Workers
 - Little formal education beyond 7 years compulsory education
 - White men
 - 4% promoted to foremen (Sørensen & Grimsmo, 2001)
 - Workers didn't talk to management outside work
 - Be polite, stand hat in hand (Sørensen & Grimsmo, 2001)



Systems at workplace

- Lysgaard identified four systems at workplace
 1. Technical / administrative system – the primary system
 - a. The factory with machines, organisational hierarchy, and workers
 - b. Management appointed by owners
 2. Union – a secondary system
 - a. A formal system to protect members against the primary system
 - b. Union leader elected among members
 - c. Part of a national and international system of unions
 3. Workers collective system – a secondary system
 - a. An informal system to protect workers against the primary system
 - b. Leaders unknown
 4. The human system – the “personal” workers (Lysgaard, 1961)



The "collective system"

- Definition
 - "We"
- Characteristics
 - Own rules of what is right or wrong at workplace
 - Don't work too fast
 - Don't talk too much with management
 - Don't aspire to be a foreman
 - If appointed to foreman you are excluded from the collective
- Strong collective system might lead to strong unions
 - But the collective system is different from the union

(Lysgaard, 1961)



NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Norway since the 1950s

- Union representatives at company board
- The Work Environment Act (1977)
- Different colours in Government
- Individualism
- Less industrial workers
 - Not only white men anymore
 - Women and new Norwegians
- Educated – vocational training
- Union membership still high, but LO's share smaller

Unions in contemporary Norway

- Educated
- Part of systems that both are boxing and dancing
 - Main agreement
 - Partners in enterprise development – The Joint Programme
 - The extended representative co-operation between LO and NHO
- Union/managers are sometimes in the same boat
 - Globalisation and protection of local factory against remote owners
- “Boxing” or “Boxing and Dancing” or “Managers”



The collective system today

- Two master student projects from this century, both from Østfold county where Lysgaard identified the collective system in the 1950s
- Inger Lise B Hansen (2007) – “50 years later”
 - Same factory, same questionnaires (but strong tensions in factory)
 - She identified a strong collective system among the workers
- Jan Wilhelm Bugge Amundsen (2009)
 - Another factory, and under “normal” conditions
 - He identified a weak collective system among the elderly workers

Unions vs. collective system

Union	Collective system
Formal – known leaders	Informal – unknown leaders
Protect members (boxing)	Protect members
Partners in development (dancing) or even management	
Part of a larger system of unions	Local – at workplace
Strength vary	Strength vary
	Situational

Broad participation - cooptation

- Broad employee participation defined
- Cooptation defined
- Front soldiers or errand boys?
- Respect each others role
- Norwegian (Scandinavian) management traditions

Broad participation as cooptation?

For	Against
Union as errand boys	Union has to be strong to participate - mechanisms to prevent too close participation
American management traditions used in Norway	Norwegian management traditions (respect of employees' and unions' role)
Individuality among workers leads to cooptation	Union leaders are aware of the dilemma and know its own roles

References

- Amundsen, J. W. B. (2009). *Arbeiderkollektivet - Mot en teknisk/økonomisk idealtilstand? Et spørsmål om forskjeller*. Universitetet for Miljø og Biovitenskap (Norwegian University of Life Sciences), Ås.
- Brøgger, B. (2007). Samarbeid som produksjonsfaktor - en introduksjon. In B. Brøgger (Ed.), *Å tjene på samarbeid. Medvirkning - Partssamarbeid - Bedriftsutvikling* (pp. 11-30). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Colbjørnsen, T. (2003). *Fleksibilitet og forutsigbarhet. Arbeid og organisasjoner i endring*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Eikeland, O., & Berg, A. M. (1997). *Medvirkningsbasert organisasjonslæring og utviklingsarbeid i kommunene*. Oslo: Kommuneforlaget.
- Falkum, E., & Grimsrud, B. (2007). Mellom institusjon og praksis. In J. E. Dølvik, T. Fløtten, G. Hernes & J. M. Hippe (Eds.), *Hamskifte. Den norske modellen i endring* (pp. 99-122). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Fossetøl, K. (2004). Innledning. In K. m. f. Fossetøl (Ed.), *Relasjonsmestere. Om kunnskapsarbeid i det nye arbeidslivet* (pp. 11-26). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Gulowsen, J. (1987). *Kvalifikasjoner og arbeidermakt. Samlet og sterk eller splittet og svak?* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.



References

(2)

- Gustavsen, B. (1992). *Dialogue and development. Theory of communication, action research and the restructuring of working life*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Gustavsen, B., Qvale, T. U., Sørensen, B. A., Midtbø, M., & Engelstad, P. H. (2010). *Innovasjonssamarbeid mellom bedrifter og forskning - den norske modellen*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Hansen, I. L. B. (2007). *Arbeiderkollektivet - 50 år etter?*, Høgskolen i Østfold (Østfold University College), Halden.
- Heiret, J. (2003a). Et nasjonalt system i en internasjonal verden 1978-2003. In J. Heiret, O. Korsnes, K. Venneslan & Ø. Bjørnson (Eds.), *Arbeidsliv, historie, samfunn. Norske arbeidslivsrelasjoner i historisk, sosiologisk og arbeidsrettslig perspektiv* (pp. 177-246). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Heiret, J. (2003b). Samarbeid og statlig styring 1945-1977. In J. Heiret, O. Korsnes, K. Venneslan & Ø. Bjørnson (Eds.), *Arbeidsliv, historie, samfunn. Norske arbeidslivsrelasjoner i historisk, sosiologisk og arbeidsrettslig perspektiv* (pp. 109-176). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Huzzard, T. (2004). Boxing and Dancing - Trade Union Strategic Choices. In T. Huzzard, D. Gregory & R. Scott (Eds.), *Strategic Unionism and Partnership. Boxing or Dancing?* (pp. 20-44). Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

References

(3)

- Huzzard, T., Gregory, D., & Scott, R. (Eds.). (2004). *Strategic Unionism and Partnership: Boxing or Dancing?* Chippenham & Eastbourne, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnsen, H. C. G., & Claussen, T. (2002). Democracy, participation and communicative change. When democracy becomes a means and not an end. In M. Levin (Ed.), *Researching Enterprise Development. Action Research on the cooperation between management and labour in Norway* (pp. 223-238). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Kotter, J. P., & Schlesinger, L. A. (1979). Choosing strategies for change. *Harvard Business Review*, 57, 106-114.
- Levin, M. (Ed.). (2002). *Researching Enterprise Development. Action Research on the cooperation between management and labour in Norway*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Lysgaard, S. (1961). *Arbeiderkollektivet* (3 - 2001 ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Løken, E., & Stokke, T. A. (2009). *Labour relations in Norway*. Oslo: Fafo-report 2009:33, Fafo.
- Løseth, A. (2004). Region, kultur og økonomi - Nord-Vestlandet 1850-1975. In H. Gammelsæter, O. Bukve & A. Løseth (Eds.), *Nord-Vestlandet - liv laga?* (pp. 22-51). Ålesund: Sunnmørsposten Forlag.



References

(4)

- Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schramm-Nielsen, J., Lawrence, P., & Sivesund, K. H. (2004). *Management in Scandinavia. Culture, Context and Change*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sørensen, B. A., & Grimsmo, A. (2001). *Varme og kalde konflikter i det nye arbeidslivet*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Sørli, E. (1977). Bedriftsdemokratiet som tiltak mot arbeiderkollektivet. *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*(2/1977).
- Utgård, R. (2004). *Fagbevegelsens frontsoldater eller ledelsens løpegutter. Om konserntillitsvalgtes bidrag i omstillinger i internasjonale konserv*. Oslo: Rapport 454, Fafo.
- Wicken, O. (1997). Regionenes industrialisering - et historisk perspektiv. In A. Isaksen (Ed.), *Innovasjoner, næringsutvikling og regionalpolitikk* (pp. 80-111). Kristiansand: HøyskoleForlaget.
- Øyum, L., Finnestrand, H. G. O., Johnsen, E., Lund, R., Nilssen, T., & Ravn, J. E. (2010). *PALU - Utvikling og praktisering av den norske samarbeidsmodellen*. Trondheim, Oslo: SINTEF, NHO, LO, Hovedorganisasjonenes Fellestiltak.



Thank you for your attention

- Contact: Geir Liavåg Strand, gst@vestforsk.no