

# Swedish Trade Unions' Alliances

- Geographical strategies and motivations

Author  
SARA FALKENSJÖ

Supervisor  
JONAS LINDBERG

**MASTER thesis in Geography with major in Human Geography**  
SPRING semester 2017

Department of Economy and Society  
Unit for Human Geography  
School of Business, Economics and Law at  
Univeristy of Gothenburg



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW



Student essay: 30 hec  
Course: GEO230  
Level: Master  
Semester/Year: Spring 2017  
Supervisor: Jonas Lindberg  
Examiner: Marie Stenseke  
Key words: Trade Unions, Geographical Strategies, Agency, Scale, Geography of Justice, Sweden

---

## Abstract

Workers' agency, and their struggles to potentially increase their agency, has been and still is intriguing labour geographers. The relevance and potential of the role of the trade union for workers' power is an interesting subject in a time of international competition and economic disparities.

The aim of the study is to contribute to an increased understanding of the geographical dimensions of labour agency in relation to current socio-political challenges, by studying the character of and motivations behind Swedish trade unions' national and international alliances.

To accomplish the aim of this study the following research questions are to be answered:

- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies, are Swedish trade unions partaking in alliances?
- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies, are Swedish trade unions participating in actions?
- What justifications motivate Swedish trade unions' different alliances and joint actions?

Of importance for answering the research questions have been theories and concepts regarding agency, geographical strategies and moral justice, to help explain motivations behind workers' alliances and actions. To study the qualities of the trade unions' alliances and actions a critical study of the trade unions' websites and documents, and interviews with key informants were conducted. The study objects were ten Swedish trade unions, chosen based on qualities judged to be of relevance to get a spread in answers to these questions – size, national confederation, if sector specific and if subject to competitiveness internationally.

The geography of Swedish trade union alliances and actions seem to reflect that recruiting and organizing is important, as are international alliances and solidarity. International alliances and actions might serve both to keep workers informed and to gain strength by numbers, as well as to counteract e.g. social dumping and mirror the transnationalism of capital. There is often a discrepancy between competitive and solidarity goals within the union, but this appears not to be problematized. The size of a trade union matter for its ability to enter alliances, and a strong ideology matters for the ability to find compatible organizations to co-operate with. A trade union's sectors' level of international competition appears to matter for their participation in competitive alliances – more competition means more alliances entered to increase competitiveness – at least for the trade unions in industry.

---

Unit for Human Geography, Department of Economy and Society  
School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg  
Viktoriagatan 13, PO Box 625, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden  
+46 31 786 0000  
es.handels.gu.se



## Preface

I would like to thank my informants at the Swedish Union of Forestry, Wood and Graphical Workers (GS); the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union (HRF); the Industrial and Metal Workers' Union (*IF Metall*), *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* (SAC) and *Skogs- och Lantbrukstjänstemannaförbundet* (SLF), who all despite hectic schedules let me interview them. It would have been a meagre result without your participation!

I would also like to thank my boyfriend and family for being so good to me in times of deep doubt and desperation (and moving house in the middle of it all). And to my amazing classmates, perhaps especially those in *Kulturkällar'n*, our little human geography makeshift office, thank you for sharing this... "experience".

And I would like to give a huge thank you to my supervisor, Jonas Lindberg, for posing all the right questions and being an absolute rock of positivity.

Sara Falkensjö

Gothenburg 19-06-2017



## Table of contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b><i>i</i></b>
<b>Preface</b> .....	<b><i>iii</i></b>
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	<b><i>v</i></b>
<b>Tables</b> .....	<b><i>vii</i></b>
In text .....	<b><i>vii</i></b>
In appendixes .....	<b><i>vii</i></b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b><i>viii</i></b>
<b>1 Introduction, aim and scope</b> .....	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.2 The role of trade unions during different times</b> .....	<b><i>1</i></b>
<b>1.3 The state of the world</b> .....	<b><i>2</i></b>
<b>1.4 Previous research in labour geography</b> .....	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b>1.5 Project aim and scope</b> .....	<b><i>5</i></b>
1.5.1 Aim and research questions .....	<b><i>5</i></b>
1.5.2 Clarifications of key terms .....	<b><i>5</i></b>
1.5.3 Scope and delimitations .....	<b><i>6</i></b>
<b>1.6 Outline</b> .....	<b><i>7</i></b>
<b>2 Theory</b> .....	<b><i>8</i></b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>8</i></b>
<b>2.2 Agency</b> .....	<b><i>8</i></b>
2.2.1 Structuration theory .....	<b><i>8</i></b>
2.2.2 Agency and action in labour geography .....	<b><i>9</i></b>
<b>2.3 Geographical scale and worker strategies</b> .....	<b><i>11</i></b>
2.3.1 Geographical strategies and dilemmas .....	<b><i>11</i></b>
2.3.2 Moral in worker strategies .....	<b><i>13</i></b>
<b>2.4 Connecting the snippets of theory</b> .....	<b><i>16</i></b>
<b>3 Method</b> .....	<b><i>18</i></b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b><i>18</i></b>
<b>3.2. Methodology</b> .....	<b><i>18</i></b>
3.2.1 Methodology .....	<b><i>18</i></b>
3.2.2 Positionality .....	<b><i>19</i></b>
<b>3.3 Initial study</b> .....	<b><i>19</i></b>
3.3.1 Creation of a data matrix.....	<b><i>19</i></b>
3.3.2 Selection of trade unions for the study .....	<b><i>20</i></b>
<b>3.4 Qualitative text analysis</b> .....	<b><i>23</i></b>
<b>3.5 Interviews</b> .....	<b><i>23</i></b>

3.5.1 Informant interviews .....	23
3.5.2 Interview questions .....	24
<b>3.6 Critical discussion of the field material.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3.7 Summary method .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4 Trade unions in Sweden and their alliances .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.2 Unionism and labour politics in Sweden .....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.2.1 The geographical and political context of unionism in Sweden .....	28
4.2.2 The structure of trade unions and trade union confederations in Sweden .....	30
4.2.3 A brief guide on the structure of international trade unionism on a supranational level .....	32
<b>4.3 Alliances .....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.3.1 Types of alliances.....	33
4.3.2 National alliances .....	35
4.3.3 Regional alliances .....	36
4.3.4 Alliances spanning outside of Europe.....	38
<b>4.4 Actions .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.4.1 Types of actions.....	39
4.4.2 Actions with national targets .....	41
4.4.3 Actions with regional targets.....	42
4.4.4 Actions with targets outside of Europe .....	42
<b>4.5 Summary of results .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5 Analysis .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.2 Local alliances and actions for local needs and wants .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.3 A trans-local action for local needs and wants.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>5.4 Local alliances and actions for non-local needs and wants .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>5.5 Trans-local alliances and actions for non-local needs and wants .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5.6 Discussion and summary of analysis .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6 Conclusion and suggestions for future research .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6.2 Conclusions.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6.3 Further discussion, questions and future research.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendix A – Field material .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix B – Interview questions (in Swedish) .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix C – Alliances .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix D - Actions.....</b>	<b>64</b>



## Tables

### In text

Table 1: The Swedish trade unions included in the study .....	22
Table 2: Examples of alliances .....	33
Table 3: Examples of actions .....	40

### In appendixes

Appendix table 1: Alliances .....	60
Appendix table 2: Actions.....	64

## List of abbreviations

BWI	Building and Wood Workers' International
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EFFAT	European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism
ETF	European Transport Workers' Federation
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
EWC	European Work Council
FSV	<i>Föreningen Sveriges Vägingenjörer</i>
GS	<i>GS Facket för Skogs-, Trä- och Grafisk Bransch/The Swedish union of Forestry, Wood and Graphical Workers</i>
HRF	<i>Hotell- och Restaurangfacket/Hotel and Restaurant Workers' union</i>
IDC	International Dockworkers' Council
<i>IF Metall</i>	<i>Industrifacket Metall/The Industrial and Metal Workers' Union</i>
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
<i>Kyrka</i>	Kyrkans Akademikerförbund (for academics within the Swedish church)
LO	<i>Landsorganisationen i Sverige/The Swedish Trade Union Confederation</i>
LS	Local Syndicate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Nordic IN	<i>Industrianställda i Norden</i>
NUHRCT	Nordiska Unionen för Hotell, Restaurang, Catering och Turism
SAC	<i>Svergies Arbetares Centralorganisation</i>
<i>Saco</i>	<i>Sveriges Akademiker/The Swedish Confederation of Professionals' Associations</i>
SD	<i>Sverigedemokraterna</i>
SLF	<i>Skogs- och Lantbrukstjänstemannaförbundet</i>
TCO	<i>Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation/The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees</i>
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UN	United Nations
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

# 1 Introduction, aim and scope

## 1.1 Introduction

Workers' agency, and their struggles to potentially increase their agency, has been and still is intriguing labour geographers. The relevance and potential of the role of the trade union for workers' power is an interesting subject in a time of globalization, international competition and economic disparities. Here the background and contemporary context of trade unions will be given a brief review, as well as where labour geography is coming from and moving towards. This will be followed by the aim and scope of this study – to contribute to an increased understanding of the geographical dimensions of labour agency in relation to current socio-political challenges, by studying the character of and motivations behind Swedish trade unions' national and international alliances.

## 1.2 The role of trade unions during different times

Different social movements stem from different social contexts (Harvey, 2006: 114-15). The class struggle, in the sense of labour versus capital, and the development of the welfare state has historically been pushed forward by trade unions. In Sweden, the organization of trade unions blossomed during the post-war years' economic growth, when optimism brought about a more allowing environment for democratization, redistributive politics and union rights. A sense of fellowship felt in the workplace was widened to incorporate other, similar workplaces, leading to a strong position for negotiations as well as a sense of class community (Abrahamsson, 2008: 159). International solidarity amongst workers started as a readiness for support between equals, but solidarity has from this for many come to mean something resembling charity, where one helps those in need out of the want to be and do "good" (Liedman, 1999: 86-7). During the Cold War era, from the mid-1940's until 1991, international solidarity in the form of aid to small countries struggling to be autonomous was geopolitically important and reflected Sweden's balancing act between east and west. Solidary alliances were then regarded as a matter of national security (Abrahamsson, 2008: 165).

The geographical and temporal context – e.g. the political and economic climate – matter for the success rate of union struggles (Coe, 2013). Trade unions' power depend very much on their number of members, their negotiating strength on different scales, and their ability to stand their ground in conflict. The power of workers also depends on the power of employers, as well as on the state, politics and regulations. These factors are all interconnected and differ between

different sectors and countries (Kjellberg, 2013: 39-40). A general image of trends is that overall, lately trade unions have lost members in the “West”, although they have gained in the “Global South” (LO, n.d). Explanations given for the decline in the West are: that workers are more individualistic than before; a change in discourse making individuality and selfishness more acceptable; as well as trade unions no longer standing up for workers against capital, thus not fulfilling their expected role (Mercille & Murphy, 2015: 132). In Sweden, there was also a hike in the cost of union memberships, due to decisions made by the centre-right-orientated alliance government that took office in 2006 (Kjellberg, 2013: 42). Fees were later lowered again by the same government, but memberships have not recuperated (Kjellberg, 2014, 24 June). Furthermore, more short-time contracts and migrant workers in precarious working situations and other *vertically disintegrative* changes, such as outsourcing, growing numbers of subcontractors and hiring from agencies, break up the workforce in many sectors. This leads to fewer union members (Kjellberg, 2013: 48-9) and less ability to act upon injustices, as workers might not have much contact with one another, enough time to form or share opinions or even see the point in joining a union if they are only in a specific workplace temporarily (Coe, 2013). Trade unions sprung from solidarity and necessity, and has been part of a financially redistributive and democratizing movement, but today they seem to have lost some of their power and appeal to many employees. How does that sit with society today?

### 1.3 The state of the world

Capitalism and the geographical divisions of labour have led to geographical territories being in competition with each other for capital investment and growth (Harvey, 2006: 98). This can be seen globally, as a neoliberal agenda since the 1970’s has been pushed by states such as Britain and the US as well as organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Neoliberal states want to create a favourable business climate through deregulation, privatization, “free” trade (and protectionism in the right measures), individualism, a strong state of law, a “flexible” work force to match the more flexible capital etc. This is done to attract investment and innovation and generate growth and prosperity, which will then, supposedly, “trickle down” and make everyone richer (Mercille & Murphy, 2015: 9-15). Many, however, argue that there is little empirical evidence that this theoretical justification of neoliberalism works in reality, but rather, to the contrary, is a way for the ruling class to keep economic power, and that economic disparities are increasing (e.g. Mercille, 2015: 9; Harvey, 2006: 25). With the European Union (EU), its common market and goal to create an investment friendly business climate has led to increasing pressure on labour in Europe – e.g. through

increasingly insecure employment for workers – while mainly larger corporations benefit (Flassbeck & Lapavitsas, 2015: 19, 70-1). The story is much the same in other regions and between regions globally.

The political view in Sweden of international solidarity as a matter of importance mentioned earlier was lost after the Cold War, perhaps leading to a decreased sense of relevance regarding transnational collaborations in the everyday lives of Swedes (Abrahamsson, 2008: 165). The role of trade unions, international cooperation and solidarity between trade unions in this era of falling memberships in the West, globalization and international competition is however one that is increasingly important for worker rights (Kjellberg, 2013: 51). Harvey (2006: 64-5, 83-4) writes that workers all over the world have to co-operate and dare call the class struggle for what it is, as the ruling élite is already waging this neoliberal war, albeit sometimes rather stealthily under the disguise of capitalism and “common sense”. There are many examples of different constellations of trade union collaborations with the aim to improve their fortune – between unions (e.g. Wills, 1998), between unions and social movements (e.g. Occupy Wall Street, Bookbinder & Belt, 2012, quoted in Nolan & Featherstone, 2015: 7), unions and communities (Wills, 2012), but also between unions and government (Mercille & Murphy, 2015: 131-2), and even unions and companies. Labour and its relation, often of a contesting nature, to capital has been a subject of study for some time now, and in the next section an introduction to labour geography will follow.

#### 1.4 Previous research in labour geography

Labour geography as a sub-discipline to economic geography has since the 1990's come to focus mainly on worker agency, as opposed to the earlier focus on capital's locational choices, where labour was treated more or less like any other commodity needed for the production process. This interest has later come to incorporate and broaden the knowledge base of both collective agency and the agency of individual workers, both in- and outside of work (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011). Unionism in our globalizing world thus remains an important strand in labour geography (Coe, 2013). Simply put *agency* is a group's or an individual's *capability to act* for the benefit of themselves or others, within the social and geographical constraints of where they are at (Castree, Coe, Ward & Samers, 2004: 159-60). Assigning workers agency has led to an interest in their strategies employing and expanding said agency. Different types of worker strategies have been usefully categorized by Katz (2004: 242-52) as *resilience*, *reworking* and *resistance*. Resilience means daily coping strategies, for individuals or groups of workers. Reworking and resistance, however, are geared at improving social conditions and

increasing power and agency – the former within the system, and the latter by changing it. Workers' actions are thus sometimes undertaken within and sometimes without the capitalist system (Gough, 2010; Coe, 2013), sometimes aligned with, and sometimes in opposition to, capital (Gough, 2010; Siemiatycki, 2012 in Coe & Hess, 2013). Striving to keep businesses within the country or region through a “race to the bottom” pay- and rights-wise, plays into the hands of capital (Kjellberg, 2013: 45; Dicken, 2015: 67). Alternatively, workers can solidarize and chart the workings of capital, share knowledge and challenge capital e.g. through sympathy strikes with other workers (Gough, 2010) or money contributions to help those in strike stand their ground.

Worker actions and interests can be counter-productive between different scales and time frames: what keeps jobs in the local factory now might mean an immediate decline in jobs somewhere else and contribute to an overall long-term decline in rights (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). Hastings (2016) argues that labour geography needs to pay further attention to labour divides to de-romanticise worker action and to improve chances of more successful future strategies for improved agency and realities for workers world-wide. To further understand worker interests and how they shape worker actions there is a need for exploring the *motivations* and *justifications* behind said actions (Hastings, 2016). Humans are according to Gough (2010) not inherently altruistic nor individualistic, but rather our actions are undertaken if they are perceived as *feasible* within our material and, perhaps more importantly, social context. We thus choose projects we conceive of as both doable and acceptable, and it is easier to justify actions that are positive locally, despite having negative effects in other localities. Even with a more vivid geographical imagination and traditional class-politics at heart workers might still act upon local interests, as it is harder to solidarize with persons in other places that one does not know (Castree et al., 2004: 60, 120). It does however happen, and Castree et al. (ibid., p. 118-19) write of four different *geographical strategies* that workers employ, where an action is taken on a local or trans-local scale, and the target for the action might be the benefit of locals or non-locals. This adds up to four strategies:

- *Local acts for local needs and wants* – where workers act entirely locally to enhance their local situation.
- *Local acts for non-local needs and wants* – where workers act locally, but the benefits of the action are not local.

- *Trans-local acts for local needs and wants* – where workers act in coordination with workers in another place for local benefits.
- *Trans-local acts for non-local needs and wants* – where workers organize together in different places for common goals.

To add to the understanding of worker agency there is continued need for analysis of agency within the societal structures that shape and constrain it (Coe, 2013). Globalization means an increasing need for fruitful transnational unionism, as well as community unionism, if workers are to counteract the competition against each other on capital's terms (Coe, 2013; Gough, 2010), but what do Swedish trade unions do to handle current socio-political challenges? With a downturn in trade union membership in many Western countries, many workers being hindered from organizing, neoliberalism, global and local economic inequalities, globalizing forces and capitalism's spatial fixes, there is a need to study workers' struggle to increase agency. Focus in this study is on ways that trade unions today use collaborations to improve the agency of their own members and/or workers in other places in the socio-political context described.

## 1.5 Project aim and scope

### 1.5.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to contribute to an increased understanding of the geographical dimensions of labour agency in relation to current socio-political challenges, by studying the character of and motivations behind Swedish trade unions' national and international alliances.

In order to accomplish the aim of this study the following research questions are to be answered:

- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies, are Swedish trade unions partaking in alliances?
- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies, are Swedish trade unions participating in actions?
- What justifications motivate Swedish trade unions' different alliances and joint actions?

### 1.5.2 Clarifications of key terms

*Alliance* in this study refers to long-term collaborations, networking etc. with other groups of some sort. An ally does not necessarily have to be a recognized organization, as some groups

of workers are not allowed to organize, but are important nevertheless. The words “alliance”, “collaboration” and “co-operation” are used interchangeably for readability.

A collaborative *action* is an alliance that is temporary and aimed at a specific goal. It is conducted together with, or in support of another group or organization. Expected findings are co-authored debate articles, sympathy strikes/notices, projects, campaigns, demonstrations etc.

*Character of alliances* refers to who the partner in the collaboration is, and what that indicates regarding what the desired outcome is – e.g. improved sector competitiveness, improved working conditions for workers. *Motivations* (rather than motifs, which are much harder to pinpoint) from the trade unions, where available, will further complement this.

*Geographical dimension* is here analysed through the concept of scale. *Geographical scale* here refers to whether an alliance is local (in this study national, unless stated otherwise), Nordic, European or “global” in reach. In the *geographical strategy*, the reach of the alliance and where the outcome is intended are separated – i.e. an alliance might reach from Sweden to the other side of the world, but the intended outcome might be to benefit only one part of the alliance, locally or non-locally (Castree et al., 118-19).

### 1.5.3 Scope and delimitations

The objects in the study are Swedish trade unions on the national level. The subdivisions of the national labour federations and their actions are too many to fit inside the scope and time-frame of this dissertation. They are not in any way unimportant or uninteresting, but it would not be feasible to incorporate them while studying several trade unions for a spread in material and potential comparisons between e.g. different sectors and number of members. The time-frame of the study also meant a need to limit the time-span for the data collected, which was set to span three years back.

When using terms like workers, labour etc. in this study, officials and academics are included. This is partly because it is not always easily discernible what is blue collar or white collar employment (TCO, 2015). Also, the Swedish workforce is largely comprised by officials and academics, and they too, are to some extent, feeling pressures from employers in the form of e.g. part time and/or temporary employment, especially persons that are young or soon retiring (e.g. LO, 2017: 7-9; TCO, 2015). The three different Swedish national confederations organize trade unions typically for labourers (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO), officials (the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees, TCO) and academics (the Swedish Confederation of Professionals’ Associations, Saco) respectively. Trade unions from all three,



and outside national confederations, have been chosen to potentially get a wider spread in the geographical strategies of alliances and actions, and the motivations behind.

I choose to examine the Swedish trade unions as united organizations/entities, and not their individual members, despite there surely being disparities between what different members think, and thus possibly between the union's official "line" and the individual's opinion. One example of late is the fact that many of LO's members vote for *Sverigedemokraterna*, (SD), a Swedish party with a strong anti-immigrant agenda, and party representatives with neo-Nazi roots, which is not compatible with LO's values (Sydsvenskan, 2016, 6 December). Individual workers' everyday agency is also very interesting, and needs further engagement by researchers (e.g. according to Carswell & De Neve, 2013), but I will not delve into this as it is beyond the scope of this paper.

The collective bargaining (*kollektivavtalsförhandling* in Swedish) will not be considered an alliance between union and employer(s), no matter the nature or outcome of those negotiations. The bargaining is part of the so called "Swedish model", where pay levels etc. are negotiated between the parts in the negotiations – the trade union and the employer organization or firm – and are thus not unique initiatives between union and employer to collaborate. Nor will focus be on the "social dialogue" in the EU, between the European Commission (EC), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) or its federations, and employer organizations, as these discussions and negotiations are conducted at a supranational institutional level. Swedish trade unions matter in these settings, but work through their umbrella organizations and it is thus beyond the scope of this study.

## 1.6 Outline

This dissertation is outlined as follows: In the next chapter (2) a more thorough review of the theoretical aspects chosen to guide – and hopefully be expanded by – this study follows. The Swedish, European and global context, agency, solidarity, geographical scales, strategies and moralities will be discussed here. After that a methodological chapter (3) with how the empirical material was collected, and potential flaws are discussed. The chapter in which the empirical results found are presented (4) is aimed to be brief but exhaustive and followed by a more in-depth analysis with regards to the theoretical approaches in chapter 5. The dissertation ends with conclusions reached and a plethora of ideas for future studies (6).

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 Introduction

Here follows a presentation of the theories and concepts chosen to analyse the empirical material and help answer the research questions posed. The selection of theoretical tools has been made through a study of literature on previous research in labour geography. It started in Marxist economic geography (e.g. Harvey, 2006), as this is where my interest was sparked, and moved on to contemporary studies, as a lot has happened since labour geography's start in location theory. Perhaps most importantly there has been a shift from the determinism that is part of e.g. Marxism, towards structuration theory, where a dialectical relation between agency and structure is in focus (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011). There has been a multitude of different attempts to add to, and bring clarity and structure to the concept "agency", which is the main focus of labour geography today (Coe, 2013; Hastings, 2016). Focus has for this study been on the most prominent theorizations and concepts that involve, or translate to, organized labour. The theories, or snippets thereof, chosen were so because they provide a sound base for categorizing and analysing worker agency. Of importance for answering the research questions have been theories which problematize geographical scale and strategies to increase agency through alliances. Theories in moral justice were chosen as they are currently relatively unexplored (Hastings, 2016), but arguably called for as they help explain motivations behind workers' alliances and actions. The chapter starts off in the structuration theory to try to grasp the well debated relation between agency and structure. We then move on to more concrete geographical strategies and moral justifications of worker actions. The chapter ends with an attempt to connect these bits of labour theory.

### 2.2 Agency

#### 2.2.1 Structuration theory

An over-arching theoretical starting point to this study, are ideas that stem from *structuration theory*, where the sociologist Anthony Giddens (e.g. 1984) is one of the most well-known names. Structuration theory aims to connect structure and agency. It came about as an answer to *structuralist* theories with their underlying metanarrative, as in Marxism, and functionalist theories, which borrowed from biology and the natural sciences. The structuralist theories have been criticized for being too deterministic and leaving little room for human subjects and their will, other than as parts of what was seen as the naturally given system. The *hermeneutic* traditions, on the other hand, focused nearly solely on the human subject, actions and meanings, and the material and social structures surrounding these were given little or no importance. This

voluntarism, as opposed to structuralist determinism, did thus barely acknowledge constraints to, nor enabling of, human actions (Giddens, 1984: 1-3). Giddens attempted to join structure and agency, and the macro- and micro-levels, in a way that also encompassed the process of how they co-create each other over time. This joining of space and time made the theory interesting to geographers (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011).

What is meant by *structure* in structuration theory are the rules and resources that form, and continues to form, our lives. Procedures and methodologies become normative and act as rules, as they over time are repeated and stabilized. Resources are either authoritative, i.e. organizational capacities, or allocative, i.e. the control of material resources (Giddens, 1984: xxxi). *Agency* is the ability to act, to do something, and thus implies power (ibid., p. 9). Outcomes might be unintentional, but the act, or absence thereof, itself is the choice of the subject. Humans are in structuration theory viewed as reflexive agents, who act with intention and reason, but still within the time-space context of their situation, with its constraints and expectations (Giddens, 1984: 2-3). Structuration theory has played an important role in explaining and making sense of society. Structures, both social and material, are produced and re-produced by humans through their actions, and these actions, in turn, take place within societal structures. Without human actions these structures would not exist, or continue to exist, and without societal structures – e.g. monetary systems, patriarchy, class systems, built structures – everyone would be completely free to do anything, which we are not.

Critique against the structuration theory, at least in its early stages, is that the relation between structure and agency is perhaps too rational, and the importance of culture, dreams, desires or fear was still somewhat neglected (Healey, 2006; Halfacree, 1995). Other critiques are that the theory is too abstract, and that it is still too dualist or comparted regarding the interconnections of structure and agency, as reality is more complex (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) thus call for further, grounded additions of empirical studies of labour, on a meso-level, which incorporate the institutional embeddedness of labour agency. This is where this study is aimed.

### 2.2.2 Agency and action in labour geography

To start off with, there is one rather important assumption that has been made in this study, which seemingly is an assumption generally held in labour geography: that unions, and workers through unions, want to increase – or at the very least maintain – their agency. The act of organizing in trade unions itself implies a want or need of finding strength in numbers, strength to act towards common goals (Abrahamsson, 2008: 159). Agency has been theorized by many.

Coe (2013) calls for the need to further deconstruct agency, and that more empirical studies are needed to ground the concept in different contexts. One example which is often mentioned in the labour geography literature, is Katz' (2004: 242-56) categorization of agency as resilience, reworking and resistance. These are strategies, or tactics, through which people direct their lives. The *resilience* type of agency is not changing structures, but rather a way for people to get by, to cope and manoeuvre in their every-day lives. *Reworking* is aimed at improving one's power and/or material situation, often targeting specific problems in a pragmatic manner, but still without directly challenging the system dictating the terms itself. *Resistance*, on the other hand, is doing just that – challenging the capitalist system – but is also very rare. It might not be with big demonstrations or revolutions, but it is about workers themselves dictating their own terms through e.g. starting a sharing economy or co-operative. These categories are not easily teased apart and they build on one another, as e.g. coping and building relationships can be needed as a foundation to be able to push for organizing, which in turn might lead to acts of resistance (ibid., p. 242-56).

One critique of Katz' resilience, reworking and resistance, presented by Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) is that it is unclear whether they refer to *attempts* or *accomplishments*. For this study, I will use the categories to help categorize motivations for alliances and actions by trade unions. Of interest here is thus categorizations of attempts, as accomplishments would be too massive an endeavour, and there might be a discrepancy between what the aim, or the sense of accomplishment is and the actual outcome, something Katz (according to Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011) acknowledges. Another critique of Katz (2004) and many others (e.g. David Harvey, see Herod, 1997) is that in their theorizations of agency they put capital as the main force at play, giving labour a subordinate role, merely *reacting* to capital (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). This disregard of labour's active role as makers and shifters of the geo-economic landscape is something that was a surprisingly common view in early labour geography, which mirrors its roots in Marxist theory with its dominance of economics (Herod, 1997). The subordination of labour agency to capital has been challenged in later years. A view of the agency of labour and the agency of capital as a *dialectical totality*, where they both engage in a class struggle, both creating and co-creating each other, has become more prominent (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). Labour, too, seeks "spatial fixes", and is thus actively shaping the economic landscape to ensure their reproduction and survival (Herod, 1997). Both labour's and capital's actions are formed by social, institutional and material structures, and their actions form these structures in return, as Giddens (1984: 15-16) structuration theory explains. Capital is indeed very flexible and can

use economic coercion to great effect, but it is far from entirely free to move or place pressure on labour and governments (Gough, 2010).

Other types of agency, which are very much related to capital, but do not put capital as the central power at play, are identified in a study by Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (2011) as e.g. *in-/formal, individual, collective, spontaneous, goal-directed, sustained* and up-scaled (“moved beyond individual mines and compounds” (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011: 250)). They came to the conclusion that worker agency can both “unite and compound, and yet it can also fracture and fragment” (ibid., p. 257-8), as workers’ struggles and goals change over time. Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (2011) relate agency to control, which is relevant in this study as well, insofar that members in Swedish trade unions through said unions grapple with employers and government for control in workplaces, on the labour market and in society. However, Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (ibid.) conducted their research in a very different historical and geographical context: in post-colonial and -apartheid South Africa. When Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (ibid.) break control down to e.g. reproductive control, workers’ rights to control their own intake of food, sexual life etc. during apartheid it becomes very clear that agency and labour struggles in practice look different in different places. This is not to say these *types* of problems do not exist in Sweden, but they take very different forms, such as discussions on parental leave or exploitation of immigrant workers, and, importantly, are not nearly as severe, obviously. There is awareness needed, both to differences and similarities in geographical context, and historical backdrops, to be able to theorize around, and connect worker struggles for increased agency on different scales (Harvey, 2006: 62-5).

## 2.3 Geographical scale and worker strategies

### 2.3.1 Geographical strategies and dilemmas

Geographical scale can be employed by capital and labour alike, to illustrate or motivate actions. Scale is a useful tool, but it should be clear that it is a human concept that is created as a way to help make sense of the material and social world (Castree, 2000). One example is Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu’s (2011) up-scaling of agency, where the collective organization of workers from several mining compounds into one trade union led to a stronger, sustained agency. In the next section, about moral justifications of actions, motivations will be dealt with in more detail. Here though, to make clearer the geographies of worker co-operations and conflicts Castree et al. (2004: 118-19) categorize four different geographical strategies workers employ, which build on different geographical scales:

- *Local acts for local needs and wants* are where workers act entirely locally to enhance their local situation. This can be a competitive strategy to e.g. secure jobs. It can be aimed to benefit the workers themselves, but also employers and the local community.
- *Local acts for non-local needs and wants* are where workers act locally, but the benefits of the action are not local. This can mean refusing to take jobs that are lost elsewhere in the re-structuring of a Transnational Corporation (TNC).
- *Trans-local acts for local needs and wants* means acting in coordination with workers in another place for local benefits, and could be the opposite to the above in the case of a restructuring of a TNC – campaigning to get workers in another plant to not take on jobs, in order to attempt to keep them locally.
- *Trans-local acts for non-local needs and wants* are where workers organize together in different places for common goals, such as e.g. co-ordination of minimum wages.

Labour’s geographical strategies are not always easily discernible (Castree et al., 2004: 118-19), and here too, as with Katz’ (2004: 242-256) categories, it is unclear whether it is attempts or accomplishments that they regard. In this study the categorizations will be used for categorising the act or alliance itself as local (national) or trans-local, and the trade unions’ aims, rather than results, as local or non-local. Again, in this study, what is meant by “local” is the national level, as the national level of trade unions is the “smallest” in this study.

Ince, Featherstone, Cumbers, MacKinnon and Strauss (2015) argue that there is a difference to be noted between “concrete struggles”, i.e. localized efforts, and the more general labour movement, challenging capital across space. I would here thus connect the concrete struggles to the three first geographical strategies, as they are all strictly local in act and/or target, and the “general labour movement” to the category “trans-local acts for non-local needs”, where a more universal effect is the goal, according to Castree et al. (2004: 118-19). However, I have one critique, or maybe rather an expansion, especially to the “target-side” of the categorizations. Theoretically there could be a difference between struggles as to whether the target is *non-local* or *global/universal/all-encompassing*. The difference would be that the non-local target implies a localized, concrete struggle, even if it is the target of a trans-local action, whereas the universal target fits better with what Ince et al. (2015) mean by a general labour struggle. Technically an action could be aimed to benefit a group/a few groups of non-local workers or it could be aimed to benefit all workers. Examples could be (1) a Swedish trade union financially supporting workers in Spain in a protest for better working conditions, as compared to (2) the same Swedish

trade union and workers in Spain creating a campaign to improve workers' conditions in their sector, e.g. hospitality. The former example I would think of as "trans-local action for non-local needs", as the Spanish workers are the intended beneficiaries. In the second example, however, both countries and potentially their whole hospitality sector is the target – trans-local action, but for universal needs.

Geographical dilemmas for the labour movement occur when workers in different places are put in a position where they can act for their own local needs and wants at the expense of workers elsewhere. This is closely related to geographical scale, as it is hard to see, or foresee, the implications of an action on one scale on another scale (Castree et al., 2004: 119-21). The nature of capitalism is that the over-accumulation of capital in one place needs to go somewhere, another place, where circumstances are more favourable for investment (Harvey, 2006: 98). This puts labour in different places or regions in competition with one another, for jobs and investments, which is what sets the scene for labour's geographical dilemmas (Castree, 2004: 119-20). Cooperation and solidarity does not come easy, as goals, contexts and power differ between unions or community groupings, creating areas of tension (Coe, 2013; Gough, 2010). Greater disparities on a global scale can then be expected to make it harder still for workers to cooperate, but, arguably, even more necessary, if trade unions are to counteract these trends and potentially create a more equal society and labour market globally. What is needed to create this change, with, according to Castree et al. (2004: 120, 256) is a widened geographical imagination of workers, where other scales than one's own are incorporated. There is also a need to shift away from buying into the competitive justice of markets, according to Gough (2010). I will now delve into the latter.

### 2.3.2 Moral in worker strategies

Actions can be more or less deliberate and stem from more or less clear political, individual and/or collective interests (Carswell & De Neve, 2013). I have thus in this study taken Hasting's (2016) call for moral explanations of how decisions are made, to discern potential conflicts in motivations, especially regarding different geographical scales, in Swedish trade unions' work, and to further understand why certain alliances are important to certain trade unions. Justice is, according to Gough (2010), a *praxis* that develops in social relations, which generally matter the most in our immediate proximity, and thus is intrinsically geographical. Ways to justify actions are thus strongly connected to scale. *Solidarity* can also be said to be not merely in words, but in actions. Workers' solidarity can according to Liedman (1999: 86-7) be described as a "brotherhood of action", based in mutuality and affinity. Workers have an actual communal

base – “next time it could be me, or we are alike” – but without action this is politically unimportant (ibid., p. 102). In Liedman’s (ibid., passim) reasoning scale is not emphasized as much as the social context. From the “solidarity of similarity” of e.g. the worker, there sprung a “solidarity of contrast”, where those worse off were the target of actions. This stemmed from a solidarity of similarity between workers, but as differences between workers has grown internationally this solidarity has become hard to distinguish from charity, as those that have give to those that have not. This is not necessarily bad, as not only those perceived as equals are included in this solidarity. However, charity places the target of the solidarity in a subordinate position, and the solidarity is more fickle – those that have might not want to give to those that have not anymore, and they might place demands on the receiver of charity (ibid., p. 86-7).

Gough (2010) writes that actions are undertaken if they are perceived as *feasible* within our material and, perhaps more importantly, social context. We choose projects we conceive of as both doable and acceptable, and it is easier to justify actions that are positive locally, despite having negative effects in other localities. The social context thus co-creates our actions, and this, rather than an inherent altruism or selfishness decides their nature. As social relations and the social context are constantly in the making they simultaneously set the frame and continue to develop through our actions, creating a variable social context and varying feasibility. Therefore, a society as well as the individual can contain conflicting interests and moralities (ibid.). There are two different moralities that make workers adopt different strategies according to Gough (ibid.): the *justice of markets*, and the *acknowledgement of oppression and unjust social relations*. In the morality of justice of markets, which Gough (ibid.) identifies as strategies in collaboration with capital, strategies are justified through a morality based in capitalism that is prevalent today, where the worker is a seller and the employer is a buyer of labour on a (supposedly) level playing field. The worker thus has to compete with others selling their “goods” to attract a buyer. This can entail *individual advancement* (where workers make themselves more attractive to employers); *exclusion* of groups of workers by other workers to make gains for themselves (e.g. blacks by whites, women by men); and *improvements in efficiency*. The strategies against capital are justified through an acknowledgement of the playing field as not being level, that there is oppression and unjust social relations at play, and through solidary relations to other workers. Strategies that go against capital are: *militant particularism* (local actions to e.g. secure jobs), but only if the struggle is at the expense of capital, rather than the expense of other workers; and *traditional union organization*. In the



latter category, Gough (ibid.) lists three viable ways: unionism within a large multi-site firm; across different firms within the same sector; or across sectors within a geographical territory (community unionism). The aim is to challenge oppression and to gain control (over production and investment), Gough (ibid.) writes, and this will be increasingly feasible as knowledge and confidence grows.

Gough's (2010) focus is on worker strategies to secure jobs. He does however argue that one person, an organization and/or society due to the perceived feasibility of different actions can have different justifications and moralities simultaneously. The morality behind justifications of actions and the use and importance of scale can thus be of use in this study to analyse trade unions and other actions, such as the potential balancing act many unions find themselves in, between their members' pay levels, keeping of jobs, and solidarity between workers globally. What Gough (ibid.) means by traditional trade union organization, seems to be where the overall aim of a union, or collaborating unions, is to take over production. This, I would like to argue, is not (all) contemporary unionism. The aim to control production and investment, even though it is made to sound reasonable and not utopian in Gough's (ibid.) article, I think stems from an over estimate of the desire of all workers to seize power, or even seize half the power. Or it is an under estimate of the influence of neoliberalism on discourse and what is perceived as "common sense" (Harvey, 2006: 83-5). This ties in with the influence of our social context, and what is considered acceptable, on perceived feasibility (Gough, 2010). Another thing I find lacking in Gough's (ibid.) reasoning is that it is a big step between justifications based in the market and justifications based in unjust social relations. Gough (ibid.) dismisses the redistribution of rights and resources of quasi-socialist justice, as socialist justice must aim for just social-spatial relations, but for the sake of analysis it would be very helpful. The two moralities he does expand on do however serve quite well as two stylized categories, which function as analytical extremes.

To get back to the importance of scale: The competitive market strategies are more localized, ranging from the body to the workplace, region or nation. They are more likely to be socially oppressive and/or fixated on territory, e.g. the state. The solidary strategies are generally also started on a smaller scale, such as the workplace, firm or sector – this is more feasible, as it is easier to organize – but with the potential to grow and incorporate other workers at large spatial scales. The up-scaling of struggles are the results of growing geographical imaginations and is an important part of modern labour struggles. I would here, like to get back to what Gough (2010) refers to as "militant particularism", and also bring the here first mentioned of the

geographical strategies (local action for local needs and wants) by Castree et al. (2004: 118-19) to attention. Perhaps, if Gough (2010) is right about local struggles that place demands on capital, but do not negatively affect other workers, the “local action for local needs” is not always competitive. Other workers might not be the *primary* target of the action, but if it is a strategy demanding more from capital, e.g. raised pay, it could even benefit workers elsewhere, as it could counteract social dumping.

#### 2.4 Connecting the snippets of theory

Despite the criticism of structuration theory, it is a way to acknowledge that both structures and actions matter, and an accessible attempt to connect the two. Here I wish to connect Giddens’ (1984) structure to Gough’s (2010) feasibility. Structure and agency feed and (re)produce each other. Feasibility sets the frames for actions and alliances, and is changed by them in similar ways. Structure in structuration theory might be a wider and more hidden concept, whereas feasibility is what is perceived as doable, but the dialectical relationship with agency, actions and alliances connect them.

The types of strategies for agency presented are all useful, if we are to create as big a vocabulary to discuss agency as possible, and as in this case put it to use. For this study Katz’ (2004: 242-56) categories *resilience*, *reworking* and *resistance* will be used, as will Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu’s (2011) categories *in-/formal*, *individual*, *collective*, *spontaneous*, *goal-directed*, *sustained* and up-scaled, as the latter can describe agency not merely in relation to capital. Also, they remind us to keep an eye out for where agency becomes at the expense of others, e.g. through exclusion. This we can connect to Castree’s et al. (2004: 118-20) list of different geographical strategies, from the local to the trans-local, which tie into matters of what scale is prioritized, and Gough’s (2010) moralities, where actions can be motivated by competition or solidarity. Justifications of the market, where workers collaborate with, or play into the hands of capital (Gough, 2010) can be connected to Katz’ (2004: 242-551) resilience or reworking as inside of the system, and justifications based in unjust social relations (Gough, 2010) can be connected to Katz’ (2004: 251-56) resistance as outside the system.

Castree et al. (2004: 248-9) argue that too much of moral relativism and you can argue that “anything goes”, but in order to understand different reasonings and chart the full gamut of agency it is helpful. One can then go on to criticizing actions that have negative impacts on other workers, as well as bringing workers’ attention to the geography of their actions. In this study the focus is on gathering information on workers’ alliances and actions, to see what

different geographical strategies and motivations are discernible. How the collecting of this empirical material was undertaken is presented in the next chapter.

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the methods used to find the information deemed needed to answer the research questions, and fulfil the aim of the study are presented. In order to study the qualities of the trade unions' alliances and actions – where are the allies? who are they? why? – qualitative methods were used. The study objects were chosen based on qualities that were judged to be of relevance to get a spread in answers to these questions. To find out who the allies are, and where they are, a qualitative study of documents and websites of the chosen trade unions was conducted. Where available in the analysis of texts, the justifications and aims of alliances were also recorded. To verify of the accuracy of these findings, as well as gather more information regarding the aims and motivations of alliances and actions, interviews were conducted with experts in five of the trade unions. This chapter also holds a critical analysis of the sources used.

### 3.2. Methodology

#### 3.2.1 Methodology

In this study the work has pended between theory and empirical research and has thus been abductive. Initial studies of literature and research in economic and labour geography preceded empirics, and gave the idea of researching alliances as a way for workers to potentially increase agency. Very early on in the study the empirical field was examined to find out possible entry-points and variables. The methodology is however perhaps closer to the deductive side of the spectrum, as theory to some extent preceded empirics. From the initial reading ideas and vague hypotheses were gleaned, which guided the start of studying the field. This led back to further reading of theoretical material and so forth (Gren & Hallin, 2003: 219-20). The qualitative material gathered was analyzed and categorized by finding themes that corresponded to the dependent variables and theoretical entry-points based in previous research. Dependent variables were, when text analysis and interviews had been finished, critically reviewed and an analysis of ideas conducted. A critical analysis of ideas is where arguments are checked against norms (Esaiasson et al., p. 212), but in this case how motivations in combination with the ally fit with justifications of the market or unjust social relations. In hind sight, the time to do more “rounds” between empirics and theory, or following the methodological procedures in grounded theory (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012: 276) to find – or create – even more suitable theoretical categorizations would have been ideal, but possibly also too time consuming for such a (relatively) small project.

### 3.2.2 Positionality

A brief note on positionality is needed, as it perhaps is clear that there is a normative element to this study – the choice of subject, and that inequalities are defined as a problem straight off the bat. One’s positionality, due to e.g. gender, class and ethnicity, affects what one chooses to study, how one goes about studying it and the way one interprets the findings, and self-reflexion is thus needed. This will remind the researcher to be critical of their own work, and make the reader aware of where one is coming from (Gomez & Jones, 2010: 34, 42). My political and academic positionality I feel coincides. Academia, at least within the social sciences and subjects I have studied are fairly normative and leftist, as have I been for as long as I can remember. The perhaps good thing about this is to be able to be critical of the neoliberal “common sense” that permeates society today (as e.g. Harvey, 2006: 83-4, would argue), but me even saying there *is* such a hegemonic “common sense” and calling it “neoliberal” shows a need to be wary not to be insensitive to findings that contradict this.

## 3.3 Initial study

### 3.3.1 Creation of a data matrix

In order to gain deeper knowledge of the potential variables and study objects, and to be able to narrow the sample down, a study of all Swedish trade unions’ websites was conducted, as well as related sources of information, such as the national confederations’ websites (see Appendix A – Field material). Also, examples of alliances and actions, what documents could be found and perhaps needed, and a deeper understanding of Swedish unionism, economy and politics in general was needed to get a sense of what was doable and what could potentially be of interest for the study.

From this initial, “light” qualitative text analysis to explore the terrain, and thus also gain deeper knowledge of possible variables, and check the relevance of the theoretical perspectives chosen, a data matrix, or analysis schedule, was created. Esaiasson et al. (2012: 44-51) say that this is a good way to create order in your research, an “intellectual aid”, and I agree. The units of analysis, i.e. the objects to be studied, were fairly clear from the start: Swedish trade unions, and as a sub-unit their collaborations. The basic criterion was that collaborations stemmed from trade unions on a national level, to be able to say something about how Swedish trade unions ally, and why. Also, a sub-national level, regional/local trade union federations or clubs, would have led to a work-load that would be overwhelming, and a risk of not many of the alliances reaching internationally. A narrowing down of the number of units still had to be done, however, as the initial sample of 61 trade unions also would have been overwhelming. To aid

the process independent variables, or dimensions, i.e. qualities or attributes of the units to be studied that might be able to explain the variations to be explained, were identified (shown below in section 3.3.2 Selection of trade unions for the study). The dependent variables, or the variable describing the variations of interest for the study, were carefully chosen with aim and research questions in mind, and with aid from the theories chosen. The dependent variables are: *geographical strategy/scale*; *ally/allies*; and *aim* (from the unit's/trade union's point of view). The sub-units (collaborations) were later divided into *alliances* and *actions*, in the case that there might be a difference in the dependent variables between them. The sub-units were further divided into *type of alliance* and *type of action*, to describe them and not miss anything of potential interest. If no variations between these divisions were found they could easily be collapsed again.

### 3.3.2 Selection of trade unions for the study

To guide the selection process all Swedish trade unions were listed, along with the independent variables:

- number of members;
- membership in a national confederation – The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), Swedish Confederation of Professionals' Associations (*Saco*), The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) – if any;
- whether the union in question is mainly sector specific, or spans over several sectors;
- a very rough estimate, from low to high, of different unions' susceptibility to international competition.

Number of members, whether part of a central organization or not, sector bound or not and susceptibility to international competition were judged to potentially be of importance for the results. Size can mean bigger influence, as there is strength in numbers (Kjellberg, 2013: 40-41) and more resources. National confederations can act both to coordinate collaborations, give strength and support, but theoretically also potentially act to diminish agency for the individual union if there are conflicting interests. The estimate of international competition was made by searching each union's website, using search words such as "competition", "international", "sector" (in Swedish: "*konkurrens*", "*internationell*", "*bransch*"). Whether a trade union is sector specific and subjectively estimated by the union itself as in high international competition was thought to possibly matter for where sympathies lie – e.g. with tradesmen nationally or

workers, in a more general sense, internationally. The aim of the selection was to get a spread between different types of unions, to potentially find different alliances and reasonings with regards to the current socio-political issues stated in the introduction, rather than to generate a set big enough to be statistically valid. There are obviously other very important and interesting issues that could have formed independent variables, such as e.g. number of migrated members or gender distribution in the trade union, but too many variables guiding the selection would have made it hard, as the sample of study objects is very small due to time constraints.

There were 61 Swedish trade unions in the original data set, which aimed to be all encompassing. Six relatively small trade unions did not have a search engine on their website, which were often quite rudimentary and gave a sense of being incomplete, and were therefore omitted, as it would make the search for relevant information ineffective and uncertain. *Ledarnas*, a trade union for managers and executives, was also omitted as even though their members are selling their labour to employers they are presumably in a different situation than most employees with regards to power in their work place. Thus, they were considered beyond the scope of this study. Several other trade unions also have members that are in supervising or management positions, but in those cases the union in question as a whole is not solely geared towards leaders. Finally, ten trade unions were chosen to be part of the study, as can be seen in Table 1: three from LO and TCO respectively, two from Saco and two with no membership in a national confederation.

*Unionen*, was chosen partly due to being the biggest trade union in Sweden, and according to themselves the biggest white-collar trade union in the world (Unionen, n.d.). *Kyrkans Akademikerförbund*, *KyrkA*, for church academics, was chosen because their members' professions might be thought of more as vocations or callings, and with a social agenda in their work life. Even though the church is not competitive in the economic sense, there is a steady decline in memberships (Svenska Kyrkan n.d.), which affects the organization and perhaps their prioritizations. *Skogs- och Lantbrukstjänstemannaförbundet* (SLF), for forestry and agricultural officials, was chosen as the level of Swedish food production is under debate and the international competition is high. They also have members in closely related "green industries", such as agricultural colleges, but food and fuel production were the main reasons they were chosen. The Industrial and Metal Workers' Union (*IF Metall*), The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (*Sveriges Ingenjörer*), and The Swedish union of Forestry, Wood and Graphical Workers (GS) were chosen as the different manufacturing industries they are represented in are in high competition internationally and of importance for Swedish export and

economy. The Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union (HRF) was chosen as they are in low direct competition internationally.

Three trade unions were chosen partly for reasons outside of the list of independent variables. *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* (SAC), Swedish workers' federation with an anarcho-syndicalist ideology, was chosen as it has a distinguishing class-politics and anti-capitalist agenda, and The Financial Sector Union of Sweden were chosen for being in the heart of capital's mobility. *Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet* (from here on referred to only as *Hamnarbetarförbundet*), the Swedish dock workers' union, was chosen as they are in a big conflict over wanting to negotiate pay levels for their members, at the time of this study, and have been figuring in the Swedish media. SAC and *Hamnarbetarförbundet* were also chosen as examples of trade unions outside of the national confederations.

Table 1: The Swedish trade unions included in the study

National trade union	Central organization	Members (approx.)	Sector specific	Level of competition internationally
<i>Unionen</i>	TCO	620 000	no	mixed
The Financial Sector Union of Sweden, <i>Finansförbundet</i>	TCO	30 000	yes	medium
<i>Skogs- och Lantbrukstjänstemannaförbundet</i> , SLF	TCO	650	no	mixed
The Industrial and Metal Workers' Union, <i>IF Metall</i>	LO	300 000	no	high
The Swedish union of Forestry, Wood and Graphical Workers, <i>GS</i>	LO	60 000	yes	high
The Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union, <i>HRF</i>	LO	50 000	yes	low
The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, <i>Sveriges Ingenjörer</i>	Saco	130 000	no	high
<i>Kyrkans Akademikerförbund</i> , <i>KyrkA</i>	Saco	5 000	yes	low
<i>Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation</i> , <i>SAC</i>	-	3 000	no	mixed
<i>Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet</i>	-	1 400	yes	medium

The selection of trade unions was made with the intention to get a good spread between the different independent variables, which I believe was achieved. In retrospect, however, the inclusion of a healthcare trade union, which could have been interesting regarding privatization and pressure on workers, at the expense of one of the industrial trade unions (*IF Metall*, *GS* and the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers) could potentially have yielded an even better spread in the empirical findings.



### 3.4 Qualitative text analysis

The qualitative text analysis, filling in the data matrix, was done before the interviews. This meant the ability to show the interviewees that research had been done, and pose more informed questions, and follow-up of answers. The main aim of the text analysis was to create an exhaustive list of collaborations, see if any discernible patterns in the dependent variables could be found in relation to the research questions, and in turn (re-)relate them to the theoretical perspectives and categorizations. The findings were systematically ordered and continuously revisited. As this was created in an MS Excel file, an extra column was added, where the backdrop of the alliance and/or information from related websites etc. could be added for context. The variations within the variable “geographical strategies” were categorized using the categorizations in Castree’s et al. (2004: 119-20), but noted if they did not “fit” these. The geographical scale – local, Nordic, European and global – was noted to bring order to the structure of the results. ”Ally/allies” were listed and noted what kind (e.g. union, company, non-governmental organizations (NGO) etc.). These two variables were thus aimed to systematize and “logically order” the findings on the websites and in the documents. The aim with this is to create easily discernible categories (Esaiasson et al., 2012: 211), here to later get a grasp of how all these different alliances and actions fit with, or what they say about, the trade union’s strategies to increase their agency. Where aims were found, they were recorded as quotes and/or through a summary.

### 3.5 Interviews

#### 3.5.1 Informant interviews

The interviews were conducted as informant interviews. The questions posed, about motivations for actions and alliances, resemble those of a respondent interview, where the interviewee is the object of study (Esaiasson et al., 201: 227), but in this study the interviewees are giving witness on the unit of study: the trade union. The idea of “witnesses” as presented by Esaiasson et al. (ibid., p. 227) however is somewhat of an overly optimistic idea of how they are supposedly “truth tellers” on a subject. In this case, the witnesses are invested in the organization they are telling “truths” about. They are still people, even though they talk on a subject they are very knowledgeable in. Now, the questions might not be very sensitive, and are intended to be straight forward, see Appendix B, which holds a general example of questions, but others in the same organization would maybe answer them slightly differently, as no one is ever an objective witness, but a person with different interests and motivations.

Contact with interviewees was sought through the central office of their respective trade union. An e-mail was sent to all, giving a brief introduction of the study (in general terms), showing the alliances and actions found in their organization, along with a question asking to be put in contact with someone knowledgeable on the subject for an interview. This way I could show I had done my research, get a fact check, and avoid being told what I already knew. HRF did not have an office e-mail online, so they were called by phone and that way I got in touch with someone directly. In that instance it worked very well, but most offices when called had little knowledge of whom I should have been put in contact with. The bigger the organization the harder, it seemed. The only person that had time to meet face to face was HRF, and we met in their head quarter in Stockholm. A recorder was used, along with a notepad to jot down thoughts. The interviews with GS, *IF Metall*, SAC and SLF were all done over phone, using the app Tape a Call to record. The other five trade unions were not interviewed, as they did not have the time or possibility, or simply did not respond, which is discussed further below in the critical discussion of the field material. There was thus no interview conducted with a member in *Saco*, which is a pity, as no light was shed on the relationship between trade unions and that confederation. All interviews were later transcribed and sorted into the data matrix for analysis against previous research and theories used.

### 3.5.2 Interview questions

The questions in Appendix B shows an example of the questions asked. As the interviews were conducted with informants the questions do not have to be identical between the participants (Esaiasson et al. 2012: 228). Also, the trade unions are somewhat different in their internal organization and have different alliances. The first few questions are general and “harmless”, asking about the interviewee’s position in the organization number of members etc. This was to get acquainted and for both me and interviewee to warm up a little. Then I asked if I had understood the level of international competition of their sector right and if it clashed with demands for pay, and often got some information on the state of their sector and/or what their members do. This was followed by questions about what the trade union’s position in relation to the employers is like, to find out more about their power relation, if they are much in conflict, or working closely together, etc. The importance of this is e.g. to find out more about if the trade union is in a position to place demands on capital (or does even though it is not), or sides with employers for competitive reasons. This helps explain where their decisions are stemming from and if they are in a precarious situation regarding jobs.

Then followed questions about alliances and co-operations on sub-national level, and if they sometimes get lifted to the national level. This was to see if there is a discernible pattern of up-scaling of militant particularism or if actions and alliances often stem from “lower” levels. After that followed a few questions on the membership in the national confederations (where applicable), their sense of influence in the confederation, and what the trade unions get out of this membership. This was to find out if they feel that they get increased agency, or perhaps have conflicting interests and have to abstain from certain actions etc. Then followed questions about European Work Councils, EWCs, as the sense I got from the trade unions’ websites was that they generally do not get involved much in these. EWCs are platforms for employees and employers within large TNCs in Europe. These are thus not direct alliances of the trade union itself, but of its members that work within a TNC that has a EWC. Whether the trade unions get involved or want to influence would however be of interest. Another question here was the relationship with employers in alliances, and what issues were harder/easier to agree on. This tells of the common ground trade unions and employers share – if any – which is interesting for understanding a trade union’s motivations.

A section of questions more specifically about the trade union’s own alliances then followed. Of interest here was mainly to clarify if the information gathered on the websites was correct, and to find out more about their motivations for alliances on different scales. After this a question about if there ever was a clash between different scales was posed, as this informs of the trade union’s geographical imagination and how they pose different actions and alliances in relation to one another. The final question was rather large and was aimed to get a grasp on the situation the trade union is in now, compared to earlier, in the contemporary context of e.g. faster communications, but also a harsher, more competitive socio-political climate. This was to get a sense of what issues are prioritized, what is a problem, what is not etc., which can help explain why certain actions are taken, alliances made and geographical strategies followed.

### 3.6 Critical discussion of the field material

Using documents from the trade unions’ websites and the websites themselves (see Appendix A – Field material) means using material that is on the trade unions’ own terms, generally quite well edited and showing a united and “tidy” front. The trade unions’ websites can be seen as a form of advertisement (e.g. Unionen, n.d.) – they want to attract more members, at the same time as they want to appeal to and be of use to the members they already have. Phrasings seem carefully weighed to not exclude potential members. There is a need to show strength and unity, but often not at the expense of competitiveness – that is the over-arching experienced gleaned

from visiting all 61 Swedish trade unions' websites. This does not (necessarily) mean the material found is not truthful, but the full gamut of conflicts and motivations might not show. This means a critical reading and awareness of contradictions is essential.

Interviewing only one person in each trade union is troublesome in that a) that person becomes the sole representative for the whole trade union despite that b) that person is rarely an expert in both national and international co-operations. In some cases, the person most suitable was not available, mainly due to hectic schedules, needing to focus on their members, and collective bargaining processes in full swing. In a couple of cases someone else, often on a "lower level", but well informed employee, would offer to speak to me instead. In many cases when calling a trade union to make sure they received the e-mail and that it was headed to the right person/-s the contact e-mail sent out had ended up with the wrong person or in the wrong section of the organization altogether. Finding the right person myself on the website was not always easy, as sometimes the "domestic political expert" was the one to talk to, and in other cases it was the "communicator". Or the assistant. Or the chairman. Whether contacting the office on their general e-mail or contacting a person directly, few e-mails hit home directly. The process of finding the right person in each union was done all over in many cases, and was in five of the ten cases fruitless. The position held by the informants can be seen in Appendix A – Field material. Over all, the process of getting in touch took longer than expected, meaning that interviews were conducted quite late on in the study and often over phone. Substitutes were too late to be found, and if another trade union would have to be found altogether, there would have been extensive work localizing all their alliances needed, which there was not time for within the timeframe given. Only five of the ten trade unions have had time for an interview. However, the material gathered from a lot of digging around on those five's (GS, HRF, *IF Metall*, SAC and SLF) webpages, and the webpages of LO, TCO, *Saco* and Union to Union (Appendix A – Field material) was near all-inclusive according to the informants at the trade unions. The only collaborations generally missing were EWCs, which are not alliances of the trade union itself, but of some of its members. Alliances within a firm or TNC are fairly easily discernible where they exist, in comparison to the other types. However, when interviews were held it surfaced that some of these types of alliances were not found on the website or in documents, which means more of those might have been missed (GS, interview). In some cases, there are vague hints at work in collaborations, but if it is not manifest anywhere it has not been counted. This might be of a more informal character or as a "by product" of other meetings etc. where representatives from trade unions might meet. Over all, the confirmed accuracy of the

information gathering from GS, HRF, IF Metall, SAC and SLF's web pages respectively makes me confident that the information gathered from the other five trade unions (*Unionen*, the Financial Sector Union of Sweden, the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, *KyrkA* and *Hamnarbetarförbundet*) is also comprehensive.

Asking informants about *motivations* rather than *motifs* is arguably a more valid way of asking why actions were undertaken. This as motifs can be hard to discern, even for the subject in question. However, how truthful the motivations stated are is still something for the interviewer to hope for, judge and try to get to the bottom of (Esaiasson, 2012: 290-292). Often the true motifs are not discernible to the actor, nor to the researcher. The latter is thus forced to go by *motivations*, rather than the *motifs* and hope that the subject for the study is being sincere. Motivations for certain actions are not necessarily coherent and accurate to reach the goal intended, but make sense to the actor in question (ibid., p. 291). In this case, it is not individuals asked about their motivations, but an organization, or rather documents and representatives from an organization. This makes it even more impossible to ask about motifs, as they may differ between different individuals in the organization.

### 3.7 Summary method

The study objects were chosen based on a brief initial survey of the entire field, which gave an understanding of what independent variables could be of importance. This, together with the dependent variables of interest gave the frame of the data matrix. This was filled in as the critical analysis of texts and the interviews with informants were conducted. The analysis was conducted as a critical analysis of ideas, where the dependent variables, such as motivations and aims, corresponded with the theoretical perspectives. The findings from the text analysis and interviews are presented in the next chapter and further analyzed in chapter 5 Analysis.

## 4 Trade unions in Sweden and their alliances

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the results from the qualitative text analysis of material on the trade unions' websites, and the interviews with informants in five of the ten trade unions in the study, are summarized. The material used can be found in Appendix A – Field material. The results are presented with a start in a brief rundown of Swedish unionism and its structure on different scales, for orientation. This is done as a combined backdrop of geographical context and results, which is aimed to give a better insight into the situation of the different trade unions. Then follows a presentation of alliances and actions found, respectively. The separation of alliance and action is done for clarity, as they are somewhat different in their nature. Where alliances are generally sustained over a longer period of time and have more over-arching goals, actions are generally more “pin-point” type events with more specific goals that have taken place in the last three years or so. As many alliances have led to actions coming into fruition, it felt suitable to start with the former. Of interest in all alliances and actions are what geographical strategy is followed, with what other organization the trade unions in the study have allied, and the motivations given. Two tables (Table 2 and Table 3) illustrate the sections with examples of alliances and actions different geographical strategies and allies. For the full list of co-operations see Appendix C for alliances and Appendix D for actions.

### 4.2 Unionism and labour politics in Sweden

#### 4.2.1 The geographical and political context of unionism in Sweden

This section is aimed to give some background and contemporary context to unionism in Sweden and the trade unions in this study. Depending on the situation for unions and workers in Sweden the motivations for alliances can be better understood. Sweden, Denmark and Finland are compared to the rest of the world highly unionized, with around 70 % of the work force members in a trade union (figures from 2010, Kjellberg, 2013: 53). In Sweden, there was a drastic decrease in trade union membership between 2006 and 2008, from 77 to 71 %, due to decisions made in 2006 by the centre-right alliance in Sweden. These decisions resulted in raised member fees to the unemployment insurance funds (UIFs, *a-kassor* in Swedish); dropped tax deductibility on both UIF fees and trade union membership fees; lowered initial unemployment benefits; and heightened minimum of hours worked monthly to be eligible for unemployment benefits. The previous economic redistributive measure between different funds was dropped, effectively meaning a bigger burden on certain funds with a larger number of unemployed, dubbed “*arbetslöshetsavgift*” in Swedish. The *arbetslöshetsavgift* was restored by

the same government at the start of 2014, meaning membership fees could be dropped nearly down to 2006 year's levels, but trade union memberships have remained low (Kjellberg, 2014, 24 June). GS (interview) said political decisions were often well felt and called the decisions in 2006 "anti-unionist". Internationally Sweden is still a highly unionized nation, but of the interviewed trade unions (GS, HRF, *IF Metall*, SAC and SLF) all spoke of decreases in members and/or the importance of continued organization and recruiting new members.

The Swedish, or Nordic, model is a system where pay development, working hours and work environment issues are negotiated between the parties of the labour market – employers and employees – through their organizations. The parties thereby also agree not to go into strike (workers) or conduct lock-outs (employers) or engage in other industrial action, on any of the points agreed on. SAC (interview) is not part of the collective bargaining and does thus not have this peace obligation (*fredsplikt* in Swedish). The issue mentioned earlier (section 3.3.2) for *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) is that they want to negotiate their members' agreement, as they organize most of the workers in the port in Gothenburg, but there is already an agreement between the employers and another union, *Transport* instead. This has led to an outdrawn conflict. When asked if they could partake in interviews several trade unions were in collective negotiations and hard up for time, as the collective bargaining is one of the top priorities for the Swedish trade unions that are part of these (e.g. GS, interview; *IF Metall*, interview; HRF, interview). "If we do not [manage the collective bargaining] we don't have a job", as HRF expressed this in the interview. HRF (interview) had recently left notice to the employers that if they would not see their demands met they would take their members out in strike, which appeared to have had effect, even though they are a trade union with the lowest percentage of union memberships in their sector, with 32% union memberships in hotels and restaurants, compared to the Swedish average of 70 % (figures from 2016, LO, 2016).

The collective agreements function as benchmarks for pay levels in different sectors, but there is no law for companies to follow them, unless they are one of the parties of the agreement. The industrial sectors set the mark for the rest of pay levels in Sweden. The government is not part in these negotiations, and Sweden does not have a minimum wage regulated by law. Sweden's trade unions, with their relatively high percentage of employees organized, are in a relatively strong position to place demands. In most of the rest of Europe governments regulate a minimum wage instead. E.g. in Germany, with lower levels of unionization, trade unions prefer to have a minimum wage set, as they are not in a position themselves to place demands on employers that are satisfactory (Kjellberg, 2013: 41). GS and *IF Metall* (interviews) expressed

that they feel confident in their sectors in relation to the employers, but that they take the level of international competition into account when they place demands. GS (interview) said that they “always want more”, and the employers less, especially if it costs money, but that that was “part of the game set-up”. The Swedish economy is now well, compared to after the financial crisis of 2008, and the national industries are leading in the world according to GS (interview) and *IF Metall* (interview), placing the industrial trade unions and their members in a good position. As mentioned HRF (interview) is in a weaker position to place demands, and their sector is in competition with tourism elsewhere, but the trade union does not feel obliged to take international competition into account, despite wages being high by international standards. SAC (interview) expressed that no matter what, the employers are the opposition and that what they want is to take over production as SAC’s over-arching goal to create a classless, socialist society. SLF (interview) with their approximately 650 members partake mostly in individual negotiations between employer and employee. They speak of good relations with employers and no worries from international competition. The trade unions that were not interviewed have not confirmed their status in international competition or commented on their relations to employers, but an estimate of international competition based on their websites can be seen in Table 1 in the method chapter.

#### 4.2.2 The structure of trade unions and trade union confederations in Sweden

The trade unions in the study may have slightly different structure of subdivisions to the national level, but there are generally regional offices, local sections (*avdelningar* in Swedish), associations (*föreningar* in Swedish), clubs within a workplace and groups within a firm with several workplaces. At the trade unions’ central offices are employed a varying number of employees to handle administration, communication etc., depending on the size. There is also a board, and an annual congress that decide on the general direction of the union. The regional level might also have office employees, if large enough. In the different workplaces are ombudsmen and elected officials (*förtroendevalda* in Swedish) who organize and speak for the employees in that association, club or group. The trade union SAC (website; interview), who wanted to be clear about being an association rather than a federation (*förbund* in Swedish), has an anarcho-syndicalist ideology, and a different, “flatter” power structure. Here all the local syndicates (LS) work near independently, with a very limited central organization, mainly for administration. Currently they are without a Secretary General. *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) has a similarly flat structure, and a small central office with one employee.



All trade unions mention the need to organize both nationally and internationally on their websites. In the interviews with GS, *IF Metall* and HRF a similar view on international unionism was expressed, that it is increasingly important, as “the world is shrinking” (GS, interview). GS (interview) also mentioned how much easier it has got to keep in touch, e.g. through the messaging app WhatsApp and the video-call program Skype. *IF Metall* (interview) and SAC (interview) expressed that the economic situation in Sweden and for their members matter a lot for the ability to work internationally. *IF Metall* (interview) did not suffer as much as other trade unions during the financial crisis of 2008, but with less members and more unemployed the pressure on trade unions increase. SAC (interview) has lost members since the 1970’s and part of the reason they are currently not part of any collaborations is that their members are fully occupied with their daily struggles.

Of the 61 Swedish trade unions 50 are part of one of the three national confederations - the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO); Swedish Confederation of Professionals’ Associations (*Saco*); or the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO). GS (interview) described LO as “more of a political body”, with alliances to similar confederations to itself, whereas GS and the other federations have their own sector specific alliances. According to GS (interview) LO works well to unite the federations on certain issues, like that the industrial sectors set the pay mark, although sometimes it is too hard and they fail. *IF Metall* (interview) also expressed that to be part of LO is good, that LO is not ever hindering them from anything, but that there can be issues that they disagree on. SLF (interview) said that they, despite being a very small trade union, have a lot of influence in TCO, and that they only have international co-operations through TCO. Neither the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers nor *KyrkA* were available to do an interview, unfortunately, and thus I have no words on any trade unions’ relationship to Saco.

The confederations LO and TCO formed an aid organization *LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd* in 1977 (Larsson, 2015, 7 May), which *Saco* joined in 2015, and the name was changed to Union to Union. Union to Union is a cooperative body for international union development collaborations that helps the confederations and their trade unions with administration of aid funding from *Sida*, the Swedish governmental agency aimed to reduce poverty in the world. Union to Union currently handles around 100 developments projects (Union to Union, website). As the funding from *Sida* through Union to Union is taxpayers’ money it “requires handling with care” (GS, interview), but it makes projects and collaborations doable financially, and means that GS, in this case, can use their own solidarity fund to fund side-projects more easily.

GS (interview) expressed the view that trade unions are the best, cheapest and fastest way of working to educate, further democratization etc., as the structure is already in place through the massive network that is made up of trade unions globally.

#### 4.2.3 A brief guide on the structure of international trade unionism on a supranational level

The Swedish national confederations are part of the global trade union International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and the European trade union European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). They also have an office in Brussels where they partake in lobbying, networking and information sharing (the Brussels Office of the Swedish Trade Unions, website). There are international federations for different trades/sectors (broadly defined), such as Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI); IndustriALL for workers in mining, energy and manufacturing; International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF); International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF); and UNI Global Union, for workers in skills and services (Union to Union, website). The global sector federations then have regional subdivisions, e.g. UNI Europa.

In the EU, workers can be part of discussions and negotiations with employers, or together with employers act as consultants to the EC on initiatives taken within their sector, through the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the social dialogue. These discussions and negotiations can take place across or within sectors. The idea is for civil society to partake in the process of decision making in the EU (European Commission, n.d.). Globally, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is a UN organization that gathers representatives from its 187 member countries' governments, employers and workers. The Swedish committee is governed by the Ministry of Labour and has representations from all three parties (Svenska ILO-kommittén, n.d.). The aim of the ILO is “to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men” (ILO, n.d.).

To sum up, Swedish trade unions are strong, compared to trade unions in most other countries, but they differ between them, in size, structure and the competitiveness of their sectors, and overall Swedish trade unions express a need for further organization. Through national confederations eight of the trade unions in the study are automatically part of a global network of trade unions and through Union to Union they have state funding to undertake “development projects”. In the next section alliances found in the data collection and their different characteristics will be presented.

## 4.3 Alliances

### 4.3.1 Types of alliances

*Alliances* are collaborations between the trade unions in the study and other organizations and/or groups. Examples can be seen in Table 2, below. There is a sort of longevity to alliances, and generally there are more than one common goal, as compared to actions. What here is referred to as *types* of alliances is not to be confused with character of alliances, but rather is the structure of the alliance. What is meant by character, the way it is used in the aim of the study, is who is the ally and what does that indicate with regards to desired results of the alliance. The different types of alliances identified in the study are:

- *umbrella organizations or multilateral alliances* – where more than two trade unions or other organizations are members;
- *bilateral alliances* – where two organizations collaborate, and
- *alliances within a firm or TNC* – where workers within a firm, but in different trade unions, or un-organized, form an alliance.

Hardest to tease out would have been umbrella organizations from multilateral alliances, as it would be based on how autonomous the umbrella/alliance organization itself is, and how much influence the participating organizations have in the umbrella/alliance organization. This lies somewhat beyond the scope and timeframe of this dissertation. These types of alliances were by far the most common, and all trade unions were part of an umbrella organization or multilateral alliance. In a bilateral alliance, it is more of a straight forward collaboration, but as only two organizations are involved the exchange can be more profound and directly rewarding (HRF, interview). HRF (interview) currently have no bilateral alliances, but the interviewee expressed a hope that they might do again. Alliances within a firm or TNC are fairly easily discernible where they exist, in comparison to the other types. The Financial Sector Union of Sweden had the most of these types of alliances, and the reasons given were that it is a matter of international solidarity, and that they, as a well-established trade union, needed to help organize and set standards for workers within their sector in e.g. Latin America (The Financial Sector Union of Sweden, website).

Table 2: Examples of alliances and allies found, to illustrate the different types of alliances and different geographical strategies employed. The full list of alliances can be found in Appendix C.

National trade union	Alliance	Allied
<b>The Financial Sector Union of Sweden</b>	Transnational in-firm alliance between workers	E.g. HSBC Group, <i>Itaú-Unibanco</i> , <i>Banco do Brasil</i> & Barclays Bank
	Swedish UN association	Unions, NGOs, religious- & political organizations
	<i>Centrala Jämställdhets- och Mångfaldskommittén</i> , committee for equality and diversity	Employer organization in banking, BAO
	Fairtrade	Global NGO
<b>GS</b>	UNI Global Union	Unions globally
	UNI Europa Graphical	Unions in Europe
	The Swedish Unions within Industry	Swedish unions
	<i>Teknikcollege</i>	Swedish schools, employers & unions
<b>HRF</b>	<i>Palmecentret</i>	Swedish unions, social- & political organizations
	European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism, EFFAT	Unions in Europe
	European Work Councils	Workers & employers in e.g. Fazer Food Services AB, Scandic Hotels AB
	Educational council for hotel- and restaurant workers	Swedish union, employers
<b>IF Metall</b>	Transnational framework agreement	Workers for H&M in Asia, Europe & Africa
	<i>Produktionslyftet</i>	Chalmers, think tanks, employers & unions
	Cooperation regarding European Globalization Adjustment Fund, EGF	Swedish government, <i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i> & unions
	Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme, SWHAP	International Council of Swedish Industry & <i>Sida</i>
<b>Kyrka</b>	Network for professionals in Lutheran churches in Europe	Workers in Europe
	The Swedish church	Swedish religious organization
	<i>Förhandlings- och samverkansrådet</i> , PTK	Swedish unions
<b>Hamnarbetarförbundet</b>	International Dockworkers' Council, IDC	Unions globally
<b>SAC</b>	Red and Black Coordination, RBC	Unions globally
	<i>Confederación General del Trabajo</i> , CGT	Spanish union
<b>SLF</b>	<i>Offentliganställdas Förhandlingsråd</i> , OFR	15 Swedish unions for officials
	<i>Lantbrukets Arbetsmiljökommitté</i>	Swedish employer-, professional- & religious organizations, unions, companies etc.
<b>The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers</b>	IndustriALL Global Union	Unions globally
	Eurocadres	Swedish unions & European trade union federations
	<i>Industrirådet</i> - Swedish industry council	Unions & employers
	<i>Teknikvägen</i> - mentor programme for immigrated engineers	Stockholm University
<b>Unionen</b>	UNI Global Union	Unions globally
	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Swedish TNCs	Swedish TNCs
	<i>Nordiska Transportarbetarefederationen</i> , NTF	Unions in Nordic countries
	<i>Svenska digitaliseringsrådet</i> - Swedish digitalization council	Swedish companies, think tanks, municipalities & county councils

As previously mentioned all but *Hamnarbetarförbundet* and SAC of the ten trade unions in the study are part of one of the three national confederations (LO, TCO and *Saco*) and thus part of Union to Union, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). The alliances that run through the national confederations will not be included here, as they are much the same for all but *Hamnarbetarförbundet* and SAC. All trade unions also listed *autonomous* memberships or alliances, which here will be the focus. All but SLF (website; interview) had alliances with global, European and/or Nordic organizations – regardless of size, whether sector specific or not, and despite their level of international competition.

#### 4.3.2 National alliances

Nationally only *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) and SAC (interview; website) are not connected to a national confederation nor other unions, but in the interview with SAC it came up that up until a couple of years ago SAC used to invite *Hamnarbetarförbundet* to their annual congress, as they are both independent trade unions. *Hamnarbetarförbundet* is very sector specific and SAC is very ideologically specific, which might result in a lack of appropriate allies nationally. All trade unions in the study, apart from the previously mentioned SAC and *Hamnarbetarförbundet*, were part of Swedish alliances. These can be separated mainly into three categories:

- alliances between trade unions to coordinate their efforts in negotiations with employers or in other ways to improve their agency;
- alliances that work for societal changes outside of negotiations with employers, and might include other unions, NGOs, universities and other educational organizations, and/or employers; and
- alliances with unions, tradesmen and employers that aim to promote and improve a certain sector.

The first kind pushes for better pay and rights etc. against capital, e.g. *Förhandlings- och Samverkansrådet*, PTK, which gathers 26 Swedish trade unions for white-collar workers in the private sector (*Kyrka*, website; the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, website; *Unionen*; website). The second category is often focused on education, gender equality and/or diversity, e.g. *Teknikvägen*, a mentor programme for immigrated engineers, that is a collaboration between the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) and Stockholm University. The third type of collaboration is based on an agenda that is more geared

at promoting their sector – internationally and/or to (and sometimes against) the government. The aim is creating jobs, expanding and improving their sector. e.g. *Föreningen Sveriges Vägingenjörer* (FSV), for engineers (the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, website), *Produktionslyftet*, aimed at improved efficiency (*IF Metall*, website) and *Industrirådet*, an “industry council” (*IF Metall*, website; the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, website). *KyrkA* (website), *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website), the Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) and SAC (website) are not part of any competitive alliances, or alliances that are aimed to promote their sector, as far as could be read from allies and motivations. *KyrkA* (website) is somewhat of a special case, as their members are not employed by the average company, but a religious association. Some of the union’s work might be “promotional”, but without the competitive undertones seen e.g. in the industrial trade unions. SLF (website; interview), HRF (website; interview), GS (website; interview), the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website), *IF Metall* (website; interview) and *Unionen* (website) are part of the third kind of alliances however. GS (website; interview), the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) and *IF Metall* (website; interview), who are all relatively big trade unions within highly competitive sectors, had many alliances in this category.

The Swedish Unions within Industry, where GS (website), *IF Metall* (website), the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) and *Unionen* (website) are members can be said to be in the first of the three categories, but they simultaneously work for improved competitiveness for Swedish industry and have collaborations with employers. The motivations for the existence of this alliance range from the need to work for “increased collaboration between blue- and white-collar workers” and raised real wages, to “strengthening the export industries” (*Unionen*, website).

#### 4.3.3 Regional alliances

All trade unions bar *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) and SLF (website; interview) list alliances with other European organizations. *Hamnarbetarförbundet*, however, has shown sympathy with workers regionally through actions, as can be seen below in section 4.4.3, Actions with regional targets. The absolute majority of European alliances are between trade unions, and the majority of those are sector or trade specific. These sector specific alliances are not competitive in the same way as the national equivalents, however. The remaining few involve NGOs and trade unions and have more of an agenda for development and human rights. The European organizations where employers partake, the EESC and EWCs, are entered for the same reasons, mainly: to be part of the dialogue between employers and labour, and to push

labour's agenda. The geographical strategies followed by entering regional alliances, in this case European or Nordic, are not quite as straight forward as the national and global ones with regards to for whose needs and wants they are undertaken. All regional alliances are for both local and non-local needs, as in not only for Swedish employees' benefits, but depending on ally/allies and motivations the scale of who benefits varies and can be beyond regional, i.e. universal.

The European alliances with unions are mainly about networking, building knowledge and counteracting social dumping. As most are niched at a certain trade or sector, they are entered also to share knowledge within the trade (GS, interview). European organizations for trade unions, such as European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism (EFFAT), where HRF (website, interview) is a member, and UNI European Trade Union, where The Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website), GS (interview, website), the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) and *Unionen* (website) are members, are joined to make sure workers in different European countries and sectors are not pitched against each other pay- or rights-wise, that regulations are being followed – and maybe even progressing. Both HRF (interview) and GS (interview) spoke of the importance of this. GS (interview) expressed a view of wanting everyone in Europe to be part of these alliances, if they are independent of government involvement, whether members of the EU or not.

All trade unions in the study but *Hamnarbetarförbundet*, SAC and SLF had information on their websites about European Work Councils (EWCs). SAC (interview) and SLF (interview) do not have members in EWCs. The trade unions' *members* can be part of an EWC, if their workplace is. It is thus not the trade union that is part of the collaboration, but their members, if they are employed in a firm that spans more than one country, has more than 1000 employees in the European Economic Area (EEA), of which at least 150 employees in two countries, and where an EWC has been started. These types of collaborations followed the geographical strategy of trans-local action for local *and* non-local needs and wants. Both GS, HRF and *IF Metall* expressed in their interviews the importance of these collaborations and that they tried to act as support for their members that were part of an EWC.

GS (website, interview) only mentions Nordic co-operations, which implies these are not manifested in an organization, but are rather informal. The other trade unions, apart from *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website), SAC (website) and SLF (interview, website), are all part of Nordic co-operations. The similarities between the Nordic countries, with their high level of unionization and the Nordic model, but also their relatively small size, means it is natural for

the trade unions and sectors in the countries to work closely together, said e.g. GS (interview). The Nordic alliances are like the European alliances generally between unions within a certain trade or sector, and primarily about knowledge and experience sharing. It was argued in the interviews with GS, HRF and *IF Metall* that it is important to promote the understanding of the Nordic countries and the Nordic model in international forums, mainly the EU, but also globally. For some of these collaborations the need to join ranks to grow in force is for better pay and work environment, such as *Nordiska unionen för hotell, restaurang, catering och turism*, NUHRCT, where HRF (website) is a member, and/or for a more competitive edge in the rest of the world, such as *Industrianställda i Norden (Nordic IN)*, where *IF Metall* (website), *Unionen* (website) and the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) are members. The Nordic alliances are primarily aimed to be of benefit to Nordic workers, but this is not generally to say they are against workers elsewhere.

#### 4.3.4 Alliances spanning outside of Europe

All trade unions but SLF (website) and *Kyrka* (website) are part of global alliances. The absolute majority of the global alliances were with other unions, and those organizations, whether with an umbrella organization or a multilateral alliance, serve as knowledge sharing and networking platforms. The most prominent aims were development, democratization, “same pay for similar work” and counteraction of social dumping. Motivations from the Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) to be a part of these kinds of alliances were that “international solidarity is the basis for unionist co-operation” and wanting to take “solidary responsibility to support our unionist friends in countries with low pay levels, bad working conditions and trouble starting free and democratic trade unions”. The Financial Sector Union of Sweden is part of several trans-national in-firm collaborations, where workers in branches in different countries were informed on their rights and received support. Other examples of global alliances the Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) partake in are co-operations with NGOs, such as Amnesty and Fairtrade, or membership in the UN Association of Sweden, which engages a multitude of trade unions, NGOs, religious and political organizations in Sweden. The Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) was the only trade union where co-operations with NGOs were listed online, but GS spoke of a not yet realized co-operation for sustainable forestry with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as well. A few co-operations on the global scale are with companies, e.g. the HIV and AIDS prevention programme SWHAP, which *IF Metall* (website) is part of, in workplaces in countries struggling with this. The longevity of this programme places it in alliances rather than actions. The geographical strategies (Castree et al., 2004: 118-19) of all global alliances were that of trans-local action for local *and* non-local needs



and wants, or *only* for non-local needs and wants. In other words, the targets of the strategies were *universal* or non-local. The purpose of these types of alliances therefore is for the benefit of all workers universally, or workers non-locally (i.e. not Sweden), something that was confirmed in the interviews with GS, HRF and *IF Metall*. In the collaborations with employers at least the one issue at hand (e.g. AIDS) was targeted to benefit non-local or all workers.

## 4.4 Actions

### 4.4.1 Types of actions

What separates *actions* from alliances is that it is something more hands-on *done* together, often for a shorter duration of time, or as a once off manifestation, and they often have a clear goal. Actions often seem to spring from alliances on a global, European or local level, like support shown towards *and* from *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) via International Dockworkers' Council (IDC). Examples of actions can be seen in Table 3. Actions are generally geared at supporting another group of workers, or to together with other workers strive for something that benefits both/all in the alliance – e.g. increased agency, power and/or job security. Common actions aimed to achieve this are:

- *financial support*;
- support shown through signs of *protest or sympathy*, through actions such as a sympathetic threat of industrial action (*stridsåtgärd* in Swedish), official written letters of sympathy; or
- *campaigns or projects* for improved working conditions.

Support of the former two types are generally between unions or between a union and a group of unofficially organized workers, and are local actions for local *or* non-local needs. Examples of financial support is that SAC (website; interview) and GS (website; interview) have solidarity funds of use for this, and HRF did until recently (interview). *Kyrka* gives money to the Swedish church for “international work” (website), but who benefits from this fund is unclear. Acts of protest or sympathy were shown by all but *Kyrka* (website), GS (website) and *Unionen* (website). Campaigns could have other collaborators, such as employers and other organizations. Examples are Fair Play in the construction industry, where *Unionen* (website) participates. GS's (website) actions are mainly campaigns or projects of this kind.

A third group of actions was geared at issues partly outside of the labour market, such as environmental issues (albeit they arguably affect the labour market indirectly) or health issues in a more general way. This could manifest in debate articles, often written in collaboration

with universities, think tanks etc., such as the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers' (website) co-authored debate article bringing attention to mental health issues) or projects (such as GS's project for sustainable forestry in South East Asia).

Table 3: Examples of actions, with allies and intended beneficiaries, to illustrate the different types of actions and different geographical strategies employed. The full list of actions can be found in Appendix D.

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Alliance organization(s) (additional intended beneficiaries)</b>
<b>The Financial Sector Union of Sweden</b>	Participation in global action day: "Hands off our right to strike"	Unions through ITUC ( <i>workers worldwide</i> )
	Support of comrades in Argentina	Argentinian workers
<b>GS</b>	Campaign: "Decent Work"	BWI ( <i>builders of sporting arenas globally</i> )
	Campaign: "Better work environment"	Unions in Sweden & Swaziland
<b>IF Metall</b>	Debate article: " <i>Kraftfulla satsningar krävs mot ohälsan i arbetslivet</i> " for better health	Swedish unions, <i>Arena Idé</i> & Örebro university ( <i>workers</i> )
	Campaign/hearing: Zero tolerance against deadly accidents in work	Swedish union & <i>Arena Idé</i>
<b>HRF</b>	Campaign: "Make up my workplace – Dignity for hotel housekeepers"	UIF
	Support for <i>Kommunal's</i> notice of strike	Swedish union
<b>Hamnarbetar-förbundet</b>	Support from dockworkers internationally towards Swedish dockworkers	Unions through IDC
	Support of Spanish dock workers	Unions through IDC
<b>Kyrka</b>	Donation(s) to international work	The Swedish church ( <i>unclear</i> )
	Seminar on women and leadership at <i>Nordiskt Forum 2014</i>	200 Nordic women's organizations, through their umbrella organizations, e.g. <i>Sveriges Kvinnolobby</i>
<b>SAC</b>	E.g. Support after "police attack"	CNT-F
	Political strike: Women's strike 8 March 2017	Women's organizations
<b>SLF</b>	-	-
<b>The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers</b>	Debate article: " <i>För bättre forskning – befria universiteten</i> " for better research	<i>Forska!Sverige</i> & Swedish unions
	Debate article: " <i>Tekniskt basår hotas av bristande finansiering</i> " for Swedish competitiveness	<i>Teknikföretagen</i>
<b>Unionen</b>	Participation in campaign: Fair transport	Unions, European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) & EU citizens
	Debate article: " <i>Kollektivavtal är en trisslott med vinstgaranti</i> " for increased organization	Swedish unions

Actions took many shapes and forms and were sometimes hard to tease apart. A campaign for better mental health prevention and care is also aimed to benefit employees in sectors that provides these services, as well as workers in general. SLF (website, interview) has not

participated in any actions during the last three years, for their own or others' benefit. Motivations to not participate directly is that they are part of collaborations through TCO.

#### 4.4.2 Actions with national targets

Action taken nationally is following the geographical strategy of local actions for local needs and wants, such as support of another Swedish trade union's industrial action. Types of joint actions primarily for the benefit of workers in Sweden were generally:

- national *debate articles*, or
- *campaigns or demonstrations*.

Debate articles (see Table 3 for examples) could be written in collaboration with only unions, against capital for e.g. raised pay, such as The Swedish Unions within Industry's debate article saying that Swedish industry can afford higher wages, or with employers and educational organizations for improved competitiveness through education, such as the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers (website) and *Teknikföretagen* co-authoring a debate article to save the preparatory year in technology. The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers only shows this type of actions (website). An example of a national demonstration is the 16:00 movement, for raising awareness regarding the fact that women get paid for one hour's work less than men, daily, where HRF (website) and The Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) were involved. The arguments here are "solidarity", "backing-up of our fellow workers", "supporting our comrades" et c., which was expressed in different varieties by all that partook in such actions (e.g. SAC (website), the Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website); GS (interview), HRF, (interview)). SLF, *Kyrka* and *Hamnarbetarförbundet* do not participate in any national actions.

Mainly, the local actions for local needs consist of debate articles written in different constellations. These are written generally either by two or more trade unions, or by trade unions in collaboration with universities and experts. The motivations where trade unions are against or place demands on employers call for what is considered just: "Our members work hard every day to ensure the companies will succeed. It is only right that they also get their fair share of the earnings." (freely translated from the debate article "*Svensk industri har ett bra läge*" arguing for higher pay levels and -increases, by the Swedish Unions within Industry) and "We can never accept a work-life that creates illness and long-term health issues." (freely translated from the debate article "*Kraftfulla satsningar krävs mot ohälsan i arbetslivet*" aiming for better health for workers, which *IF Metall* co-authored). In other instances, the issue at hand

is the Swedish economy and competitiveness. These debate articles are generally co-authored by trade unions in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as institutions and employers, in a specific sector. Motivations can be e.g. “To secure the future our government must solve the financing [of the one year basic technological education] as soon as possible” (freely translated from the debate article "*Tekniskt basår hotas av bristande finansiering*" for Swedish competitiveness, by The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers and technology companies). All of the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers' actions were debate articles with a local agenda, co-authored in various constellations, both placing demands on e.g. employers and the government, for example arguing for higher pay, and with e.g. employers and investors, for increased competitiveness internationally.

#### 4.4.3 Actions with regional targets

Actions with regional targets are not many, but those that exist are geared at mutual help or support. There is a campaign, Fair Transport, which promotes better conditions for all working in transport in the EU, which *Unionen* (website) is part of, a participation in a feminist seminar (*Kyrka*, website) and in a women's committee (*Unionen*, website) and support from *Hamnarbetarförbundet* (website) and SAC (website) to European trade unions. The geographical strategies are local or trans-local action for non-local or universal needs and wants, as allies are Swedish or European, and targets are European or global. European co-operation is often mentioned in passing on the trade unions' websites as important and part of their work, but nothing else concrete was found in the study. GS (interview) spoke of difficulties collaborating within Europe, as there is a difference made between EU members and those outside the EU, when GS “want all free trade unions to be part” of discussions and projects.

#### 4.4.4 Actions with targets outside of Europe

GS (website) and the Financial Sector Union of Sweden (website) stood out as the absolute majority of their actions span outside of Europe. GS has many projects in various parts of the world, where they co-operate with trade unions and workers on site, such as the project or work environment and health in collaboration with BWI branches in some African countries (GS, interview; website). All but the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers are part of international actions, however. SAC is a bit unclear, as apart from their solidarity fund, the only action is where workers at the Swedish off-license, *Systembolaget*, supported workers at a winery in South Africa. This is however technically between a LS and the South African workers, and not SAC's central organization. It is mentioned here, however, as SAC has a different organization and structure compared to the other trade unions. Actions that span

worldwide are generally aimed at improving working conditions and supporting local unions. Swedish companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has also been targeted, for example in Chinese branches of Swedish TNCs in co-operation with Swedish businesses environmental managers, *Näringslivets Miljöchefer*. GS (interview) expressed the need to keep an eye on Swedish companies internationally, as "if they are to be an ambassador for Sweden, or even call themselves blue-yellow, they have to be good".

#### 4.5 Summary of results

To summarize this array of findings, the backdrop of Swedish trade unions is that they have lost members lately and therefore are keen to work for recruiting new members. The continued organizing is important. Trade unions in Sweden and the Nordic countries are however strong by international comparison, and they want to promote the Swedish/Nordic model, where trade unions and companies negotiate wages and rights in the labour market. International competition is affecting everyone, but to *IF Metall*, GS, *Unionen* and the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers this seems to be of bigger and more direct importance, and partly in a positive manner. All but SAC and *Hamnarbetarförbundet* of the trade unions in the study are part of a national confederation. The national confederations and their aid organization Union to Union help finance and co-ordinate the member trade unions' alliances and projects. Through the national confederations the trade unions are also part of the global trade union ITUC and the European trade union ETUC. They are also members of sector specific trade unions (Union to Union, website).

Alliances are identified as three types: umbrella organizations/multilateral alliances, bilateral alliances and within TNCs. The former two can be national, regional or global in span. The third one can be regional or global. National alliances are generally either collaborations that work as a counter weight to capital, e.g. in negotiations; that promote changes in society not directly related to worker/employer negotiations; and that are aimed to promote the trade union in question's sector. Sometimes collaborations, like the Swedish Unions within Industry, can both push workers' rights locally, and the competitiveness of their sector. Regional alliances are generally between unions within their sectors. Nordic alliances are generally aimed to promote the Nordic model and Nordic competitiveness. Two arenas for co-operation and/or negotiations with capital within the EU also exist: the EESC where both trade unions and employers can influence decisions to be made by the EC, and EWCs within certain TNCs. Global alliances are generally also with other trade unions, and sometimes with NGOs.

Actions are more differentiated in type than alliances, but an attempt at categorization is that they are either geared at helping another union or group of workers financially, through sympathy or protest, or through campaigns or projects. Actions where the target of the action is local, i.e. national, are generally debate articles, or campaigns or demos. Debate articles can be written with/for workers and improving their situation directly, or with capital, e.g. employers and investors, for the benefit of the industry. Campaigns and demos are generally on a subject such as women's pay. Another, smaller, group of actions are geared at environmental or health related issues. Regional actions are generally conducted between workers, as are actions that span beyond Europe. In the next chapter these findings will be analyzed and related to the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter 2.

## 5 Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study will be analyzed, mainly using the theoretical entry-points presented earlier, which are of importance for agency (Katz, 2004; Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011), geographical strategies (Castree et al., 2004: 118-19), and justifications of actions (Gough, 2010). The research questions posed to reach the aim of this study are:

- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies are Swedish trade unions partaking in alliances?
- With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies are Swedish trade unions participating in actions?
- What justifications motivate Swedish trade unions' different alliances and joint actions?

As the justifications of alliances and actions, i.e. the answers to the third question, are closely connected to the different answers to the first two questions, the questions will best be analysed in parallel. The geographical strategies identified will guide the structure of the chapter for clarity.

### 5.2 Local alliances and actions for local needs and wants

The local alliances and actions identified in this study, i.e. collaborations between trade unions and other Swedish organizations, are mostly targeted at local, i.e. Swedish, needs and wants (Castree et al., 2004: 119-20). Most are related to union work, i.e. aimed at improving pay and conditions for workers in Sweden. The most common collaboration is an alliance with other Swedish trade unions, albeit sometimes together with religious, social and employer organizations. Local actions for local needs and wants that target other issues, on a broader base in the Swedish society, such as gender equality, mental health and integration, also involve different stakeholders, such as think tanks, employers and social organizations. Many collaborations are aimed both at workers needs *and* broader social issues, or workers needs *and* competitiveness. The latter collaborations are not always in collaboration with employers, however, but often with other unions and/or think tanks. More clear cut competitive collaborations, such as *Industrirådet*, the Swedish industry council, where profitability precedes pay rises, always involve employer organizations and/or companies.

Apart from the clearly competitive alliances and actions none of the local collaborations for local needs is exclusionary of other groups, as Castree et al. (2004: 119) and Gough (2010) write that they can be. The collaboration is local action primarily targeted at local needs and wants, which places it in this geographical strategy-category, but the aim and the motivations are not explicitly exclusionary, but rather seem to incorporate everyone in Sweden, and in the bigger scheme of things aspire to be beneficial for all even abroad, by some type of “trickle down” effect of e.g. improving pay, rights and/or health, thus counteracting social dumping. There is however still a risk that the *outcome* is exclusionary or contributing to intra-class conflicts, if workers e.g. help companies attract investment that could have benefitted workers elsewhere, nationally or internationally.

All national alliances are – no matter whether for workers, civil society or competitiveness – *formal, collective, goal-directed* and *sustained*, to use Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu’s (2011) different types of agency. All national actions are *formal, collective* and *goal-directed*. Despite actions not being sustained for longer periods of time, they cannot quite be said to be spontaneous, however, as they generally are well-planned and/or well-rehearsed reactions to common happenings (e.g. sympathy notices when another union goes into strike). As all collaborations go beyond the individual workplace they are also *up-scaled*, by Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu’s (2011) measure, but not in the sense that they span beyond Sweden. The collaborations are also all examples of *reworking*, as per Katz’ (2004: 242) categorizations. This means all actions and alliances are within the capitalist system, although many, especially the ones related to workers’ rights and pay levels, are pushing capital and thus pushing boundaries for workers. Demonstrations for e.g. women’s rights can be said to potentially push against patriarchy universally, even though the aim here primarily was national, as social movements can spread, e.g. through the channels of European and global trade unions.

It is clear that Swedish trade unions, especially the bigger ones in the industrial sectors, are founding their claims very carefully in reports on what the sectors “can handle” (e.g. the debate article by the Swedish Unions within Industry “*Svensk industri har ett bra läge*” for higher pay). The balance for Swedish industrial trade unions to find is one where they collaborate with employers to further the industry and thus securing jobs, yet attempt to get a bigger piece of the earnings for their workers. This balance between competitiveness and workers’ rights on the national level reflects both justifications of the market and justifications through acknowledgement of the playing field as not being level, i.e. unjust (Gough, 2010), and shows that organizations can hold these two conflicting moralities simultaneously. The justifications



of the market are visible in collaborations with employers that push the strategies of *individual advancement* for their members and *improvement in efficiency*, both exemplified in e.g. the alliance *Produktionslyftet*. In the sympathy actions between Swedish trade unions the justification due to social injustices is clearest, as strategies of *traditional unionist organization*, e.g. through unionism within a geographical territory, within a sector or between sectors (Gough, 2010), and *solidarity actions* (Liedman, 1999: 20) are represented.

### 5.3 A trans-local action for local needs and wants

There is only one case of trans-local action for local needs and wants (Castree et al., 2004: 119): a supportive act from other dockworkers transnationally towards *Hamnarbetarförbundet*. As a part of the IDC they called upon their allies globally to support them, and they were heard. This was motivated by their continuing conflict in Gothenburg. The action by the other unions was *formal, collective, goal-directed* and can perhaps be said to have *up-scaled* the Swedish dockworkers' struggle further (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011). This conflict is perhaps the closest of all alliances and actions to be against the system, at least within Sweden, as the trade union is contesting that another trade union is negotiating in place of their members, but it is in line with Katz' (2004: 242) reworking of the system. The act of support from the foreign trade unions itself is however within the system. As the call for support fits with traditional unionist organization, and there is no competition involved, the justification can perhaps be seen as a sign of acknowledgement of injustices, but as the (at least short-term, visible) goal of *Hamnarbetarförbundet's* (website) strike is to be within the system and negotiating for their members, it is hard to say what the long-term motivations are, and an attempt at this would be speculation.

### 5.4 Local alliances and actions for non-local needs and wants

Local actions for non-local needs and wants are generally consistent of a solidarity fund or networks of organizations in Sweden with an agenda to help unions, workers and civil society outside of Sweden. Allies nationally in this support are mostly social, religious and/or political organizations. The aims in local alliances and actions for non-local needs and wants are generally to increase agency and rights in other places, and to “work for democracy and human rights”, as in the Financial Sector Union of Sweden's (website) collaboration with the UN association of Sweden. How the needs and agency look at the receiving end of these, seemingly more “one way”, collaborations is not clear, but the Swedish side clearly defines them as wanting. In cases where e.g. solidarity funds are used to support a union through a strike in another country, the need and aimed-for effect on agency of the receivers of support is clearer.

As written in the theoretical review of the geographical strategies (see section 2.3.1) there is perhaps a need, as Ince et al. (2015) call for, to make a distinction between concrete, localized struggles and the general labour movement. In most of these local actions for non-local needs and wants there seem to be two aims present: the direct aim to help non-local groups of people, and the overarching goal of human rights, i.e. a universal target.

The alliances are *formal, collective, goal-directed, sustained* and *up-scaled*, and the actions are *formal, collective, goal-directed* and *up-scaled* (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011) on the Swedish side of the collaboration. Here too, however, there could potentially be a difference between Sweden and the foreign trade unions or workers in the collaboration. If the aim of an alliance is to help form a union elsewhere, the starting point might not be “formal”, even though it is part of the goal. All alliances and actions in this category were reworking (Katz’, 2004: 247) strategies, but as the goals are striving for e.g. “democracy and human rights” the aims are set to change systems in quite profound and important ways, even though they do not aim to overthrow them.

The justifications in these cases are all based in acknowledgement of unjust social relations, and the strategies followed are (or are closely related to) *traditional union organization*, by Gough’s (2010) definition, as they involve collaborations between workers and/or unions within or between sectors.

### 5.5 Trans-local alliances and actions for non-local needs and wants

In this last category of geographical strategies, there will also be a distinction made on the target side, between the “non-local” as in “not local/not Swedish”, and the “non-local” as in “universal”. In the first category, where the target is not Swedish, many alliances and actions where Swedish unions are collaborating with another group of workers fit. Here, as compared to many alliances in the previous section, the collaboration takes the form of a *joint* action, such as where GS are part in a project for work environment and health with branches of the international sector specific union in a handful African countries. The second category, where the target is universal and all-encompassing, describes e.g. the alliance between GS and the international union BWI itself, which focuses on woodworkers’ rights globally, i.e. the overarching labour struggle.

As above, alliances are *formal, collective, goal-directed, sustained* and *up-scaled*, and the actions are *formal, collective, goal-directed* and *up-scaled* (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011) on the Swedish side of the collaboration. They are similarly also all *reworking* strategies (Katz,

247), except for SAC's strategies. When SAC had international collaborations, *resistance* was the over-arching aim. If one is to look at their collaborative actions, however, they look a lot like the actions of the other trade unions.

Motivations for global alliances and actions were generally referring to solidarity of the contrasting kind – to help those worse off than us – and solidarity of similarity when aiming for the need for better working conditions for workers generally. The strategies of justifications through acknowledgement of the playing field as not being level here are *traditional union organization*, in the form of collaborations within or between sectors.

### 5.6 Discussion and summary of analysis

The use of alliances and geographical strategies to increase agency for Swedish unions, with the socio-political challenges they are faced with, differ somewhat between the local level and internationally. The further away from Sweden, and the more unions involved, collaborations seem to move more towards the general workers' struggle (Ince et al., 2015), justifications based in an acknowledgement of social injustices, and against capital (Gough, 2010). All collaborations in this study are *formal, collective, goal-directed* and *up-scaled*, and the alliances are also *sustained* over time (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011). The usefulness of Katz' (2004: 242-56), and Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu's (2011) categorizations of agency for the analysis in this study is thus debatable. They fit theoretically and are well renowned, but as tools in this case they proved rather meek, as most Swedish trade unions' alliances and actions are very much the same, within the system. SAC's aim is to be outside the system, their strategy resistance against capital, but due to few members etc. they are currently at the resilience end of the spectrum. There is a need for categorizations that capture nuances in the legal, acceptable, yet boundary-pushing alliances and actions. Sub-categories to reworking, for example. Perhaps it would be of interest with the unions in this study to speak of their level of agency *due to* finances, number of members and how "well connected" they are to other organizations? This however comes closer to what Kjellberg (2013: 39) terms "strength", as in e.g. "organizing strength" and "ability to mobilize".

Swedish trade unions striving for the competitiveness of the Swedish industry to gain worker agency, the ability to act, is something like the "Put your own oxygen mask on first, before helping others!" in the safety booklets in airplanes: securing their own strength first, then being in a privileged position to help unions and workers worldwide. This adheres to the *justice of markets*, but not so much to *acknowledging that the playing field is not level*. The prioritization of local strength reflects the need to attract members, due to the decline in memberships lately.

This is something all unions put emphasis on. The way the majority of the Swedish trade unions in this study seem to aim to attract and keep members, as far as collaborations are concerned (there are obviously other, non-collaboratory ways, such as the collective bargaining, too), is by co-creating strong sectors, sometimes with employers, within the industrial trade unions with the motivation that it secures jobs and gives economic growth. This perhaps reflects two of the explanations given for trade unions having lost members in the West lately: that workers are more individualistic, and that individuality and selfishness being more acceptable (Mercille & Murphy, 2015: 132). By focusing on what matters for the individual they hope to keep and attract members. If the third potential explanation given by Mercille and Murphy (*ibid.*, p. 132) – that trade unions no longer stand up for workers against capital, thus not fulfilling their original role – was to guide the trade unions' strategies, focus would be on worker solidarity against capital to a larger degree. This strategy is followed by SAC, but does not seem to give them greater agency, as they too for quite some time have been losing members. To a lesser degree, and still within the system, all the trade unions involved in international alliances in the study do however stand up for workers' rights, against capital. This can be seen as tackling the other socio-political challenges, such as global economic disparities and capitalisms spatial fixes.

## 6 Conclusion and suggestions for future research

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is *to contribute to an increased understanding of the geographical dimensions of labour agency in relation to current socio-political challenges, by studying the character of and motivations behind Swedish trade unions' national and international alliances*. Through a qualitative text analysis and informant interviews the results have been gathered, and then analysed against the theoretical perspectives chosen. The questions posed to reach this aim will be answered in brief here.

### 6.2 Conclusions

*With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies are Swedish trade unions partaking in alliances?* Alliances are joined mainly with other unions, nationally, regionally and globally. Alliances are however also entered with NGOs, social, religious and educational organizations, think tanks and employers, too. Often there is a mix. The most prevalent geographical strategies for alliances are local alliances for local needs, or trans-local alliances for non-local *or* universal needs, a distinction here added, as aims differed. The local alliances for local needs are often for improved working conditions and pay, and/or (less frequently) competitive aims. Some alliances are aimed to benefit society as a whole, not only workers. Exclusion is never expressed, but in competitive alliances there is by definition someone or something competed against and thus excluded. The trans-local alliances for non-local needs are aimed to improve conditions for workers in particular places elsewhere, i.e. concrete struggles. The trans-local alliances for universal needs are mainly manifest in the large networks that trade unions have created together regionally and globally, and are aimed to improve conditions for workers universally.

*With what types of organizations, and using which geographical strategies are Swedish trade unions participating in actions?* Joint actions with other organizations often stem from existing alliances. Actions can be undertaken in collaboration with unions, NGOs, social, religious and educational organizations, think tanks and employers. Mainly actions mean showing support for another trade union's struggle, or some form of aid due to a specific problem. Trade unions' actions tend to follow the strategy of local action for local needs, local action for non-local needs, or trans-local action for non-local needs. This reflects the tendency for actions to be aid related and/or focused on a particular issue, as actions are not targeting universal needs to the same extent as alliances.

*What justifications motivate Swedish trade unions' different alliances and actions?*

Competitive alliances and actions adhere to justifications of the market and are generally more local – Swedish mainly, but sometimes Nordic. They are motivated by keeping of, or attracting, jobs for their members. The alliances and actions that reach non-locally or include all workers, universally, are justified through an acknowledgement of injustices in the world, which the trade unions claim that they want to help set straight. These are motivated by the trade unions as needs for solidarity, democracy and freedom to organize.

The geography of Swedish trade union alliances and joint actions seem to reflect that recruiting and organizing is important, as are international alliances and solidarity. Competitive and local action for local needs follow the logic of that what is close will have greater influence and tends to matter more to people, which both Castree et al (2004: 119-20) and Gough (2010) write of. International alliances and actions for non-local and universal needs might serve both to keep workers informed and to gain strength by numbers, as well as to counteract e.g. social dumping and mirror the transnationalism of capital. Many of the trade unions expressed the need to help workers in countries where they are not allowed to organize, or where e.g. Swedish companies that have high work related standards in Sweden do not show a willingness for the same CSR. All this shows that Swedish trade unions address the socio-political challenges they are facing, but that there is a discrepancy between competitiveness and solidarity within most trade unions, which could be addressed and problematized more. The differences between the aims of concrete struggles and the general workers' struggle could in many cases be better aligned, if the aim is to reach the goals of solidarity and equality that are expressed. The size of a trade union matter for its ability to enter alliances, or at least it becomes much harder when they have very few members (under 4 000 in this study). A strong ideology matters for the ability to find compatible organizations to co-operate with. A trade union's sectors' level of international competition appears to matter for their participation in competitive alliances – more competition means more competitive alliances – at least for the trade unions in industry.

### 6.3 Further discussion, questions and future research

Most of the collaborations found in this study are trans-local action for non-local or universal needs, which might reflect the omittance of the subdivisions of the trade unions in the study. Collaborations on a sub-national level are perhaps more likely to be for local needs? And perhaps resistance strategies are more likely to take place on a smaller territorial scale? Either way it would be interesting to do more research on a sub-national level, and link the potential findings in such a study to the motivations found in e.g. this study. How much are members'

views reflected in a national and supranational level? A study including the collective bargaining and justifications for deals struck would quite possibly also yield different results, as negotiations between trade unions and employers depend on the union's negotiating strength, and perhaps are more likely to incorporate compromises and the weighing of interests against each other. These negotiations might be a bit grittier as they are local, concrete struggles between the parties. Local needs and wants might thus over-shadow the over-arching workers' struggle, leading to intra-class conflicts. More focus on gender and ethnicity would be another way to get at infringed agency and inequalities in the labour market. This would be interesting on a sub-national level, as members' different perspectives and justifications would perhaps sound differently than the polished and very politically correct surface of the trade unions and their "aware" employees. It would also be interesting in international collaborations, if getting below the surface of particular projects etc., where equality in the allied organization might not have come as far as the Swedish trade unions have (on paper, anyways).

Also, this has been an analysis of Swedish trade unions' side of alliances. On the other side of collaborations, especially when a Swedish organization has been involved in aid or support, agency might not have been *formal, collective, goal-directed, sustained* and *up-scaled* (Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu, 2011). Neither need it be *reworking* (Katz, 2004: 247) in other places, just because it is a reworking strategy in Sweden. However, unfortunately this has been beyond the scope of this dissertation. It could also potentially be interesting to use post-colonial theoretical perspectives and in greater detail analyze the international collaborations that stretch beyond Europe, to see if these collaborations are some type of "white man's burden" type of "help", or if people as workers can find common ground and mutuality.

In an early stage of this dissertation the potential use of a post-political theoretical perspective came up as a theoretical perspective that might help analyse the, on my part, expected Swedish conformity. It might also be an interesting way to analyse the way dissonance between the local and global is deemed a "non-issue". In hind sight this would have been very interesting and could have given an even deeper insight into the structures that seem to set the limits for what is doable and acceptable for trade unions. On the other hand, struggles that go outside the consensus might be few and far between. At least in Sweden, where consensus is nearly a trademark.

## References

- Abrahamsson, H. (2008). *Det gyllene tillfället: Teori och strategi för global rättvisa* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Stockholm: Leopard.
- Bezuidenhout, A., & Buhlungu, S. (2011). From Compounded to Fragmented Labour: Mineworkers and the Demise of Compounds in South Africa. *Antipode*, 43(2), 237-263.
- Carswell, G. & De Neve, G. (2013) Labouring for global markets: Conceptualising labour agency in global production networks. *Geoforum*, 44, 62-70.
- Castree, N. (2000). Geographic Scale and Grass-Roots Internationalism: The Liverpool Dock Dispute, 1995–1998. *Economic Geography*, 76(3), 272-292.
- Castree, N., Coe, N. M., Ward, K., & Samers, M. (2004). *Spaces of Work: Global Capitalism and the Geographies of Labour*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Coe, N. M. (2013). Geographies of production III: Making space for labour. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(2), 271-284.
- Coe, N. M., & Hess, M. (2013). Global production networks, labour and development. *Geoforum*, 44, 4-9.
- Coe, N. M., & Jordhus-Lier, D. C. (2011). Constrained agency? Re-evaluating the geographies of labour. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(2), 211-233.
- Dicken, P. (2015). *Global shift mapping the changing contours of the world economy* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Esaiasson, P., Gilljam, M., Oscarsson, H., & Wängnerud, L. (2012). *Metodpraktikan : Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad* (4th [rev.] ed.). Stockholm: Norstedts juridik.
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Social dialogue*. Retrieved 03-05-2017 from: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=329&langId=en>
- Flassbeck, H. & Lapavistas, C. (2015). *Against the troika: Crisis and austerity in the Eurozone*. New York; London: Verso.
- Gren, M. & Hallin, P. (2003). *Kulturgeografi: En ämnesteoretisk introduktion*. Malmö: Liber.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Gomez, B., & Jones, J. (eds.) (2010). *Research methods in geography – a critical introduction*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gough, J. (2010). Workers' strategies to secure jobs, their uses of scale, and competing economic moralities: Rethinking the 'geography of justice'. *Political Geography*, 29(3), 130-139. DOI: 10.1016/j.polgeo.2010.02.005.
- Halfacree, K. (1995). Household Migration and the Structuration of Patriarchy – Evidence from the USA. *Progress In Human Geography*, 19(2), 159-182.
- Harvey, D. (2006). *Spaces of global capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Development*. New York; London: Verso.



- Hastings, T. (2016). Moral Matters: De-Romanticising Worker Agency and Charting Future Directions for Labour Geography. *Geography Compass*, 10(7), 307-318.
- Healey, R. (2006). Asylum-seekers and refugees: A structuration theory analysis of their experiences in the UK. *Population, Space and Place*, 12(4), 257-271.
- Herod, A. (1997). From a geography of labor to a labor geography: Labor's spatial fix and the geography of capitalism. *Antipode*, 29(1), 1-31.
- ILO. (n.d.). *About the ILO*. Retrieved 03-05-2017 from: <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>
- Ince, A., Featherstone, D., Cumbers, A., Mackinnon, D., & Strauss, K. (2015). British Jobs for British Workers? Negotiating Work, Nation, and Globalisation through the Lindsey Oil Refinery Disputes. *Antipode*, 47(1), 139-157.
- Katz, C. (2004). *Growing up global: Economic restructuring and children's everyday lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kjellberg, A. (2013). Kan facket's försvagning hejdas – facklig styrka och organisering i en globaliserad värld. In I. Lindberg & A. Neergaard (Eds.), *Bortom horisonten. Facket's vägval i globaliseringens tid*. (p. 39-89). Premiss förlag.
- Kjellberg, A. (2014, 24 June). A-kassan: från medlemsras till socialbidragsnivå. *Dagens Arbete*. Retrieved 23-02-2017 from: <http://da.se/2014/06/a-kassan-fran-medlemsras-till-socialbidragsniva/>
- Liedman, S. (1999). *Att se sig själv i andra: Om solidaritet*. Stockholm: Bonnier.
- LO. (2016). *Facklig anslutning år 2016*. Retrieved 18-05-2017 from: [http://www.lo.se/home/lo/res.nsf/vRes/lo\\_fakta\\_1366027478784\\_facklig\\_anslutning\\_2016\\_pdf/\\$File/Facklig\\_anslutning\\_2016.pdf](http://www.lo.se/home/lo/res.nsf/vRes/lo_fakta_1366027478784_facklig_anslutning_2016_pdf/$File/Facklig_anslutning_2016.pdf)
- LO. (2017). *Anställningsformer och arbetstider 2017: Fast och tidsbegränsat anställda samt hel- och deltidanställda efter klass och kön år 1990–2016*. Retrieved 08-06-2017 from: [http://www.lo.se/home/lo/res.nsf/vRes/lo\\_fakta\\_1366027478784\\_anstallningsformer\\_arbetstider\\_2017\\_pdf/\\$File/Anstallningsformer\\_arbetstider\\_2017.pdf](http://www.lo.se/home/lo/res.nsf/vRes/lo_fakta_1366027478784_anstallningsformer_arbetstider_2017_pdf/$File/Anstallningsformer_arbetstider_2017.pdf)
- LO. (n.d.). *Fakta om det globala facket*. Retrieved 28-02-2017 from: [http://www.lo.se/start/en\\_bättre\\_varld/globalt/fakta\\_om\\_det\\_globala\\_facket](http://www.lo.se/start/en_bättre_varld/globalt/fakta_om_det_globala_facket)
- Larsson, E. (2015, 7 May) LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd har blivit Union to union. *Arbetet*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: <http://www.dagen.se/dokument/30-arig-relation-over-nar-sida-lamnar-pmu-1.92937>
- Mercille, J. (2015). *The political economy and media coverage of the European economic crisis: the case of Ireland*. New York; Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mercille, J. & Murphy, E. (2015). *Deepening neoliberalism, austerity, and crisis: Europe's treasure Ireland*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nolan, L., & Featherstone, D. (2015). Contentious Politics in Austere Times. *Geography Compass*, 9(6), 351-361.
- Svenska ILO-kommittén. (n.d.). *Om ILO*. Retrieved 03-05-2017 from: <https://svenskailo-kommitten.se/om-ilo/>

Svenska Kyrkan. (n.d.). *Svenska kyrkans medlemsutveckling år 1972-2016*. Retrieved 16-06-2017 from: <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/statistik>

Sydsvenskan. (2016, 6 December). *LO hoppas på stoppat SD-flöde*. Retrieved 08-05-2017 from: <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2016-12-06/lo-hoppas-pa-stoppat-sd-flode>

TCO. (2015). *TCO granskar: Tjänstemannagrupper i arbetsmarknadspolitiken och i omställning*. Retrieved 08-06-2017 from: [https://www.tco.se/globalassets/rapporter/2015/0515-tjanstemannagrupper\\_w\\_1.0.pdf](https://www.tco.se/globalassets/rapporter/2015/0515-tjanstemannagrupper_w_1.0.pdf)

Unionen. (n.d.). *Invest in your working life - join Unionen*. Retrieved 12-05-2017 from: <https://www.unionen.se/in-english>

Wills, J. (1998). Taking on the CosmoCorps? Experiments in Transnational Labor Organization. *Economic Geography*, 74(2), 111-130.

Wills, J. (2012). The geography of community and political organisation in London today. *Political Geography*, 31(2), 114-126.

## Appendix A – Field material

### The Financial Sector Union of Sweden

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.finansforbundet.se](http://www.finansforbundet.se)
- Finansförbundet. (n.d.). *Finansförbundets verksamhet 2016*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [https://www.finansforbundet.se/globalassets/dokument/material-och-presentationer/om-oss/verksamhetsberattelse\\_2016\\_interaktiv\\_-reviderad\\_1705.pdf](https://www.finansforbundet.se/globalassets/dokument/material-och-presentationer/om-oss/verksamhetsberattelse_2016_interaktiv_-reviderad_1705.pdf)

### The Swedish union of Forestry, Wood and Graphical Workers, GS

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.gsfacket.se](http://www.gsfacket.se)
- GS Facket. (2016). *Verksamhetsberättelse och årsredovisning 2015*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [https://www.gsfacket.se/globalassets/dokument/verksamhetsberattelse/gs\\_vb\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gsfacket.se/globalassets/dokument/verksamhetsberattelse/gs_vb_2015.pdf)
- Political expert, interview (02-05-2017)

### The Swedish Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union, HRF

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.hrf.net](http://www.hrf.net)
- HRF. (n.d.). *Verksamhetsberättelse 2015*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [http://www.hrf.net/app/uploads/2016/08/hrf\\_verksamhetsberattelse\\_2015.pdf](http://www.hrf.net/app/uploads/2016/08/hrf_verksamhetsberattelse_2015.pdf)
- HRF. (2014) *Gränslös solidaritet – Hotell- och Restaurangfacket i världen*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [http://www.hrf.net/app/uploads/2016/01/GranslosSolidaritet\\_WEBB.pdf](http://www.hrf.net/app/uploads/2016/01/GranslosSolidaritet_WEBB.pdf)
- Assistant for the working committee (*arbetsutskottet* in Swedish), interview (26-04-2017)

### The Industrial and Metal Workers' Union, IF Metall

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.ifmetall.se](http://www.ifmetall.se)
- IF Metall. (n.d.). *Verksamhetsberättelse 2015*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [https://www.ifmetall.se/globalassets/avdelningar/forbundscontoret/resurser/dokument/verksamhetsberattelse/verksamhetsberattelse\\_2015.pdf](https://www.ifmetall.se/globalassets/avdelningar/forbundscontoret/resurser/dokument/verksamhetsberattelse/verksamhetsberattelse_2015.pdf)
- International secretary, interview (25-04-2017)

### Kyrkans Akademikerförbund, Kyrka

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.kyrka.se](http://www.kyrka.se)

### Skogs- och Lantbrukstjänstemannaförbundet, SLF

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.slf-facket.se](http://www.slf-facket.se)
- Chairman, interview (26-04-2017)

### Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet

- Website: [www.hamn.nu](http://www.hamn.nu)

### *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation, SAC*

- Websites. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.sac.se](http://www.sac.se), [www.internationellsolidaritet.wordpress.com](http://www.internationellsolidaritet.wordpress.com)
- Former international secretary, interview (08-05-2017)

### The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.sverigesingenjorer.se](http://www.sverigesingenjorer.se)
- Sveriges Ingenjörer. (n.d.). *Sveriges Ingenjörers Årsredovisning 2015*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [http://www.sverigesingenjorer.se/Global/Dokumentbibliotek/f%c3%b6rbundsdok/%c3%85rsredovisning%202015\\_webb.pdf](http://www.sverigesingenjorer.se/Global/Dokumentbibliotek/f%c3%b6rbundsdok/%c3%85rsredovisning%202015_webb.pdf)

### *Unionen*

- Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.unionen.se](http://www.unionen.se)
- Unionen. (2016). *Verksamhetsberättelse med Årsredovisning 2015*. Retrieved 09-05-2017 from: [https://www.unionen.se/sites/default/files/arsredovisning\\_2015\\_2469.pdf](https://www.unionen.se/sites/default/files/arsredovisning_2015_2469.pdf)

### Additional sources

- Union to Union. Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.uniontounion.org](http://www.uniontounion.org)
- The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO. Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.lo.se](http://www.lo.se)
- Swedish Confederation of Professionals' Associations, Saco. Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.saco.se](http://www.saco.se)
- The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees, TCO. Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.tco.se](http://www.tco.se)
- The Brussels Office of the Swedish Trade Unions. Website. Retrieved 22-05-2017 from: [www.fackligt.eu/swedish-trade-union](http://www.fackligt.eu/swedish-trade-union)

## Appendix B – Interview questions (in Swedish)

What is your role in the trade union? How many members does the trade union have?

(SAC) How come the trade union is not part of a national confederation?

Would you say the federation is part of a specific sector? Is the sector subject to international competition?

How is the trade union's position in relation to the employers? (Power, negotiations...) What matters are easier/harder to reach consensus on?

Is there a clash between competition and issues of pay levels/rights? How does the trade union handle this?

Is there a clash between national competition and solidarity with workers in other countries?

What types of collaborations take place on sub-national level? (Actions, networking, charity/aid, support, debate articles...? With what kinds of organizations?) Do these collaborations ever get "up-scaled" to the national level?

What types of collaborations take place and are coordinated through the national confederation? (Influencing e.g. EU decision making, sympathy actions, networking...?)

How can the trade union affect what collaborations the national confederation engages in? Does the central confederation change the trade union's agency in any way? Does the national confederation ever inhibit the trade union's work in any way? (Conflicting interests e.g. with regards to sympathy actions...?)

How involved is the trade union (if at all) in the members' work in European Work Councils? What EWCs are the members part of?

In collaborations with employer organizations, are there any issues avoided? Are some issues part of the discussion and others not?

Does the trade union have a solidarity/aid fund? (SAC and GS do.) For what purposes is it used?

(SLF) Does the trade union have any international collaborations?

(Go through the different types of collaborations the trade union is part of and what the goal of those are.) What global/European/Nordic/national goals?

Do collaborations on different scales ever clash with one another? (International collaborations with the work nationally for your members?)

How has the collaborative union work changed over time? (Fewer members, global competition, increasing economic disparities nationally/internationally, increased xenophobia, better communications...) Has it become more/less important? Easier/harder? More/less collaborative?

## Appendix C – Alliances

Appendix table 1: Alliances and allies found

National trade union	Alliance	Allied
<b>The Financial Sector Union of Sweden</b>	UNI Global Union	Unions globally
	Transnational in-firm alliance between workers	E.g. HSBC Group, Itaú-Unibanco, Banco do Brasil & Barclays Bank
	UNI Europe	Unions in Europe
	EWCs	Workers & employers in SEB
	Finance Watch	A multitude of European organizations - political, NGOs, unions etc.
	Europaportalen	Swedish unions, national confederations & employers
	Nordiska Finansanställdas Union, NFU	Unions in Nordic countries
	Svenska FN-förbundet	Unions, NGOs, religious- & political organizations
	Centrala Jämställdhets- och Mångfaldskommittén, committee for equality and diversity	Employer organization in banking, BAO
	Läkare utan gränser, MSF	Global NGO
	Amnesty	Global NGO
	Fairtrade	Global NGO
	<b>GS</b>	UNI Global Union
Building and Wood Worker's International, BWI		Unions globally
Palmeacentret		Swedish unions, social & political organizations
UNI Europa Graphical		Unions in Europe
European Federation of Building and Woodworkers, EFBWW (part of ETUC)		Unions in Europe
EWCs		Workers & employers in some TNCs
<i>Europaportalen</i>		Swedish unions, national confederations & employers
The Swedish Unions within Industry		Swedish unions
<i>Industrirådet</i> - Swedish industrial council		Unions & employers
<i>Teknikcollege</i>		Unions & employers
<i>Grafiska yrkesnämnden</i>		Schools, employers & unions
<i>Stoppmöbel- och Träindustrins yrkesnämnd, STYN</i>		Schools, employers & unions
<i>Skogsbrukets Yrkesnämnd, SYN</i>		Schools, employers & unions
<b>Hamnarbetarförbundet</b>	International Dockworkers' Council, IDC	Unions globally
<b>HRF</b>	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, IUF	Unions globally
	<i>Palmeacentret</i>	Swedish unions, social- & political organizations
	European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism, EFFAT	Unions in Europe

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Alliance</b>	<b>Allied</b>
	EWCs	Workers & employers in e.g. Fazer Food Services AB, Scandic Hotels AB
	<i>Europaportalen</i>	Swedish unions, national confederations & employers
	Nordic Union for Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism, NUHRCT	Unions in Nordic countries
	Educational council for hotel- and restaurant workers	Employers
<b>IF Metall</b>	IndustriALL Global Union	Unions globally
	Transnational framework agreement	Workers for H&M in Asia, Europe, Africa
	IndustriALL European Trade Union	Unions in Europe
	<i>Europaportalen</i>	Swedish unions, national confederations & employers
	EWCs	Workers & employers in many TNCs, e.g. Alfa Laval, Volvo Cars
	<i>Palmecentret</i>	Swedish unions, social & political organizations
	<i>Industrirådet</i> - Swedish industrial council	Unions & employers
	<i>Industrianställda i Norden</i> , Nordic IN	Unions in Nordic countries
	Motorbranschens yrkesnämnd, MYN	Unions, employers & companies
	The Swedish Unions within Industry	Swedish unions
	<i>Teknikcollege</i>	Unions & employers
	<i>Produktionslyftet</i>	Chalmers, think tanks, employers & unions
	Education in project management	ABF & Swedish unions
	Partnerships for integration in the labour market	Social- & political organizations, Arbetsförmedlingen, unions
	Cooperation regarding <i>Europeiska globaliseringsfonden</i> , EGF	State, Arbetsförmedlingen, unions
	Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme, SWHAP	International Council of Swedish Industry, Sida
	Education on unionism and anti-racism	<i>Stiftelsen Expo</i>
<b>Kyrka</b>	Network for professionals in Lutheran churches in Europe	Workers in Europe
	Nordiskt Prästsamarbete, NPS, for Nordic Priests	Priests in Nordic countries
	Professional federation within the Nordic churches	Workers in Nordic countries
	The Swedish church	Religious organization & employer
	<i>Förhandlings- och samverkansrådet</i> , PTK	Swedish unions
	<i>Sveriges Kristna Råd</i> , Swedish Christian council	5 religious organizations
	Kyrka – arbetsliv, for better work environment	LO, TCO
	Professional federation for parish pedagogues in the Swedish church	Workers
	Association: <i>Forum för prästvigda kvinnor i Svenska kyrkan</i> , for female priests in Sweden	Workers
	<i>Sensus Studieförbund</i>	Educational association
	Professional federation for workers in Swedish hospital churches, SKAIS	Workers

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Alliance</b>	<b>Allied</b>
	<i>Sveriges Kyrkokamerala förening</i>	Workers
<b>SAC</b>	Red and Black Coordination, RBC	Unions globally
	<i>Confederación General del Trabajo</i> , CGT	Spanish union
	<i>Confédération Nationale du Travail</i> , CNT-F	French union
	<i>Inicjatywa Pracownicza</i> , IP	Polish union
	National Garment Workers Federation, NGWF	Bangladeshi union
	<i>Sibirskaja Federacija Truda</i> , SKT	Siberian union
<b>SLF</b>	<i>Offentliganställdas Förhandlingsråd</i> , OFR	15 Swedish unions
	<i>Naturbrukets Yrkesnämnd</i> , NYN	Employer-, professional- & religious organizations
	<i>Lantbrukets Arbetsmiljökommitté</i>	Employer-, professional- and religious organizations, unions, companies etc.
	Vision	Union
<b>The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers</b>	UNI Global Union	Unions globally
	IndustriALL Global Union	Unions globally
	UNI Europa	Unions in Europe
	IndustriALL European Trade Union	Unions in Europe
	EWCs	Workers and employers in some TNCs
	Eurocadres	Swedish unions & European trade union federations
	European Federation of National Engineering Associations	29 European unions
	<i>NordIng</i>	Engineering societies in Nordic & Baltic countries
	Association for Nordic Engineers, ANE	Danish & Norwegian unions
	<i>Industrianställda i Norden</i> , Nordic IN	Unions in Nordic countries
	UNI-IT Norden	Unions in Nordic countries
	The Swedish Unions within Industry	Swedish unions
	<i>Industrirådet</i> - Swedish industrial council	Unions & employers
	Förhandlings- och samverkansrådet, PTK	Swedish unions
	<i>Föreningen Sveriges Vägingenjörer</i> , FSV	State, unions & employers
	<i>Akademikeralliansen</i>	17 Swedish unions
	Regional safety agents shared with <i>Jusek</i> , <i>Civilekonomerna</i> , <i>Naturvetarna</i>	Swedish unions
	<i>Teknikcollege</i>	Unions & employers
	<i>Teknikvägen</i> mentor programme for immigrated engineers	Stockholm University
	Swedbank mentor programme	Swedbank
<b>Unionen</b>	UNI Global Union	Unions globally
	IndustriALL Global Union	Unions globally
	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, IUF	Unions globally
	Transnational trade union alliance within H&M's trade	Unions globally
	CSR in Swedish TNCs	Swedish TNCs
	UNI European Trade Union	Unions in Europe
	UNI Europa Professionals & Managers	Unions in Europe
	UNI Europa Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS)	Unions in Europe
	IndustriALL European Trade Union	Unions in Europe



<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Alliance</b>	<b>Allied</b>
	European Transport Workers' Federation, ETF, Women's Committee	Unions in Europe
	<i>Europaportalen</i>	Swedish unions, national confederations & employers
	EWCs	Workers & employers in some TNCs
	<i>Nordiska Handels</i>	?
	<i>Industrianställda i Norden, Nordic IN</i>	Unions in Nordic countries
	<i>Nordiska Transportarbetarefederationen, NTF</i>	Unions in Nordic countries
	The Swedish Unions within Industry	Swedish unions
	<i>Industrirådet - Swedish industrial council</i>	Unions & employers
	<i>Förhandlings- och samverkansrådet, PTK</i>	Swedish unions
	<i>Teknikcollege</i>	Unions & employers
	Swedish Digitalization Council	Swedish companies, think tanks, municipalities & county councils.

## Appendix D - Actions

Appendix table 2: Actions found, allies and other intended beneficiaries (the latter within brackets)

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Alliance organization(s) (additional intended beneficiaries)</b>
<b>The Financial Sector Union of Sweden</b>	Participation in 16:00-rörelsen	Women's organizations & unions
	Participation in global action day: "Hands off our right to strike"	Unions through ITUC ( <i>workers worldwide</i> )
	Support of comrades in Argentina	Argentinian workers
	Support against attacks on trade unions in Turkey	Turkish unions
	International development and solidarity work, e.g. in Malawi, Vietnam and Latin America	?
<b>GS</b>	E.g. Debate article: "Svensk industri har ett bra läge" for higher pay	The Swedish Unions within Industry
	Campaign: "Decent Work" - for builders of sporting arenas globally	BWI
	Project: Work environment & health	BWI, unions in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland & Zimbabwe.
	Project: Forestry on islands in the Pacific Ocean	BWI, unions in Papua Nya Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa & Fiji.
	Project: Humanitarian aid, collection for Nepal	UNI Global Union
	Campaign: Better work environment	Unions in Sweden & Swaziland
	Project: CONAGRA in Chile	Chilean union
	Project: Sustainable forestry in South East Asia	Workers in South East Asia
	Project: Webb course "Safe forestry"	Swedish employers, <i>Prevent</i> & workers in Sweden
	Solidarity fund	? (?)
<b>Hamnarbetarförbundet</b>	Support from dockworkers internationally towards Swedish dockworkers	Unions through IDC
	Support of Spanish dock workers	Unions through IDC
<b>HRF</b>	E.g. participation in "Make up my workplace – Dignity for hotel housekeepers" and union development in Africa, Latin America and South East Asia	UIF
	Support of <i>Kommunal's</i> notice of strike	Swedish union
	Support of <i>Musikerförbundet's</i> demands for a collective agreement for the artists on Idol	Swedish union
	Support of <i>Målareförbundet's</i> demands for keeping their pay system	Swedish union
	Support of <i>Fellesforbundet's</i> strike for the low paid	Norwegian union
	Participation in 16:00-rörelsen	Women's organizations & unions

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Alliance organization(s) (additional intended beneficiaries)</b>
	E.g. partaking in debate: Berlin Declaration on Transforming Tourism	<i>Schysst resande-nätverket</i> : Swedish union, Fair Action, the IOGT-NTO-movement, the Swedish church & Union to Union ( <i>workers and people at risk in tourism industry</i> )
	Donation of 30 000 SEK	UNHCR
<b>IF Metall</b>	E.g. Debate article: " <i>Svensk industri har ett bra läge</i> " for higher pay	The Swedish Unions within Industry
	Courses for members active in <i>IF Metall</i>	<i>Stiftelsen Expo</i>
	Debate article: " <i>Kraftfulla satsningar krävs mot ohälsan i arbetslivet</i> " for better health	Swedish unions, <i>Arena Idé</i> & Örebro University ( <i>workers</i> )
	Campaign/hearing: Zero tolerance against deadly accidents in work	Swedish union & <i>Arena Idé</i>
	Seminar: Swedish TNCs' implementation of CSR in Chinese branches + Education of 20 CSR auditors at H&M in China	<i>Sveriges Forum för Hållbara Investeringar &amp; Näringslivets Miljöchefer</i>
	Seminar: Global deal – Swedish model in China	Swedish embassy in China
	Support for South Korean strike	IndustriALL & South Korean workers
	Protest against incarceration of Bangladeshi workers	Bangladeshi workers
<b>Kyrka</b>	Donation(s) to international work	The Swedish church (?)
	Participation in seminar on women and leadership at <i>Nordiskt Forum 2014</i>	200 Nordic women's organizations, through their umbrella organizations, e.g. <i>Sveriges Kvinnolobby</i>
<b>SAC</b>	E.g. Support after police attack	CNT-F
	Debate article and threat to strike in sympathy with South African wine production workers	Workers
	Threat of sympathy action with employees at a Swedish School in France	Workers
	International solidarity fund	? (?)
	Political strike: Women's strike 8 March 2017	Women's organizations
	Blockade in support of workers at IFO (care home) in Kungsbacka	Swedish workers
	Solidarity with arrested protesters in Greece	Workers in Greece
	International conference "Still building internationalism"	Workers, anarcho-syndicalist unions, organizations
	Collection for Bangladeshi garment workers	Bangladeshi unions
<b>SLF</b>	-	-
<b>The Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers</b>	E.g. Debate article: " <i>Svensk industri har ett bra läge</i> " for higher pay	The Swedish Unions within Industry
	Debate article: " <i>För bättre forskning – befria universiteten</i> " for better research	<i>Forska!Sverige</i> & Swedish unions
	Debate article: " <i>Fler måste få nytta av nya behandlingsformer</i> " for better health/making research more readily available	<i>Forska!Sverige</i> , Apotekarsocieteten & Lunds University ( <i>workers/society</i> )
	Debate article: " <i>Företagen har råd – höjda löner hotar inte industrin</i> " for higher pay	Swedish unions

<b>National trade union</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Alliance organization(s) (additional intended beneficiaries)</b>
	Debate article: " <i>Parterna måste ta ansvar när socialförsäkringarna brister</i> " for better health/social security	Swedish unions (workers/society)
	Debate article: " <i>Psykisk ohälsa allt vanligare i Skåne</i> " for better health	Forska!Sverige & Swedish unions (workers/society)
	Debate article: " <i>Kollektivavtal är en trisslott med vinstgaranti</i> " for increased organization	Swedish unions
	Debate article: " <i>Slopa förslaget om en särskild bankskatt</i> " against a special bank tax	Swedish unions
	Debate article: " <i>Tekniskt basår hotas av bristande finansiering</i> " for Swedish competitiveness	Teknikföretagen
<b>Unionen</b>	E.g. Debate article: " <i>Svensk industri har ett bra läge</i> " for higher pay	The Swedish Unions within Industry
	Participation in campaign: Fair transport	Unions, European Transport Workers' Federation, ETF & EU citizens
	Participation in campaign: Fair play	Swedish union & professional federation
	E.g. partaking in debate: Berlin Declaration on Transforming Tourism	Schysst resande-nätverket: Swedish union, Fair Action, the IOGT-NTO-movement, the Swedish church & Union to Union.
	Debate article: " <i>Företagen har råd – höjda löner hotar inte industrin</i> " for higher pay	Swedish unions
	Debate article: " <i>Parterna måste ta ansvar när socialförsäkringarna brister</i> " for better health/social security	Swedish unions (workers/society)
	Debate article: " <i>Kraftfulla satsningar krävs mot ohälsan i arbetslivet</i> " for better health	Swedish unions, Arena Idé & Örebro University (workers)
	Debate article: " <i>Kollektivavtal är en trisslott med vinstgaranti</i> " for increased organization	Swedish unions
	Participation in committee	UNI Europa Women's committee
	Participation in committee	UNI Global Union Women's committee