

Intermediary cooperative associations and the institutionalization of  
participate work practices:  
A case study in the Danish public sector

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*Economic and Industrial Democracy* (2015), 36(4), 701-725.

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## Abstract

Scandinavian countries are known for having a high adoption of cooperative models of work design. This article investigates the role of parity labour market associations, termed *intermediary cooperative associations*, in the dissemination of these models. Findings are based on an examination of the Centre for the Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (SCKK), a social partnership-based organization that funds workplace development projects at state workplaces, and of nine participative development projects that received financial and logistical support from the SCKK. These projects increased union and management commitment to partnership-based approaches to problem-solving, despite their ambiguous results for both groups. This suggests that intermediary cooperative associations help to enhance the normative legitimacy of participative work practices through the provision of resources and 'best practice' management approaches.

Keywords: Cooperative models, Denmark, industrial relations, intermediary associations, labour-management cooperation, participation, work design

## Introduction

A central feature of the ‘Scandinavian model’ is a strong tradition of cooperation between labour and management on work reorganization (Hasle and Sørensen, 2013). Research has shown that Scandinavian employees enjoy better opportunities for participation compared to those in other European countries (Gallie, 2003, 2009). However, there is less agreement on why participative work practices have been so widely and successfully adopted in these countries.

This article investigates the role of a particular type of cooperative parity associations common in Scandinavian countries, termed here *intermediary cooperative associations*, in promoting and sustaining participative work practices in Denmark. Denmark is a particularly interesting national case, as a Scandinavian country that has come to be seen as a ‘best practice’ model, in terms of both economic and social outcomes (Gautié and Schmitt, 2009). Denmark is also known for its tradition of support for sociotechnical systems of work design, with recent research showing strong adoption of high involvement management practices in a range of employment settings (Gallie, 2009; Sørensen and Weinkopf, 2009).

Findings are based on a case study of the Centre for the Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (Statens Center for Kompetence – og Kvalitetsudvikling – SCKK) – a sector-level social partnership-based organization that funds workplace and competence development projects at state workplaces. The SCKK was established in 2000 as a part of a collective agreement between state employers and unions, with the goal of encouraging quality improvement initiatives. One of its central roles has been to provide counselling, training and financial support to organizations and agencies seeking to implement participatory approaches to work redesign. It thus represents a particular kind of social partnership-based

organization that is responsible for encouraging labour–management cooperation within companies and workplaces.

We examine the development and activities of the SCKK, as well as its role in supporting labour–management cooperation over work reorganization. Findings suggest that intermediary cooperative associations such as the SCKK may successfully encourage the broader adoption of participative practices due to their role in both legitimizing union input into decision-making and in encouraging institutional isomorphism across organizations within a sector. The SCKK was founded through tripartite negotiations, with the aim to provide local labour and management representatives with resources, monitoring and oversight to raise competence and quality levels at state workplaces; as well as the expertise needed to diffuse best practice models. This created a strong environment for encouraging cooperative approaches to restructuring jobs through funded projects. However, longitudinal findings suggest that the substantive impact of these initiatives on work design and worker outcomes was impeded by uneven stakeholder commitment and employer strategies to reduce costs and rationalize work.

We first review past literature on the role of institutions and associations in supporting cooperative management approaches in Scandinavian countries, with a focus on Denmark. Second, we describe the development and activities of SCKK. Third, we summarize findings from nine projects that received support from the fund between 2004 and 2007 across three public sector organizations: state prisons, the national transportation company (DSB) and the Lutheran state church. We present an overview of the cases, and then carry out a more detailed, longitudinal analysis of a project focused on the merger of kiosk and ticket sales at DSB. In this case, we examine the project’s origin and short-term results, as well as the longer-term impact of

the merger on work organization and working conditions up to 2013. Findings are based on focus groups, interviews with participants and archival materials.

### **Coordinating associations and cooperation in Scandinavian countries**

Scandinavia is renowned for both strong traditions of labour–management cooperation and extensive adoption of participative work practices. Comparative studies have found higher quality work tasks and better opportunities for participation (Gallie, 2003), higher influence over work tasks (Gallie, 2009), higher worker autonomy (Esser and Olsen, 2012; Lloyd and Payne, 2012) and more ‘learning-oriented’ forms of work organization (Gustavsen, 2007) in Scandinavian companies compared to their counterparts in other European countries. International comparisons based on multi-sectoral case studies of value chain reorganization (Flecker et al., 2008), the privatization and liberalization of services (Flecker and Hermann, 2011), pay structures in low-wage occupations (Gautié and Schmitt, 2009) and labour market segmentation in call centre jobs (Doellgast et al., 2009) also have shown that cooperative approaches to restructuring are more common in Scandinavian countries, with less disruptive effects on pay and working conditions.

The high commitment of both labour and management to cooperative models of work design in Scandinavian countries has often been attributed to the distinctive role or policies of the state in these countries. Esping-Andersen (1990) argued that universal welfare provision distinguished Scandinavian countries from corporatist systems such as Germany and Austria, where welfare rights were traditionally attached to class and status. Scandinavia’s social democratic welfare states, in turn, invest more in general skills across the population, making it easier to adopt participatory forms of work organization across the economy – and not just in privileged ‘core’ workplaces (Iversen and Stephens, 2008). The historic strength of social

democratic parties has also established a supportive regulative environment for unions, including the Ghent system whereby unions are responsible for administering the unemployment insurance system, and the continued legality of secondary boycotts or sympathy strikes. Resulting high union membership rates and bargaining coverage constitute distinctive power resources for unions, allowing them to ‘constrain the actions of employers in the interest of improving the quality of work life of employees’ (Gallie, 2007: 100).

Other scholars have focused on the centralized organization of employers’ associations in Scandinavian countries to explain high levels of labour–management cooperation, with several studies centred on the operation of these associations in Denmark. Martin and Swank (2012) attribute employer support for social investments in Denmark to strong peak business associations, which they argue help their members to both form collective preferences and achieve goals in negotiations over labour market policy. Martin and Thelen (2007) have argued that a large public sector in Denmark has helped to sustain a ‘macrocorporatist’ form of coordination that relies on cooperation between peak unions and employers’ associations at the national level, with the state playing a central coordinating role.

These arguments focus on the ways in which institutions at the national level shape the material interests of actors, as well as the power resources that they have to pursue these interests. Thus, employers involve employees in decision-making because this complements other management practices necessary for high-value added production models that have pay-offs in global markets (Hall and Soskice, 2001); or because it is pushed by strong unions who are able to pursue an agenda for workplace change that incorporates employee interests in broadened skill and autonomy (Doellgast, 2012). However, cooperative models have been adopted across organizations in all these countries, not just in export-oriented firms that expect to reap rewards;

and they are endorsed in workplaces with strong and weaker union presence (Knudsen et al., 2011).

Scandinavian countries also differ from one another in a number of important ways (Amable, 2003), with variation in the degree of bargaining centralization and coordination, the strength of legislated employment protections and institutional support for vocational training and development (Due and Madsen, 2008; Goergen et al., 2012). However, despite these differences, Scandinavian countries have in common high adoption rates of participative work practices. Moreover, Scandinavian employers have long stood apart as particularly enthusiastic in embracing these practices compared to other European economies with strong and encompassing union agreements and strong workplace participation rights, such as Germany (Gallie, 2009; Sørensen and Weinkopf, 2009).

This suggests that while Scandinavia's social democratic welfare states and tradition of centralized bargaining through peak associations may be important supports for labour-management cooperation and participative work practices, they are not sufficient for explaining the continued strength of this model across these countries. One shared institutional feature of Scandinavian economies that has typically been overlooked in this literature is the widespread presence of 'intermediary cooperative associations'. Intermediary associations have been defined as 'organizations, groups and collectivities in civil society situated below the state but above individuals' primary groups' (Sciulli, 2011: 55). By intermediary cooperative associations, we refer to parity-based or funded organizations that define and sustain agreements, procedures and practices at the intermediary level between unions and employers' associations and workplaces; and that link or tie the partnership strategies of unions and employers' associations to their local constituencies' participative practices. Such intermediary cooperative associations can be

distinguished from general intermediary associations such as employer, union and state-based bodies. They can also be distinguished from firms, workplaces and workplace-level actors, including works councils, shop stewards and managers. Intermediary cooperative associations are typically established and supported by collective actors via central collective agreements or in tripartite agreements.

In the Scandinavian countries, intermediary cooperative associations are regularly formed by the central social partners in tripartite agreements or in the collective labour agreement (CLA) negotiation process as a forum for promoting specific issues, such as training and development or health and safety; and for encouraging local labour–management partnership. They disseminate positive experiences from local projects to labour and management representatives and their constituencies. The system routes a share of local surplus to a sectoral cooperative association for redistribution to selected companies or employee groups, rather than allocating these resources to small sector-wide pay rises. In some cases, the state adds additional funds – for example, during tripartite negotiations, the social partners may agree to take responsibility for societal problems such as increased vocational training demands. These bodies are widely perceived as neutral due to equal union and management representation.

Intermediary cooperative associations are present across Scandinavian countries in different forms. In Norway, the cooperative tradition has roots in the sociotechnical tradition initiated by the cooperative experiments – ‘Samarbejdsforsøgene’ (Emery and Thorsrud, 1976). A contemporary example is ‘Hovedorganisationernes fellestiltak’<sup>1</sup> (the central social partners’ common initiative), whose purpose is to contribute to value creation through encouraging broad participation at the workplace level. In Sweden, the central employers’ association withdrew

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<sup>1</sup> [www.fellestiltak.no/om-oss/](http://www.fellestiltak.no/om-oss/) (accessed 18 December 2013).

support from several cooperative associations in the late 1990s. However, there continues to be a tradition of these intermediary bodies; for example, the organization ‘Prevent’ aims to prevent working environment problems, based on a cooperation agreement between the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation and the Council for Negotiation and Cooperation.<sup>2</sup> In Denmark – the context of this study – such associations have been established in a range of labour market areas, which are described below.

In this article, we examine the role of these intermediary cooperative associations in encouraging the adoption and institutionalization of participative work practices. Our analysis is based on a case study of one such association: the Centre for the Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (SCKK). The state as employer has been found to be particularly important in Scandinavian countries as a ‘model employer’ promoting particular models of cooperation and employee participation (Mathiesen and Hvenegaard, 2001). In Denmark, the public sector is a site where unions have traditionally had strong bargaining power, with high union density and a tradition of investment in the workforce (Martin and Thelen, 2007). In addition, studies have shown that new strategies and models adopted in the public sector, such as flexible cooperative health and safety organizations and joint commissions for collaboration and health and safety, have served as examples for private sector organizations, eventually being incorporated more broadly through the diffusion of new ‘best practices’ and legislation supporting them (Sørensen et al., 2009).

Public sector workplaces are thus a setting where labour power has traditionally been strong at the sectoral level in Denmark. At the same time, the public sector has gone through substantial change in recent years, as governments have sought to liberalize service provision,

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<sup>2</sup> [www.prevent.se/sv/Toppmenyn/In-English/](http://www.prevent.se/sv/Toppmenyn/In-English/) (accessed 18 December 2013).

with some state-owned companies now required to operate on a forprofit basis. Case studies of the SCKK and a selection of projects that it has funded provide a unique window on the role of intermediary cooperative associations in institutionalizing cooperative approaches to work design, in organizations that are under growing pressure to reduce costs and restructure employment. To reiterate the research question, we ask what role the SCKK has played in encouraging the adoption and diffusion of participatory work practices in Danish public sector organizations.

### Methods

Research findings are based on a case study of the SCKK and an analysis of nine projects that the SCKK funded between June 2004 and February 2007, all of which centred on improvements in psychosocial working conditions (interpersonal and social interactions that influence behaviour and development in the workplace<sup>3</sup>). The research was carried out in three phases, spanning 2008–2013.

The first phase of the study, conducted in the first half of 2008, sought to identify the project activities that the SCKK promoted and their impact at the workplace level. The evaluation focused on nine projects in three different subsectors: public transport, state prisons and churches. The sample ensured coverage of a range of public sector workplaces and jobs with very different issues and challenges. The evaluation was complemented by a detailed study of the SCKK that provided insights into its role in initiating the projects and disseminating experiences and results.

During this phase, the research team carried out a retrospective analysis of project documents in which implementation processes, mechanisms and outcomes were discussed. The

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<sup>3</sup> [www.springerreference.com/docs/html/chapterdbid/345781.html](http://www.springerreference.com/docs/html/chapterdbid/345781.html) (accessed 16 January 2014).

documents included project applications and plans, the organizations' internal evaluation of their initiatives, and additional materials, including magazine articles and web-based magazines. This archival material was analysed using the qualitative data analysis software program NVIVO, based on a combination of template coding (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) and thematic open coding (Malterud, 2001). Fifty-five template codes were derived from theories concerning the psychosocial working environment (Kristensen et al., 2005), intervention context (Nielsen and Abildgaard, 2013), methods, tools and workplace learning (Holman and Wall, 2002; Nytrø et al., 2000). Examples of codes include: well-being, job satisfaction, quantitative demands, control at work, trust, involvement at work, organizational learning, embedding, methods and tools and competing initiatives. Twenty-nine open codes were generated with sensitivity to cooperation and politics (Knudsen et al., 2011) and to change-related factors (Olsen et al., 2008). Examples include: cooperation, unions, communication, success and resistance to change. In the subsequent analysis, the team ordered the material according to the codes and performed cross-case analyses. A final unpublished report was produced describing the purpose, methods and results of each project; and identifying common themes, discrepancies and areas needing further information. This report was presented to the SCKK and used to design the second phase of the study.

In the second part of the study, conducted between June 2008 and May 2009, employee and employer representatives from the nine projects were invited to a full-day workshop to get detailed information on the scope, content and impact of the workplace interventions, based on the analyses in the first phase. Ten representatives from six projects attended. They were interviewed in mixed groups about the history of each development project, their aims and results, and organizational learning outcomes. Five individuals from organizations unable to

participate were interviewed by phone or in person. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Based on a first screening of the material, the research team selected three workplaces with particularly interesting projects promoting cooperation and participative practices for further case analysis: a state prison project, three projects in the national transportation company (DSB) and a project in the National Evangelical Lutheran state church. A one-day seminar with five to seven employee and management representatives was conducted in each organization, based on a 'chronicle workshop' format (Sørensen et al., 2011). The seminars produced an account of each organization's general development and of the development project in particular. Subsequently, a group interview was conducted with six to eight employees from each project. These interviews were recorded and partially transcribed based on relevance. A thematic analysis was performed using the themes developed in the first part of the study, and a report summarizing findings from phases one and two was delivered to the SCKK.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a folder with best practice advice was developed by the project researchers and disseminated by the SCKK.

In the third phase of the study, conducted between 2008 and 2013, the long-term effects of SCKK activities were investigated in one of the projects: a merger of kiosk and ticket sales at DSB. In 2010, we carried out follow-up interviews with three SCKK board members, with management and employee representatives at DSB, with union representatives from HK-Traffic and with a consultant. In total, 39 individuals were interviewed across workplaces, unions, consultants and the SCKK. These interviews were analysed using the same themes described above; however, with a focus on context, effects and change. All interviews were supplemented

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<sup>4</sup> [www.kubix.dk/pdf/273-arbejdsmiljo.pdf](http://www.kubix.dk/pdf/273-arbejdsmiljo.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2013).

with secondary archival data, such as annual reports and budgets from the SCKK between 2002 and 2012. Short telephone interviews and email correspondence were conducted with key informants in the SCKK and the union HK-Traffic in 2011–2013 to ask follow-up questions and confirm details of the case.

The following analysis begins with the history of the SCKK and an overview of similar intermediary cooperative associations in Denmark. The article then presents an analysis of the content and short-term outcomes of nine projects funded by the SCKK; followed by an in-depth, longitudinal case study of the kiosk and ticket sales merger at DSB.

### **The SCKK and institutionalized cooperation in Denmark**

The Centre for Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (Statens Center for Kompetence – og Kvalitetsudvikling – SCKK) is an organization whose purpose is to foster and support organizational development, restructuring and competence building in all state workplaces. The SCKK came out of a social partnership, and is governed jointly by public sector unions and employer representatives. At the same time, its central roles are to promote ‘best practice’ models of employee involvement and to help to institutionalize these across state workplaces. The SCKK is one among many intermediary cooperative associations that are formed or funded jointly by Danish employers’ associations and unions, with varying degrees of state interference. To situate this organization, we will first describe the position of these intermediary associations in Denmark’s industrial relations system and then describe the particular history and activities of the SCKK.

The Danish industrial relations system is based on limited state interference, in which all issues regarding pay (including minimum pay) and most issues concerning working time and gender are absent from Danish law (Scheuer, 2007). The foundation of the voluntary collective

bargaining system is the Cooperation Agreement of 1899 (Samarbejdsaftalen). The Agreement has legislative support by a conciliation board, but its fundamental mechanisms are based on voluntary agreements and self-regulation (Due and Madsen, 2008). Similar to other Scandinavian countries, this system is sustained by high bargaining coverage and union density – at 80% and 70% respectively in 2010 (Due and Madsen, 2010). At the workplace and firm level, parity-based cooperation committees (Samarbejdsudvalg) – often compared to German works councils<sup>5</sup> – secure local representation for the unions, ensure a link between central and local levels, and give shop stewards a role during ‘peace periods’ between collective agreement renegotiations. Consequently, interest representation in Denmark takes place at industry, firm and workplace levels.

Intermediary cooperative associations represent an additional level of interest representation in Denmark. As described above, these are parity-based associations established and funded by employers and unions, with varying levels of state involvement. The important role that employers’ associations and unions play in Danish organizations and society mean that it is viewed as legitimate to place a high degree of authority and regulatory power in the hands of these parity bodies. At the same time, the activities of these associations enhance the legitimacy of the employers’ associations and unions and thus help to maintain high membership density.

There are a range of intermediary cooperative associations within specific labour market areas (Andersen et al., 2001; Miller and Stirling, 1992). One example is the ongoing adult vocational education and training system (AMU). The AMU-system is financed 50% by the state and 50% by employers’ associations and unions, which determine training needs through parity committees in each sector (Hansen and Sommer, 1999). Another example is the Danish Working

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<sup>5</sup> With the distinctive difference that cooperation committees are parity committees.

Environment Council (AMR), which advises the Danish Minister for Employment on occupational health and safety issues. Representatives from the social partners sit on 11 sector-specific councils (BAR), which provide knowledge resources for managers, shop stewards and health and safety representatives. The roles and responsibilities of these bodies are stipulated in the Working Environment Act, and their activities are financed by a combination of state and social partner funding. The Employment Relations Research Centre (FAOS) is yet another example. Although associated with Copenhagen University, national collective agreements have provided the main source of FAOS's research funding for the last 20 years. The centre has produced a large body of research describing the economic and social benefits of the 'Danish Model' (Due and Madsen, 2008), as well as studies of labour-management cooperation and participative practices at firm and workplace level (Felby-Kolling and Mailand, 2012; Ilsøe, 2012a; Sørensen et al., 2009).

There are also examples of fully voluntary cooperative associations. TEKSAM is an intermediary association established between the Danish Metal Workers' Union and the employers' association Danish Industries, which assists local partners in administering cooperation agreements focused on improving job satisfaction and productivity. Consultants from TEKSAM help managers and employee representatives to negotiate these agreements, improve cooperative practices and reduce psychosocial hazards. TEKSAM is a member of another intermediary cooperative association (Samarbejdsnævnet) that provides support to cooperation committees in private companies in a broad range of sectors. In the public sector, a similar voluntary cooperative body (Samarbejdssekretariatet) supports local cooperation committees and arranges courses for management and employee representatives.

The intermediary cooperative association we focus on, the SCKK, was established in 2000 following a series of initiatives aimed at improving working conditions in the state sector. In 1987, prolonged negotiations between the social partners resulted in an unusually high pay rise. However, that same year, Denmark experienced an economic downturn and unemployment increased (Due and Madsen, 2008).<sup>6</sup> In the negotiations preceding the collective labour agreements of 1991, it was clear that public sector employers would not agree to a second substantial pay increase. In order to reach an agreement that would be acceptable to union members, the social partners developed broader ‘negotiation packages’, which included agreements on workplace cooperation, personal and professional development and the working environment:

... when you have to convince the union members to support the CLA, some [union negotiators] thought it important to bring a ‘broader package’ to the table, consisting of an interest in a good psychosocial work environment, good working conditions, etc. (Jens Henning Ravensmed, SCKK, 20 September 2010)

The social partners agreed to establish a development fund to administer these new initiatives – the Fund for Development and Reorganization (Udviklings – og omstillingsfonden). Its stated goal was to stimulate the professional development of public sector employees and thus create more attractive state workplaces, as well as to work towards the long-term union goal of raising qualification levels to create a basis for future pay raises. This coincided with the implementation of a broad union strategy to enhance organizational efficiency through the development of ‘meaningful and prosperous work’ (Det Udviklende Arbejde) (Hvid and Møller, 1992).

The shift to a social democratic government in 1992 supported the further development of these principles in the public sector. In 1994, the Ministry of Finance published *Employee in*

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Overenskomst. Sporene fra 1987 skræmmer’, *Politiken*, 11 December 2008.

*the State – Responsibilities and Development*, which was the first comprehensive publication setting minimum requirements for the human resource management of state employees. In 1995 and 1996, the social partners established joint committees for the continuing education of academic (ELU) and non-academic (ESU) state employees. In 1996, the Ministry of Finance established the ‘Quality in the Public Sector Award’; and in 1998, it published a policy document *From Words to Action*,<sup>7</sup> which described the need to establish ‘systematic and strategic competence development’ by linking employee performance and organizational goals. As part of the 1999 collective bargaining process, the social partners agreed to group the Development Fund and the (allegedly inefficient) ELU and ESU secretariats into a new centre focusing on competency and organizational development in the state sector. This led to the establishment of the Centre for the Development of Human Resources and Quality Management (SCKK) in 2000.

The SCKK became responsible for administering applications for the three funds, supervising project grants, distributing knowledge developed in funded projects, providing strategic direction to funded activities and creating learning activities for state employees. The SCKK also became responsible for administering the ‘Danish Quality Management Award’ for public sector workplaces. Its leadership had worked in public sector administration, in employers’ associations and in labour unions. The board of the SCKK mainly consisted of representatives from the social partners, and was responsible for evaluating applications for each of the three funds. To secure broad workplace support, applications for the fund had to be approved by each workplace’s cooperation committee (i.e. management and employee representatives). According to the interviews with SCKK representatives, enhancing cooperation

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<sup>7</sup> [www.fm.dk/publikationer/1998/personalepolitik-i-staten-\\_-fra-ord-til-handling/](http://www.fm.dk/publikationer/1998/personalepolitik-i-staten-_-fra-ord-til-handling/) (accessed 18 December 2013). The 210 pages policy document outlines the future personnel policy at state workplaces.

between management and employees (and among employees) was the central criterion for evaluating the success of funded projects.

In 2002, a new fund, the Competence Fund, was added to the SCKKs portfolio. The purpose of the fund was to support ‘individual competence development’, or investment in employee skills. In contrast to the previous funds, the money in the Competence Fund was distributed directly to the different state administrations, which defined and administered workplace projects. Between 2000 and 2007, the fund granted 341 projects a total of 179.5 million DKK (about £20 million) – with an average project of around 500,000 DKK (about £55,000). The SCKK produced about 20 reports summarizing ‘best practices’ from funded projects and conducted a number of sector- and subject- specific conferences to disseminate results.

In 2008, the SCKK was reorganized. The existing funds were replaced by three new funds organized according to major union domains related to occupational and educational background. Company-level projects were continued, but with a simpler application procedure and consequently less dependence on external consultants. Over the years, the SCKK built up comprehensive knowledge of workplace development methods, and by 2012 it had developed a large portfolio of training and seminar programmes. In 2013, the social partners changed the association’s strategy to refocus on direct funding of decentralized workplace development projects, with the SCKK in the role of a knowledge centre and fund administrator.<sup>8</sup>

The SCKK’s budget was fairly constant from 2002 to 2013 (between 20 and 28 million DKK annually – or £2–3 million). There was a peak in the budget and a sharp rise in the funds it administered in 2008–2011, due to additional resources for competence development that were

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<sup>8</sup> In 2013 the name of SCKK was changed to the Competence Secretariat. This change also involved major changes in management and personnel.

set aside in the state sector's 2008 tripartite agreement. These funds were discontinued in 2011 when tripartite negotiations failed to conclude an agreement, which led to around a 50% decline in annual funds between 2011 and 2013 and a 10% reduction in the SCKK's operational budget.

This brief history of the SCKK demonstrates the ways in which it has evolved over time in line with changes in the goals and strategies of the social partners as well as the association's governing board. The development funds that the SCKK administered were originally created as a compromise that satisfied the unions' interest in raising skill levels and future pay levels of members, and employers' interest in enhancing organizational efficiency by improving employee qualification and motivation – a reaction that was seen again in the recent economic crisis. The SCKK was established due to growing dissatisfaction with the administration of these funds combined with a more recent focus on the possible synergies between human development, organizational efficiency and service quality. This, in turn, provided a new arena for cooperation between employers' associations and unions, which built on an existing culture of cooperation related to the

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on a formal negotiation of collective agreements. From the unions' perspective, the creation of the funds and the SCKK enhanced their legitimacy by allowing union representatives to expand their role at the workplace and firm level.

In the remainder of the article, we examine a series of projects funded by the SCKK's Development and Change fund, with the aim of evaluating the role of this association in promoting and diffusing participative work practices.

### **Summary of SCKK-funded projects**

Table 1 provides an overview of the projects included in the study. A central aim of all of these SCKK-funded projects was to improve employees' psychosocial working conditions. However, the analysis shows that seven of the nine projects also explicitly sought to improve employee involvement and labour–management cooperation. Consultants often introduced or assisted in developing project ideas, and they helped to write applications in seven of nine cases. In five cases, the consultants were specialized in labour–management cooperation, and specific methods of employee participation were included in the project proposals.

The national transportation company, the DSB Group, received funding for three projects. One of these, focused on merging kiosk and ticket sales, is described in detail below. Two further projects aimed to reduce stress related to high work demands at a time of restructuring and job cuts. One project focused on improving psychosocial working conditions in administrative work, through improving work design and manager–employee communication and through reducing work pressure. The other focused on reducing stress across DSB. All of the DSB projects sought to promote employee involvement and used network and dialogue methods to accomplish this.

The four projects in the Danish state prison system sought to reduce stress and absenteeism, in workplaces characterized by difficult working conditions and a risk of violence. One project focused on training selected employees as ‘stress coaches’. In another project, management and employee representatives cooperated in generating a large number of ideas to foster ‘great jobs with varied tasks’. A third project used methods such as dialogue workshops, conflict management and team building to improve wellbeing. The fourth project involved conducting a course in cooperation and job enrichment to improve employee satisfaction and communication. Three out of the four projects sought to promote workplace cooperation, with the goal of reducing high tensions between management and employees.

The National Evangelical Lutheran state church initiated two projects that aimed to improve the organization of work for employees faced with high emotional demands, an unclear management structure and role conflicts. ‘Project National Church Teamwork’ developed new ways of organizing, structuring and planning work through cooperative meetings and new ‘active communication’ techniques for improving cooperation and job satisfaction. The other project arranged courses in conflict management and applied appreciative dialogue methods to improve labour–management relations.

In at least seven of the cases, participants in funded projects reported ‘improved communication’ and ‘better mutual understanding’ between colleagues and improved cooperation between management and employees. In the interviews and focus groups, employee representatives reported that the projects had led to increased employee participation in decision-making and, in some cases, improved working conditions. However, only three out of nine projects resulted in perceived improvements in work design and organizational structure.

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Although most projects were embedded in local ‘cooperation committees’, it was difficult for employee representatives to convey project intentions and new knowledge to their constituencies. In some cases, senior management and central HR had difficulty persuading local managers to participate because of the added workload. The projects had no predesigned concrete performance objectives, and so measuring their impact on employee outcomes or performance was difficult: the central actors seemed to have been content with any perceived improvements in the working environment.

Despite these ambiguous results, organizational actors invested significant time and resources into initiating these projects and were generally positive about their value to different stakeholder groups. The SCKK interpreted the outcomes described here as evidence of the success of the funded projects in achieving their stated goals and promoted these projects as ‘best cases’ in 2009. Learning points from the projects were summarized in a small leaflet with ‘nine recommendations for implementing successful psychosocial projects’, which was presented at a conference, printed and made available on the Internet.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, findings illustrate that the SCKK played an important role in providing both union and management representatives with institutional resources and ‘best practice’ models of how to initiate and organize workplace cooperation. The SCKK gave direct and indirect support to initiatives rooted in the perceived self-interests of management and the unions. Our assessment is that the projects were viewed as successful primarily due to the belief shared by the SCKK and the central social partners that enhanced cooperation had intrinsic value, despite limited evidence of concrete performance or employee welfare effects.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.samarbejdssekretariatet.dk/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/Vaerktoej\\_og\\_Cases/Vaerktoej/9goderraad.pdf](http://www.samarbejdssekretariatet.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Vaerktoej_og_Cases/Vaerktoej/9goderraad.pdf) (accessed 18 December 2013).

In order to further analyse the role that SCKK-funded projects played in supporting union and management commitment to cooperative practices, one of the projects at DSB Group is examined in more detail. This case offers insights into the dynamics of union– management relations on several organizational levels and over time, as it was possible to track activities related to the projects in the years before and after the project period.

### **The Kort&Godt Merger at DSB**

The DSB Group is a large state-owned corporation that has primary responsibility for the passenger train system in Denmark. Over the past decade it has gone through significant restructuring. As part of a drive to liberalize the railways, it changed from a government department to a for-profit firm in 1999. Several waves of layoffs and organizational spinoffs resulted in declining employment, from 20,400 in 1993 to around 9000 in 2006. It also internationalized during this period, expanding into the Swedish and UK markets in the early 2000s.

Reduction of station personnel was one goal of the restructuring effort. After automatic ticket dispensing and Internet sales were introduced, fully operative ticket offices were increasingly viewed as inefficient, especially at smaller stations. Meanwhile, kiosks in the stations – small stores selling snacks and newspapers – had been outsourced to an independent provider.

The union HK Traffic and Railroad (HK-Traffic) had an interest in saving the jobs of its members in ticket sales, most of whom were civil servants with protected pay and working conditions. In 2004, following difficult negotiations, DSB decided to in-source the kiosk workforce and merge station ticket sales and kiosk jobs under the name ‘Kort&Godt’.<sup>10</sup> Civil

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<sup>10</sup> The name includes a pun in Danish. ‘Kort’ in Danish both means ‘tickets’ and ‘quick’, whereas ‘godt’ translates both as ‘snacks’ and ‘good’.

servants in ticket sales and kiosk employees were both transferred to the same public sector collective agreement. A new wage group for kiosk personnel was defined with a differentiation between employees with and without ticket sales competencies. Most personnel from kiosk sales did not get an immediate pay rise. However, they did get a better pension and more benefits, such as free use of trains. They also were offered the opportunity to be trained to handle ticket sales to improve their pay. Altogether, the merger affected at least 1500 employees at DSB stations.

The merger involved a significant reorganization and integration of job functions for two different groups of employees. Ticket office clerks were typically older with longer tenure than kiosk employees. Civil servants with a deep knowledge of ticket systems and schedules were required to sell products such as candy, drinks and – in the words of one union representative – ‘porn magazines and condoms’, which demanded extensive mental and physical readjustments. At the same time, kiosk employees had to learn a range of new skills such as operating IT-systems, route plans and ticket systems. The two groups also had distinctive employee cultures. The ticket office culture was rooted in civil servant values, such as finding the best travel solutions for passengers, whereas the kiosk culture placed value on selling products.

### **The Kort&Godt project**

According to the chairman of the union, HK-Traffic had been discussing a new strategy for increasing local cooperation for two years before they received the funding. The board of HK-Traffic concluded that larger initiatives were needed to make an impact and to boost the competencies of local shop stewards. They used around 90,000 DKK (about £10,000) to develop three project proposals for SCKK with the help of a consultancy company (CASA). These proposals were used to convince DSB management that the ideas behind the projects were

economically feasible. The chairman of HK-Traffic observed: ‘We constantly discuss our task as a union and look for new areas where we can make a difference besides the traditional services like securing decent pay and employment conditions. This process includes sustaining our value to our members in between collective agreement processes’ (interview, 3 December 2010).

The opportunity to apply for SCKK funding strengthened and focused the internal discussion in HK-Traffic about the need for increased cooperation with management at the workplace level. According to the chairman of HK-Traffic, ‘the project proposals would not have been developed without the opportunity to apply for funding in SCKK’ (interview, 3 December 2010). The proposals established HK-Traffic as a serious partner for DSB management, and the grants enabled HK-Traffic and DSB management to work together on improving the working environment. The sales director observed: ‘I consider it modern to cooperate, and it is positive when a union approaches us [with a project idea] saying: See, here is a problem we need to do something about’ (cited in HK-Traffic’s member magazine: *Reflex*, April 2005).

Both union and management representatives emphasized the importance of labour–management cooperation in public statements:

It is important to emphasize that the project is conducted in cooperation with the company. We do not come to bang someone’s head, but to learn whether something could be done better. Therefore it is great that managers, shop stewards, unions and the company all join in. We need to get a step ahead – we need action and competencies. Normally, the leader is just told: do something about the problem. But this is a cooperative project. (HK-Traffic chairman; cited in HK-Traffic’s member magazine: *Over Sjø og Land/Trafik & Jernbane*, March 2004)

I think it is very positive that we from the management and the union side can cooperate to reconcile the two very different cultures in ticket sales and kiosks.’ (DSB sales director; cited in *DSB Today*, February 2005)

In May 2004, DSB received a grant from the SCKK of 516,400 DKK (about £55,000) for the Kort&Godt project. The total budget was 1,600,000 DKK (about £175,000) including self-financing from DSB.

The Kort&Godt project was conducted at three stations over a six-month period and involved 60 employees. It was overseen by an external consultant from CASA, the consultancy that had helped HK-Traffic to prepare the initial funding proposal. At each station, a dialogue workshop was conducted with employees from ticket sales and kiosks to facilitate discussion about concerns and practical problems. The project also formed a networking group involving 20 participants from top management, central HR and representatives from the three stations (including management, shop stewards and safety representatives). The networking group met three times to receive training and to discuss experiences and possible solutions. According to interviewees, invited experts conducted training with shop stewards related to leading merger processes and methods for change management and employee involvement. The experiences from dialogue and network workshops were then documented in an electronic handbook.

The network seminars are an example of an activity that sought to improve cooperation and to build orientation towards a common purpose:

In the project we have had a common reflective space [network seminars], where we as participants were able to speak freely about problems and share experiences. At the same time the project provided information to [the sales director] and the other partners in the project. (DSB local manager; cited in *DSB Today*, February 2005)

According to evaluation documents and subsequent interviews, the project yielded four types of results: small-scale practical solutions, improvements in working relations between the

two employee groups, organizational learning related to the merger processes and improved labour–management cooperation. Practical solutions addressed issues such as the physical design of merged facilities (desks, work spaces), work flows and schedules, identification of training needs, improvements to the sales-support IT-system and development of the electronic handbook with dialogue tools and examples of good practice. Improvements in working relations came about as a result of candid discussions at the dialogue workshops about employee fears, expectations and values. According to the consultant, the dialogue workshop ‘was a vent for frustrations and fears’ (interview, 14 November 2010). Both management and union representatives noted that the experience of working together on this project improved cooperation between the two groups, which led to further joint projects – including a large stress prevention application to the SCKK.

However, not all elements of the projects were positive. According to the consultant, some of the local employee representatives and managers were difficult to mobilize. Several mid-level managers did not support the project, because they perceived it as ‘belonging to’ the union and HR, which made it difficult to solve cross-cutting issues related to planning and design. Stations were at different stages of the merger, and experienced participants did not always benefit from the network meetings – which made them withdraw from the process. One union representative from HK-Traffic believed that the job of disseminating knowledge could have been better handled: ‘Not all local representatives were happy about the network seminars with a view to the amount of time and resources spent’ (HK-Traffic branch president; cited in *Reflex*, April 2005).

More fundamentally, the project had little measurable influence on structural and economic outcomes from the merger process. Shortly after the conclusion of the project, DSB

slowed the pace of the merger, because expenses were higher than expected. Interviews indicate that the concrete experiences from the SCKK project were only sporadically used, because the merger process itself changed.

In 2008, DSB became a public limited company (A/S), and a new collective agreement was negotiated as an ‘accession’ agreement to the DSB agreement. It was adapted to the kiosk market, which required additional flexibility in scheduling policies. Existing employees did not experience a downgrading of their working conditions, but because the conditions in the kiosk market were poorer, they also did not experience any improvements in their conditions in subsequent years. At the same time, many conditions remained better than those in private sector firms – especially with regard to pensions.

Then in 2010, DSB entered into a joint venture with 7-Eleven to manage the Kort&Godt shops. Employees continued to be employed by the DSB subsidiary Kort&Godt A/S, but the administration of the shops was rationalized with the assistance of Reitan, a Norwegian wholesaler and retail franchiser. The conditions in the former collective agreements were retained. However, according to union officials, dismissals and evasion of the terms of the collective agreement were becoming more common.

Union officials observed that one long-term effect of the merger had been a change from the old DSB civil service culture to the new kiosk-market culture, accelerated by the transition to 7-Eleven:

The ‘old’ DSB employee feels betrayed in the recent transition to 7-Eleven, e.g. because their competencies on the rail area [ticketing] are no longer required in 7-Eleven, a service reduction that creates frustration, especially because some customers still demand the competence. However, DSB does not want the kiosk employees to deliver the service. (interview, union official, HK-Traffic, 15 April 2011)

Findings from this case study demonstrate that the SCKK provided monetary and logistical support for labour–management cooperation at a time of stressful and potentially conflictual workplace change. A number of project characteristics helped to encourage employee participation, through experimentation and development of small-scale solutions; investments in courses for shop stewards; and investments in network seminars and dialogue workshops. On a more general level, the experiences from the project were later used in new cooperative projects at DSB and became a model that was used to shape a new image for the union HK-Traffic. SCKK funding and logistical support for this project were crucial for encouraging labour–management cooperation on work redesign and improving some aspects of working conditions at the workplace level.

However, it proved to be difficult to disseminate cooperative models of decision-making from the central level to all affected workplaces. The major obstacles seemed to be structural and economic limitations and problems of engaging local stakeholders. In the long term, union members' fears that the Kort&Godt merger would have negative effects on their working conditions seem to have been justified: the project was not successful in preventing an overall downgrading of ticketing jobs toward a kiosk sales-oriented culture and management practice.

### **Discussion**

These case studies demonstrate the distinctive role that the intermediary cooperative association the SCKK played in encouraging and institutionalizing participatory work practices in the Danish public sector organizations studied here. Projects funded through the SCKK were ensured resources that made it easier for managers and employees to devote time to meetings, communication and joint problem-solving. The SCKK aggregated local experiences as best practices and disseminated this knowledge through published reports, pamphlets and online

materials and at expert seminars. Consultants hired with SCKK funding, or whose services were used to secure this funding, often applied similar methods and practices to the projects they were involved in, while ensuring that local actors had access to material documenting the experience of other SCKK projects. The SCKK also encouraged ongoing cooperation between union and management representatives at company level, who were responsible both for jointly developing funding applications and then for evaluating the success of funded projects. Finally, at the sector level, employers and unions were encouraged to develop broader joint strategies for investment in human resources and employee skills through the activities of the SCKK. Together, these activities contributed to disseminating cooperative models of work redesign across the public sector organizations studied here, as well as reinforcing the perception of their value to the social partners at sector level.

Through these processes, the SCKK helped to promote and institutionalize the idea on a more general level that cooperation was both a valuable end in itself, as well as the best means to pursue organizational actors' interests. It thus served not simply as a vehicle for reducing transaction costs or distributing power resources, but rather as a conduit for ideology, ideas or best practices through a process of 'normative' institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This occurred as company-level results were generalized and disseminated within the public sector with the support of consultants and researchers and with the normative backing of the central social partners and politicians.

The case analysis shows that SCKK-funded projects initiated local development processes and generated a number of more or less tangible outcomes. The projects all had a large element of employee involvement in both development and implementation phases, and were viewed by participants as successful in meeting their core aims: to support cooperation, reduce

stress and improve the working environment. The Kort&Godt case demonstrates that the prospect of securing SCKK funding encouraged DSB's union and management to work together to design the project and apply for a grant. This made it possible for the union to present itself and its local representatives as partners rather than solely as opponents, and increased shop steward involvement in local decision-making. Dialogue workshops helped to improve working relationships between the former kiosk and ticket sales employees and to develop new jointly designed practices in areas such as scheduling, training and technology support. At the central level, conflict between management and the union was reduced, and their positive experience working together on the merger led to the development of further joint projects.

Thus, we can conclude that these initiatives had substantial success in encouraging labour-management cooperation and diffusing a common set of participative work practices. Employees involved in the projects reported improved satisfaction and reduced stress, while the projects themselves laid the ground for future cooperation. The positive outcomes of a more cooperative, less conflictual workplace environment on the overall working climate are largely intangible and difficult to measure, but were viewed as meaningful by employees and unions across the organizations studied.

However, other outcomes were more ambiguous. It was difficult to identify clear economic gains to the workforce in exchange for their cooperation. In the case study of Kort&Godt, despite a high level of participation in local decision-making bodies, employees still experienced deskilling of their jobs, work intensification and increased insecurity due to the continued threat of outsourcing. One could argue that outcomes may have been more negative if management's restructuring plans had been implemented unilaterally, without participatory structures. However, the lack of measurable improvements in working conditions over the longer

term suggests that enhanced cooperation does not necessarily mean enhanced worker control over practices and outcomes. This may be particularly problematic where unions' bargaining power is declining at the organizational or local level.

### **Conclusions**

This study has addressed the research question: what role has the SCKK played in the adoption and diffusion of participatory work practices in Danish public sector organizations? The broader purpose was to contribute to debates concerning why these practices have been so highly prioritized in Scandinavian countries. We have argued that the SCKK is representative of what we term an 'intermediary cooperative association' that is typical of parity bodies established across a range of sectors and labour market areas in Denmark, and in Scandinavian economies more generally. Our findings demonstrate that the SCKK disseminated models of labour-management cooperation to case study firms, through providing financial support as well as by enhancing the perceived legitimacy of these models.

Evidence from the SCKK case suggests that the high density of similar intermediary cooperative institutions in Scandinavian countries provides an important, and often overlooked, explanation for the popularity of participatory models of work design in these countries. Across Scandinavia, intermediary cooperative associations are established on the basis of parity participation from the social partners, which is stipulated in collective agreements or in public regulation. They are equipped with resources, such as experts and funding, to influence and foster labour-management cooperation at the local level and to collect and disseminate locally generated experiences. Experiences from several projects may subsequently be analysed and fed back to the central social partners and distributed broadly to local actors. Our findings demonstrate that the activities of these associations encourage labour-management cooperation

between formal collective bargaining, providing local employee representatives with additional opportunities to participate in work redesign initiatives and presenting local managers with ‘best practice’ examples and resources to test new work practices.

Theories of the ‘mutual gains firm’ (Kochan and Osterman, 1994) and the firm as a ‘collaborative community’ (Heckscher and Adler, 2006) describe how participatory practices that support trust, common purpose and learning are likely to create gains for organizations and employees. However, these models have often been found to be difficult to implement and to institutionalize. The findings from this study show that intermediary cooperative associations can help to overcome such obstacles by promoting the diffusion of cooperative practices at the sectoral level and by providing workplace union representatives and managers with ideas, roles and funding. Because these intermediary associations are created through agreements between the social partners, they are ingrained with cooperative procedures and purposes that maintain and diffuse commitment to cooperation across stakeholder groups. They thus promote certain ideas or ideals of cooperation directly and indirectly, both through their own practices and knowledge building initiatives and through the projects they initiate and support.

By explicating the role of this specific type of intermediary cooperative association, the findings contribute to debates in the comparative industrial relations and political economy literatures concerning how national institutions encourage participatory management approaches. Comparative political economy researchers have explained stronger traditions of labour–management cooperation in ‘social Europe’ as the result of encompassing coordinating institutions that provide incentives for cooperative strategies on the part of both labour and management (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Other theorists explain the greater take-up of participatory management practices in Scandinavia as the result of union power, supported by a

strong state with social democratic traditions of policymaking (Gallie, 2009; Iversen and Stephens, 2008).

Findings presented here suggest that while high levels of participative work practices may be rooted in the rational interests and power resources of major organized interest groups, they are also sustained by shared labour market institutions that serve as conduits for ideas on desirable models of work organization and problem-solving. Consequently, we propose that intermediate cooperative associations play a distinctive role in promoting workplace cooperation at both a practical and ideological level, providing financial support as well as enhancing the legitimacy of participative models (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The relatively large number of such cooperative associations in Scandinavia may be part of a self-perpetuating cycle sustaining the strong belief in the benefits of employee involvement and labour–management cooperation in these countries.

We have focused on one association in Denmark. Although the projects included cover a variety of state subsectors, the ability to generalize results across Danish sectors and Scandinavian countries is necessarily limited. The findings presented here suggest that intermediary cooperative associations are worthy of closer study; however, further research is necessary to examine the role of similar associations in different industry and national settings. In addition, different forms of parity associations exist in countries outside Scandinavia. International comparison of the activities and impact of these associations could shed further light on whether and to what extent the strength of their role in disseminating cooperative models of work organization depends on the high union density, centralized employers' associations and 'macrocorporatist' forms of coordination that previous studies have attributed to the Scandinavian model in general and Denmark in particular (e.g. Martin and Swank, 2012; Martin

and Thelen, 2007). Finally, our evidence of gains from cooperative projects to employees and to employers is based on self-reported, qualitative evaluations drawn from interviews and focus groups. Further longitudinal and comparative research is needed to examine the more substantive and long-term effects of the kind of institutionalized labour–management cooperation that the SCKK supports, both on organizational performance and job quality.

This article has also illustrated some of the limitations of the ideas and practices of labour–management cooperation supported by intermediary cooperative associations like the SCKK. The initiatives funded by the SCKK had a limited scope in making substantive improvements in areas such as investment in skills or employee discretion. Longitudinal findings from the Kort&Godt case give reason to doubt whether initiatives initiated and funded by intermediary cooperative associations are able to fundamentally alter the course of greater changes induced by principles of new public management, automation and crisis management (Weishaupt, 2010). In Denmark, as across Europe, public sector organizations are under growing pressure to reduce labour costs and restructure employment (Flecker and Hermann, 2011), a trend that has intensified after the onset of the economic crises in 2008–2009 (Grimshaw et al., 2012). Despite formally encompassing collective bargaining institutions and strong protections for public sector employees, these trends have undermined unions’ ability to negotiate substantive gains. Recent studies of workplace change in Denmark suggest that more general trends of bargaining decentralization have contributed to growing inequality in worker outcomes (Ilsøe, 2012b). These more ambiguous findings suggest that while union power at the sectoral level may be important for encouraging adoption of formal cooperative initiatives, their long-term benefits to different stakeholder groups are likely to depend on the heterogeneous power resources they are able to mobilize at the organizational and workplace levels.

### **Acknowledgments**

Ian Greer, Melanie Simms, Mark Stuart, Anna Ilsøe and Steen Navrbjerg provided valuable comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

### **Funding**

The research was partially funded by the SCKK.

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Table 1. Overview of the aims and results of nine selected SCKK projects.

Purpose and aims	Means	Outcomes	Union-management relations
<b>DSB: ‘Psychosocial working conditions in the DSB administration’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve workplace assessments, working conditions and employee involvement in change</li> <li>• Develop the shop steward role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue seminars to analyse employee satisfaction survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic handbook</li> <li>• Improvements in work design and communication</li> <li>• Reduced work pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved dialogue between HK-Traffic and central management</li> </ul>
<b>DSB: ‘Kiosks and ticket sales – a good merger’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a foundation for ‘a good merger’</li> <li>• Involve employees and chance competences</li> <li>• Develop the shop steward role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching of middle managers</li> <li>• Network of employees, leaders, shop stewards, and central HR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic handbook</li> <li>• Network meetings voiced concerns about the merger</li> <li>• Improved communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved cooperation between HK-Traffic and central management</li> <li>• Limited project support from local employee representatives and managers</li> </ul>
<b>DSB: ‘The DSB stress film project’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate local dialogues about stress and stress prevention</li> <li>• Conduct dialogue seminars for employees based on a film about stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue meetings where the film was discussed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A film about stress and a small manual for discussing the film</li> <li>• Improved awareness of stress and how to avoid it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a network between managers, HR and union representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Nyborg State Prison: ‘Attentiveness instead of absence’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce sickness absence</li> <li>• Increase employee satisfaction</li> <li>• Prevent conflicts</li> <li>• Enhance labour-management cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialogue workshops</li> <li>• Communication training</li> <li>• Conflict management and team building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absenteeism reduced 25%</li> <li>• Increased sense of community and commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tensions between management and employee representatives concerning interpretation of results</li> </ul>
<b>Copenhagen Prisons: ‘Psychosocial work environment and stress management’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce negative stress at work</li> <li>• Develop guidelines for positive stress management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate and train selected employees as stress coaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress coaches trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to integrate system of stress coaches into cooperative health and safety system</li> </ul>

Table 1 (cont.)

Purpose and aims	Means	Outcomes	Union-management relations
<b>Danish Prison and Probation Service: ‘A great job with varied tasks’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase employee satisfaction</li> <li>• Balance working time and resources</li> <li>• Develop practice-based tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Future Camps’, a networking concept to develop initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vast number of project ideas were generated, but few were implemented due to budget constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong tensions between management and employee representatives despite cooperative approach</li> </ul>
<b>Svendborg Detention Unit: ‘Job development’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrich jobs</li> <li>• Train employees and develop the organization</li> <li>• Improve employee satisfaction and cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course in cooperation and job enrichment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new duty schedule</li> <li>• Cliques dissolved</li> <li>• new house rules generated</li> <li>• List of initiatives to improve working conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee representatives reported increased cooperation and better communication</li> </ul>
<b>Viborg Diocese: ‘Project National Church Teamwork’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve well-being and job satisfaction</li> <li>• Increase communication</li> <li>• Reduce sickness absence</li> <li>• Reduce conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailor-made programmes for each church/parish</li> <li>• Dialogue about new structures for meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge website</li> <li>• 10 out of 15 parishes implemented new ways of organizing and work planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal employee representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Sct. Nikolai Church in Kolding: ‘“Team building activity” improving the psychosocial working environment’</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact person responsible for employee well-being</li> <li>• Improve labour-management relations</li> <li>• Build a positive atmosphere and team spirit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses in conflict management</li> <li>• Application of appreciative dialogue methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased cooperation between employees and management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal employee representatives</li> </ul>