

Summaries

Industrial Relations in the Netherlands and Belgium: an exercise in differential sociology

A.L. Mok

According to the Dutch sociologist Hofstee differential sociology is the part of sociology that deals with the differences between groupings who otherwise have a great deal of similarity. Differential sociology draws a 'level of similarity', and studies those aspects which lie above this level, while taking the similarities under that level for granted. The higher the level of similarity is, the more interesting the (relatively few) differences become.

This is exactly what is the case in the comparison between the Industrial Relations System in Holland and Belgium. There are lots of similarities in the construction of the social building of the 'welfare state', especially between 1930 and 1980. Both countries suffered greatly from the effects of the German occupation, and this was one of the main factors in stimulating the quasi harmonious relations between the 'social partners' after 1945. After 1960 it soon became clear how thin this layer of harmony really was.

There is only one real difference between the systems in Belgium and Holland, and that is the institutionalized presence of the unions on the shop floor in Belgium and the virtual absence of union influence on the shop floor in the Netherlands.

The author uses four explanatory models for this difference: 1) a 'sui generis' model; 2) a political model; 3) a 'pillarization' model; and 4) an industrialization model. Of those four models only the last mentioned one, the industrialization model, offers an explanation which the author deems plausible enough to retain, the other three explaining the similarities rather than the differences.

Thanks to natural riches Belgium was an early industrializer, the second in the world only after the United Kingdom, while Holland was a relative late comer in that field. There were union representatives active in Belgian coal, engineering and textiles firms as far back as 1860, mainly in Wallonia. When industrial relations became institutionalized after World War Two the traditional 'Walloon' model of (radical) shop floor union bargaining (as well as more centralized national proceedings) was applied to the whole Belgian system. In Holland, on the contrary, there never existed a tradition in shop floor bargaining, because, when industrialization came to the Netherlands, machines were imported from abroad (mainly from the U.S. and Germany) in which there was no room for radical and decentralized union bargaining and for shop floor representation. As a result the Dutch Industrial Relations System is a very centralized one. This difference exerts its influence to this very day.

Dimensions of Union Growth and Union Power in Western Europe

J. Visser

In this paper, firstly, empirical patterns of unionization in ten European countries will be discussed and data on the postwar development of union membership and union density presented in relation to changes in both changes in the composition of the dependent labour force and of union membership. Secondly, national institutional and political conditions will be compared and their bearing upon growth patterns, union stability and overall density levels discussed. Thirdly, the author deals with the business cycle and its effects on union growth. Using both pre- and postwar data it is maintained that cyclical economic effects on unionization have petered out in most countries, particularly so in coun-

tries characterized by neo-corporatist labour relations. Union growth, on the other hand, proves to be highly dependent upon state-support and, more specifically, a hegemonic role of social democracy in government. In the concluding section, these findings are discussed in relation to the current economic crisis and the apparent reversal of trends in unionization.

Legal intervention and power: differentiating control strategies of Works Councils

A.W.M. Teulings

The impact of societal change and economic crisis produces an increasing differentiation in the practice and power of Works Councils in the Netherlands. In this contribution the theoretical distinction between legal intervention and legitimate exercise of power of Works Councils is elaborated, within the perspective of codetermination as a process of political bargaining. The results of a replication study (1983/84) of Works Councils in 63 large and medium sized companies in the industry and service sector are compared with a similar study in 1980. Changes in the power and effectiveness of Works Councils are evidently produced in response to the economic crisis. The already marked differentiation and social distance between 'thrusting' and 'sleeping' Works Councils is increasing also in this respect. But even 'thrusting' Works Councils do not escape to the constraints of economic crisis. The support for direct, syndicalist action at plant level is in decline, and particularly its effectiveness as an instrument of codetermination is diminishing. On the other hand there is a sharp rise in requests for third party intervention, along with its increasing effectiveness with respect to power equalization. The choice between 'right and might' as alternative or supplementary influencing strategies allows for the elaboration of an empirical typology of Works Councils: the 'traditional, radical, rational-political' and 'ritualistic' type.

Labour and technological change

P. van den Besselaar en L. Leydesdorff

Can Labour act upon the development of science and technology (S&T) in our type of societies? Some political programs aiming at the develop-

ment of a labour-oriented technology are analyzed, and assessed in terms of their impact on S&T. The results of a survey of grass-roots' initiatives (worker's plans) and two questionnaires among experts suggest that no progress has yet been made in the attempts to develop an interface with S&T. This conclusion leads to some reflection on the conditions of a policy which would allow the workforce to take part in the processes of technological innovation.

EAJ-Workingprojects for Unemployed Youth

**A case study in the relations between research
and policy**

Hennie I.E. Dijkhuis-Potgieser

In 1979/1980 the Dutch government started an experimental programme to reduce youth unemployment, called Experimental Working projects (EAJ). This experiment was prompted by proposals from the youth organizations of the trade unions. The aim of the programme was to found projects intended to create new jobs, in which small groups of unemployed young workers could work together and simultaneously receive further training.

A government subsidy covered almost all costs, including full wages for staff and the young workers themselves. There were many limiting conditions, however, the most important being that displacement of regular jobs should be prevented and that the projects should be self-supporting after a four years period of subsidy. Alongside the programme an evaluation study was conducted by the University of Leiden.

This article contains first a short description of the history of the programme and an analysis of its, often conflicting twin purposes: creation of new, permanent jobs and improvement of the labour market position of underprivileged groups of unemployed youth. Next some results of the evaluation research are presented showing a low estimate of success especially among the market-oriented projects. These results are not final however.

To conclude recent policy changes concerning the programme are being discussed, followed by a general discussion of research designed to evaluate unemployment programmes.