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Danish Trade Unions and Young People: Using Media in the Battle for Hearts and Minds

Introduction

Denmark has often been considered the industrial relations (IR) model par excellence with high levels of union membership, density and collective bargaining¹ (Due and Madsen 2008). Over the last decade, however, the institutional context has transformed considerably.² One of the most worrying trends is the decline in union membership, after many years as one of the few advanced European economies in which union membership remained steady (Blanchflower 2007). The decline has been most severe for the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions and its affiliates (LO)³; between 2000 and 2014, LO unions lost approximately a third of all their members, a drop from 1,208,000 to 867,000. One of the drivers is structural change in the composition of the workforce that has caused natural membership of LO unions to drop, and other sectors of the labour force to grow (See appendix X).

The other important factor has been the Conservative-Liberal Coalition Government's liberalisation of unemployment insurance in 2002, which successfully weakened the Ghent system⁴ of union administered unemployment insurance that acts as an effective recruitment mechanism (see Lind 2009 for a detailed discussion). This labour market reform and subsequent ones (for example lowering the percentage of union membership that is tax deductible) has allowed competing organisations that do not engage in collective bargaining – referred to as the ‘ideological alternative unions’ – to compete for members with their offer of cheap unemployment insurance.

Particularly worrisome for the LO labour movement has been the ideological alternative union's successful recruitment of young workers, a target group which these organisations dedicate large resources to recruiting using cutting edge marketing strategies and new media. Since the turn of the century, union density among young⁵

¹ A 2010 study using material from the Danish statistical office and the employers' federation DA found that 71% of those employed in the private sector and 100% of those in the public sector were covered by collective bargaining in 2007. This produces an average level of coverage of 80% (LO 2010).

² For an overview of these institutional changes, which include cuts to unemployment benefits and union exclusion from the labour market policy process, see Jørgensen and Schulze (2012).

³ The peak organization has 17 member unions whose membership comprises all categories of manual workers (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled) and a little less than half of salaried employees, including groups such as office clerks, shop assistants, and technical assistants.

⁴ The Ghent system of union administered unemployment insurance has been the most influential explanation of union membership stability, providing a strong incentive for workers to join unions to protect themselves from the ebbs and flows of the business cycle (Ebbinghaus and Visser 1999). Others have pointed to the low degree of competition over members among Danish unions (Scheuer 2007: 234). Both of which have now changed in a fundamental way.

⁵ There is no agreed upon age range for the category ‘young people’. For this paper the age range is 15-39 due to the classifications used in the survey data. Other research in this area sets the cut off point slightly lower at 35 (Cheung et al. 2012: 303).

people between the ages has fallen from 67.5 % in 1994 to 51.1% in 2008 (LO 2010) and the adult-youth gap in density has doubled. The popularity of the ideological alternative unions among young people has continued unabated during the economic recession (Andersen and Redder, 2012) as LO unions struggle to recruit new labour market entrants. Young people are prime candidates for recruitment because they have little experience of the labour market and workplace related issues and are therefore unlikely to have understood the important difference between a union that engages in collective bargaining and one that does not, free riding and undermining collective organisation in the labour market.

The decline in union membership poses a serious threat to the power resources of the LO and its affiliated federate unions. As we know, membership provides unions with the fundamental basis from which to exert power within the labour market and the political arena (Streeck 2005; Kelly 2012). Including material and human resources, strength and legitimacy in collective bargaining with employers and in negotiations with Governments, and the ability to engage in collective action. In this way, union membership cuts across other forms of union power, which explains its pervasive use in the literature as a crude indicator of the vitality of labour movements.⁶ In the long term, the decline in Danish union membership and density also threatens the Danish tradition of voluntarism, in which the social partners self-regulate wages and working conditions through collective bargaining, assuming that high union density is a prerequisite for this form of wage regulation.

In an effort to establish how best to tackle the decline in union membership, the LO initiated a Gallup survey in 2011 to investigate the public's understanding of the role of trade unions in the labour market, with a view to determining why an increasing number of workers were choosing the ideological alternative unions. It revealed that almost 70% of the public thought that wages and conditions were agreed at the Parliamentary level and not by trade unions, a finding that was even higher for young people. Thus there was little understanding of the benefits of choosing to become a member of a LO union, which is more expensive than an ideological alternative union. The survey findings were presented at the LO Congress in 2011, and to address the public's limited understanding LO affiliates agreed to commit financial and human resources over the next four years of the congress period to develop and launch a campaign (LO 2012) - marking a clear shift in strategy from political mobilisations to union organizing following the election of a Social Democratic-led coalition Government just months earlier.

This paper presents a case study of the 'Are you OK?' campaign launched in 2012 by the LO and the Confederation of Professionals in Denmark (FTF). Together these two organisations represent almost 100 affiliated unions and 30,000 shop stewards. The campaign's aim is to increase knowledge of collective bargaining and collective

⁶ Although what exactly union membership is a measurement of has been shown to vary considerably with the cultural, geographical and temporal specificities in which it is embedded (Sullivan 2009). A high level of union membership can mask a low level of membership engagement and capacity for mobilisation, and vice versa as in the case of France (Milner and Mathers 2013).

organisation among the public, particularly among 20 to 40 year olds, and for this knowledge to provide the foundation for more union members, thereby strengthening collective bargaining and collective organisation, and increasing its legitimacy. The campaign uses a variety of communication forms to reach existing and potential union members and is the largest of its kind in the history of the Danish labour movement. The central research questions it addresses are:

- What is the campaign's message?
- What forms of communication are used?
- How effective has the campaign been in reaching and informing young people?

Trade unions, young people, and the media

Changing the image of trade unions is a central aspect of union attempts to organize young workers (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000: 34) and for good reason. An analysis of the European Social Survey (Schnabel and Wagner 2007) found that attitudinal variables (being positive towards union influence at work and in society) play an important role in the determining the likelihood of union membership.⁷ Similarly a recent cross-national study (Scheuer 2011) found that employees indicating high or very high support for unions have a four out of ten density (38 and 42 percent), while those less supportive have densities ranging from 23 to 35%. Knowledge of how the labour market functions is also shown to play an important role; the perceived presence of a collective agreement triples the likelihood of union membership. This finding is especially pertinent for the study at hand, in which the Danish public is unaware of who engages in collective bargaining, and hence, one would assume also unaware of whether they are covered by such agreements. The take home message is that while the likelihood of unionization is determined by institutional and compositional factors such as those highlighted earlier, changing public attitudes towards unions and their understanding of the role trade unions play in the labour market is one area where unions can make a difference.

Efforts to influence the attitudes of young workers towards trade unions and collective organisation are directed towards two spheres of influence: the educational system and the mass media.

Education

The formative experience of education shapes young people's values, their understanding of work and the labour market, and how they interpret their later transition into it. Education also provides the interpretive framework through which young people process the mediated discourses they are exposed to. By influencing the curriculum one can help ensure that it reflects the realities of work and highlights the

⁷ In Denmark, a recent Gallup poll conducted on May Day, 2014, found that 69% of the public felt that the LO labour movement has an important function in society. Accessed at: <http://www.lo.dk/English%20version/News/may%20day.aspx>.

importance of collective organisation, providing “ a more solid background for the reception of media messages on trade unions” (Walsh 1988: 215). In light of this it can be plausibly argued, “the greatest weapon for unions might lie in education at school, so that those youngsters with core characteristics become members when joining the workforce, regardless of union presence or power at any particular workplace” (Cregan and Johnson, 1990: 101).

From this perspective, the public’s limited knowledge of the Danish labour market and the collective bargaining system is a failure both of the educational system to properly inform its citizenry, and a failure of union engagement. To influence the curriculum, unions have initiated projects that aim to provide teachers at all levels with information about unions and their contribution to workers and society, and sent speakers to schools to answer student’s questions. When the LO-initiated Gallup survey mentioned earlier was made public in 2011, it stimulated a political discussion among unions and the political parties about the need for reforming the school curriculum to include a more comprehensive treatment of the labour market. What the content should be, and how this could be achieved, was subject to heated political debate – a reminder of the deeply politicised nature of education. At the moment of writing, the LO’s youth consultant and their network of federate youth consultants and student groups (See Geelan 2013: 405) are focusing their efforts on developing new educational materials in collaboration with the centre-left think tank CEVEA. Exploring new ways of getting teachers to adopt them, given the logistical difficulty and limited efficacy of sending speakers out to schools with very diverse audiences.⁸

Media

The mass media is the other sphere that unions engage in to influence the attitudes of young people, and the one that this study predominantly focuses on. This external dimension to union communication refers to union engagement through different types of communication channels (Hyman and McGormick 2012: 153). Numerous studies in the Anglophone countries have shown a consistent negative news media bias towards trade unions and industrial conflict (e.g. O’Neil 2007). The image portrayed is often one of scrupulous bureaucratic organisations that are against any form of modernization and deplore any form of individuality⁹. As Hodder (2014: 163) rightly points out, “the impact the media plays in the public perception of trade unions cannot be understated”. This persisting media bias can partly be attributed to the decline of the industrial correspondent declining union resources, which have made it more difficult for unions to produce news in-house and keep up with the latest trends in journalism.

The LO provides one example of how unions can attempt to address this imbalance. Since 2011, the LO youth consultant has spearheaded an effort to increase the media coverage of young workers by training young union activists to be influence the scope of public debate. The potential to reach young people through the Internet and social media (e.g. Facebook, Youtube and Twitter) has also received considerable attention in recent years (e.g. Bryson *et al.* 2010), as this demographic spends more time on them than any other segment of the workforce. While existing research has explored the types of media employed by unions (Panagiotopoulos and Barnett 2014) and

⁸ In the UK, the TUC and PCS have been involved in this type of work for some time, an emphasis that has also continued since the onset of the great recession of 2008 (Hodder 2014:163).

⁹ For a detailed discussion of this see the DPhil thesis of Thomas (2012) on trade unions and newspaper tabloids in the UK between 2001 and 2010.

highlighted the importance of considering the audience (Panagiotopoulos 2012), there is little empirical work on how the Internet and social media is used in practice to organize or campaign. My own research has only begun to scratch the surface (Geelan 2013a, 2013b). Moreover, the overwhelming attention these new forms of communication have received neglects the continued importance of traditional forms of mass media that are still very much in use by unions such as radio, television, and union magazines. This appears to be an unfortunate case of throwing out the baby with the bath water. These other mediums deserve just as much, if not more attention; television, for example, is still the most powerful medium for shaping the opinions and concerns of the mass audience as originally argued by Philo et al. (1977), and reiterated by Walsh (1988) a decade later. Thus, to overcome this gap in our understanding of how trade unions use the media to engage with and influence the attitudes of young people, this article includes all forms of communication in its analysis.

In order to achieve this, one can fruitfully draw on the theoretical work of Manuel Castells. For the case study at hand, it is most pertinent to review the different forms of communication and their organisation.

Theorizing Communication

Castells distinguishes between three types of communication in the 21st century (Castells 2009: 54-55):

- interpersonal communication (conversations between two people in person, over the phone or via email);
- 2) traditional mass communication that is mostly one-directional (as with books, newspapers, films, radio and television);
- 3) and mass self-communication, a historically new form of communication in which a large audience can be reached at little or no cost to the individual through the Internet and social media.

Trade unions, like any other large collective organisation, engage in all these forms of communication simultaneously when conducting campaigns. They have also begun adapting to the trend in communication technology towards multi-media systems; facilitated through the Internet, individuals are increasingly using it to access, consume and share mass media (television, radio, newspapers) as well as any form of digitized cultural or informational product (films, music, magazines, books, journal articles, databases)(Castells 2009: 64). Unions are therefore increasingly required to be present on an increasing number of communication platforms with digital content to reach existing and potential members and engage with the public and mainstream media.

In order to analyze the “Are you OK?” campaigns use of media it is also necessary to understand the media consumption patters of the target group (Crane 1986) and explore how young people compare to other age groups. Analysis from the latest annual report of the Danish Association of Interactive Media (FDIM 2012) shows that the Danes love the Internet, which continues to increase its share of the average minutes per day spent on media (totalling 6 hours and 40 minutes in 2011) from 80 minutes in 2008 to 100 minutes in 2011. Contrasted with the continued dominance of TV with 140 minutes and the steady decline of print and radio. A related trend is the mobile phone which has also increased its share to 40 minutes in 2011 with 55% of

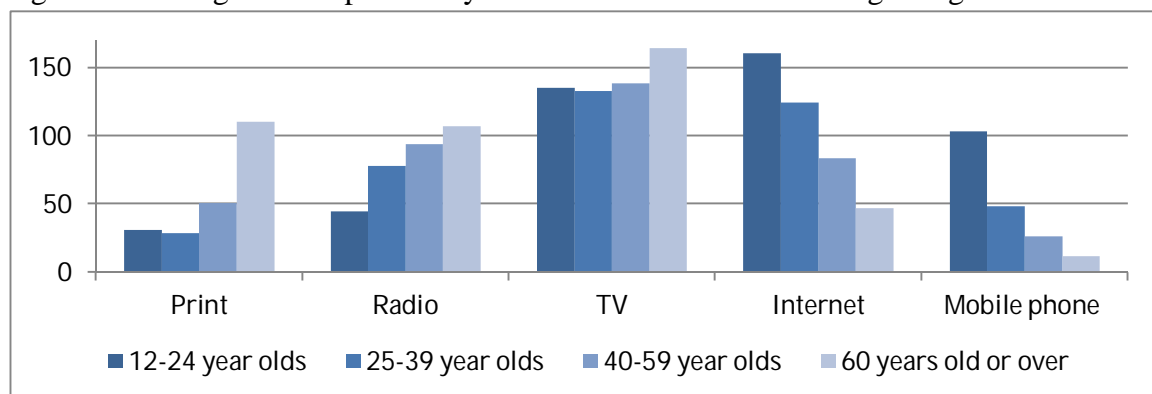
Danes between 16 and 74 using it to access the Internet; its' most common use being navigation (41%), apps (39%), email (37%) and news (32%).

If one breaks down the average minutes spent per day on media and compares young people to the other age groups, the data in Figure X reveals marked differences in media consumption.

The most notable differences between age groups are:

- 1) *Print*: young people between 12 and 39 use just 30 minutes on print whereas those over 60 used 110 minutes
- 2) *Radio*: the upward slope reveals a clear generational shift in popularity, with the 12-24 year olds spending just half the time consuming this medium relative to the other age groups
- 3) *TV*: at a high level of 140 minutes for all age groups except those over 60, its continued dominance as a form of medium is clear
- 4) *Internet*: the 12 to 24 year olds spent more time on the Internet (160 minutes) and mobile phones (100 minutes) than TV, radio and print combined (210 minutes). Similarly those between 25 and 39 used 170 minutes on the former and 135 minutes on the latter.

Figure X. Average Time Spent Daily on Media Platforms According to Age



Source: FDIM 2012, p.8.

The implications of these trends in media consumption are that while young people can still be reached through traditional mass media, the Internet has clearly become the most important form of communication for the youngest generations. While all age groups are heavy users of social media, young people between the ages of 15 and 34 are the heaviest users with the two most popular platforms being Facebook and Youtube¹⁰ (FDIM 2012: 22). Consuming and sharing content (news, culture) in a variety of digital forms through these mediums has also become mainstream (DR 2014), supporting Castells argument outlined earlier. Given that this sharing is socially driven (See Lee and Barry 2014) and social contacts play an important role in shaping attitudes (Griffen and Brown 2011: 97), an effective union campaign should strive to tap into these networks of young people and provide information in a way that can be easily shared.

¹⁰ YouTube is one of the most well-known and widely discussed sites of participatory media in the contemporary online environment, and it is the first genuinely mass-popular platform for user-created video. For an overview, see Burgess and Green's (2009) book *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*.

It is also important to consider how different organisations use these forms of communication. In Castells' (2009) theoretical work on communication power, the network is becoming the dominant mode of organising communication and power increasingly lies in the capacity of actors to shape these networks of communication to disseminate their own values in the battle for hearts and minds. From this perspective, it is commonly argued that the hierarchically organized labour movements will struggle to adapt to the new media environment. Compared to the new social movements such as Occupy and the Los Indignados movement (Castells 2012) whose horizontal network of grassroots organisations are structured around the logic of the Internet and organized through it, rendering their use of social media far more dynamic.

There is evidence, however, of unions adopting similar networked modes of organisation and communication. The most notable of which are Union Solidarity International (Geelan 2013) and the Peoples Assembly Against Austerity in the United Kingdom and Working America in the United States. These new organisations suggest that a new form of networked labour unionism (Wood 2014) is emerging which fuses the power of the Internet and social media with the power of networks. The extent to which this will help foster a broader revitalization remains to be seen, but it is certainly increasing their communicative reach to include the unorganized and disinterested.

But there are of course difficulties of achieving this type of networked unionism in practice. Hecksher and Carre (2006: 619-620) identify four key mechanisms needed for collaborative networks to succeed: shared information platforms; shared behavioural norms; a common mission; and (effective) governance. All of this must be coordinated by an actor which can be called the 'network orchestrator', with relatively little power or size, but with the credibility to coordinate wide ranges of independent players. In the labour movement, this role is typically played by the peak union, which draws on the power of its affiliated unions to organize, co-ordinate and campaign for their shared interests (Briggs 2004: 9-11). Once established, however, such networks also have serious weaknesses. The most common is their tendency to fragment and splinter, and the difficulty of maintaining strategic unity over time (Hecksher and Carre 2006: 617). Each union has its own modus operandi and interests that render collaborative networks very difficult to establish and maintain in the long-term.

Having reviewed the theoretical and empirical background of the study, the next section outlines the case study approach adopted and the data used to examine how Danish unions are using the media in the battle for the hearts and minds of young people.

DATA AND METHOD

A case study approach (Ragin and Becker 1992; Yin 2009) was utilized, drawing on data from two non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with union officials and secondary analysis of survey data. The sample of organisations is the confederate actor, the LO (the FTF was excluded due to the lack of survey data), and four of its largest affiliated federate unions:

- The Danish Union of Public Employees (FOA)
- The Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees (HK)

- The Danish Metalworkers Union (Dansk Metal)
- The United Federation of Danish Workers (3F)

The sample of organisations were selected for a combination of reasons: first, because access had already been attained to three of the organisations during prior research; second, because including actors at both the confederate and federate level that are working together on a campaign allows for exploration of how unions use the media in a networked mode of coordinated action. This helps shed light on the coordinating role of peak unions and their strategy (Ellem 2013) and fits well with Castells' characterization of communication power and the importance of networks. The case study aims to provide a rich theoretical case that will further our understanding of how trade unions can, and do, use the mass media in their efforts to change the image of trade unions among young people.

Data collection began in October 2012 during a yearlong fieldwork trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, as part of a larger doctoral research project on the production and dissemination of discourse through the media within the context of austerity in Denmark and the United Kingdom. This gave me the opportunity to observe campaign pitches by prospective media consultancy firms at the LO's central office, providing first-hand insight into the complexities of developing coordinated union campaigns. Shortly after the launch of the campaign in the beginning of 2013, I also attended meetings with senior union officials and researchers discussing the campaign's concept and aims.

After returning to the UK, another round of data was collected during an intensive fieldwork trip in June 2014. This involved interviewing the Head of Communication at each of the sampled unions and senior officials in the organizing department of the LO. The interviews focused on how each organisation was involved in the OK campaign, their use of media, and the challenges of reaching the different demographic segments of the workforce with specific attention given to young people.

Finally, survey data on public attitudes gathered by Gallup on behalf of the LO is used in order to provide an indicative analysis of the campaign's efficacy. 1,246 respondents were surveyed in four rounds: October 2012, June 2013, December 2013, and May 2014. The target group consisted of individuals in unions affiliated to the LO, members of ideological alternative unions and the unorganised. Demographic and labour market data was collected from all the participants. The survey questions focused on the medium through which individuals were exposed to the campaign, their opinions of it, their knowledge of collective bargaining and their capacity to distinguish between LO unions and the ideological alternative unions.

The 'Are you OK? Campaign

This section analyzes three dimensions of the campaign: the message, its organisational structure, and finally, its impact on young people's attitudes and their understanding of the labour market.

Message

The campaign concept draws on an existing phenomenon in Danish culture. In Denmark, restaurants are regularly inspected and the results (e.g. hygiene, work

conditions, etc) are displayed in the entrance. Depending on the findings, a smiley is awarded. It can be happy, satisfied, or unhappy and is published on a green backdrop in the storefront. Customers can then base their decision to eat at the establishment on this information. The campaign essentially applies this concept to the labour market by branding the LO unions that engage in collective bargaining with the green 'OK' logo (See Appendix X), something which is easily integrated into the existing communication and organisation efforts of the federate unions involved, each with different capacities, interests and political cultures. The title of the campaign also plays on the acronym used in the media when referring to a collective bargaining round in the public or private sector – OK 2014 - or whatever the year may be. The question in the campaign, 'Are you OK?' seeks to start conversations about whether one is unionized or not and to highlight the importance of collective agreements and organisation. As an excerpt from a flyer explains:

“This question is important for Danish wage earners. It concerns collective agreements and collectivism at the workplace. And it is about spreading the message about what collective agreements are and why it is important.” (LO 2014).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the campaign highlights the concrete benefits that collective agreements provide: namely, good wages, maternity, pension, an extra weeks vacation and possibilities for continuing education. All the interviewees felt that this was particularly important to do because young people always ask the question – what's in it for me? By informing them of the benefits of union membership, the hope is that it will help shift their decision-making process, considered to be more rational and short-term. The message, however, is uniform and never explicitly segmented according to age or any other category, although each form of communication used of course has a predominance of certain demographics as highlighted earlier. This is a surprising finding. It is not enough for unions to simply use the communication technologies that young people spend their time on; they must also communicate using language, visuals and messages that resonate with them (Bailey *et al.* 2010: 57). Focus groups could be especially helpful in this regard.

Organisational Structure

The campaign draws on a complex network of organisations and their existing communication capacities. Conceptually one can distinguish between four levels: peak, federate, branch and workplace.

At the peak level, the LO is responsible for using its institutional mandate and legitimacy to coordinate and steer the campaign activities. This includes liaising with the contracted consultancy bureau and overseeing a meeting of union officials from the organisation and communication departments of its affiliates every three months to discuss campaign strategy and development. The LO's full-time youth consultant and the LO network of federate youth consultants and student groups (See Geelan 2013) have, however, not been very actively involved in the campaign as their efforts are focused on the more immediate issues of unemployment and the lack of apprenticeships. In terms of communication, the LO is responsible for managing the campaign Facebook group (with 20,000 likes as of July 9 2014) and has taken the lead on developing campaign videos (discussed in detail in the following section).

At the federate level, the four sampled unions each use their communication channels (based at their headquarters) to reach existing and potential members. The forms of communication include two-way communication (email, phone), mass media

(electronic newsletters to their members and shop stewards, union magazines which all members receive in print), and the Internet (website, Facebook and YouTube). They also disseminate electronic campaign materials to their branches as well as physical materials (beach balls, key rings and dummies). Similar to the LO, the youth consultants are not actively involved in the campaign.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, are the union branches and their relation to the workplace through each trade union’s shop stewards. All the interviewees felt that the campaigns success was ultimately dependent on the extent to which the campaign was able to generate awareness at the workplace, and regarded the two-way communication of their shop stewards at the workplace as by far the most effective form of communication in terms of achieving the campaign objectives and increasing recruitment.¹¹

In terms of using the campaign as part of their daily operations, all the interviewees indicated that the campaign materials had been well integrated into their existing communication streams. The reason for this success was best summarized by the Head of Communication at HK: “There are three factors, a good concept, freedom of implementation and a long-term approach”. By allowing each organisation to use the campaign as they see fit, and discarding the traditional top-down short-term approach of previous campaigns, the LO has managed to generate a large-scale commitment from its affiliates. Its implementation therefore varies considerably. At Dansk Metal, the Head of Communication stated that he inserted campaign materials into the union magazine and membership communication every chance he got, which helps explain why the union has been more effective than the other three federate unions in the sample (See Appendix X).

Analyzing the campaigns efficacy

This final section examines how successful the campaign has been in shifting the attitudes of young people and their understanding of the role union’s play in the labour market.

In terms of awareness, the goal has been to increase the number that have heard of the campaign or seen the logo in the last three weeks from 26% in 2012 to 35% by the end of 2013 and 60% in 2015. The survey data shows that the OK-campaign has fallen short of the set target, reaching slightly less than one third of young people between 15 and 39.

Figure X. Have you heard of the campaign or seen the logo in the past three weeks?

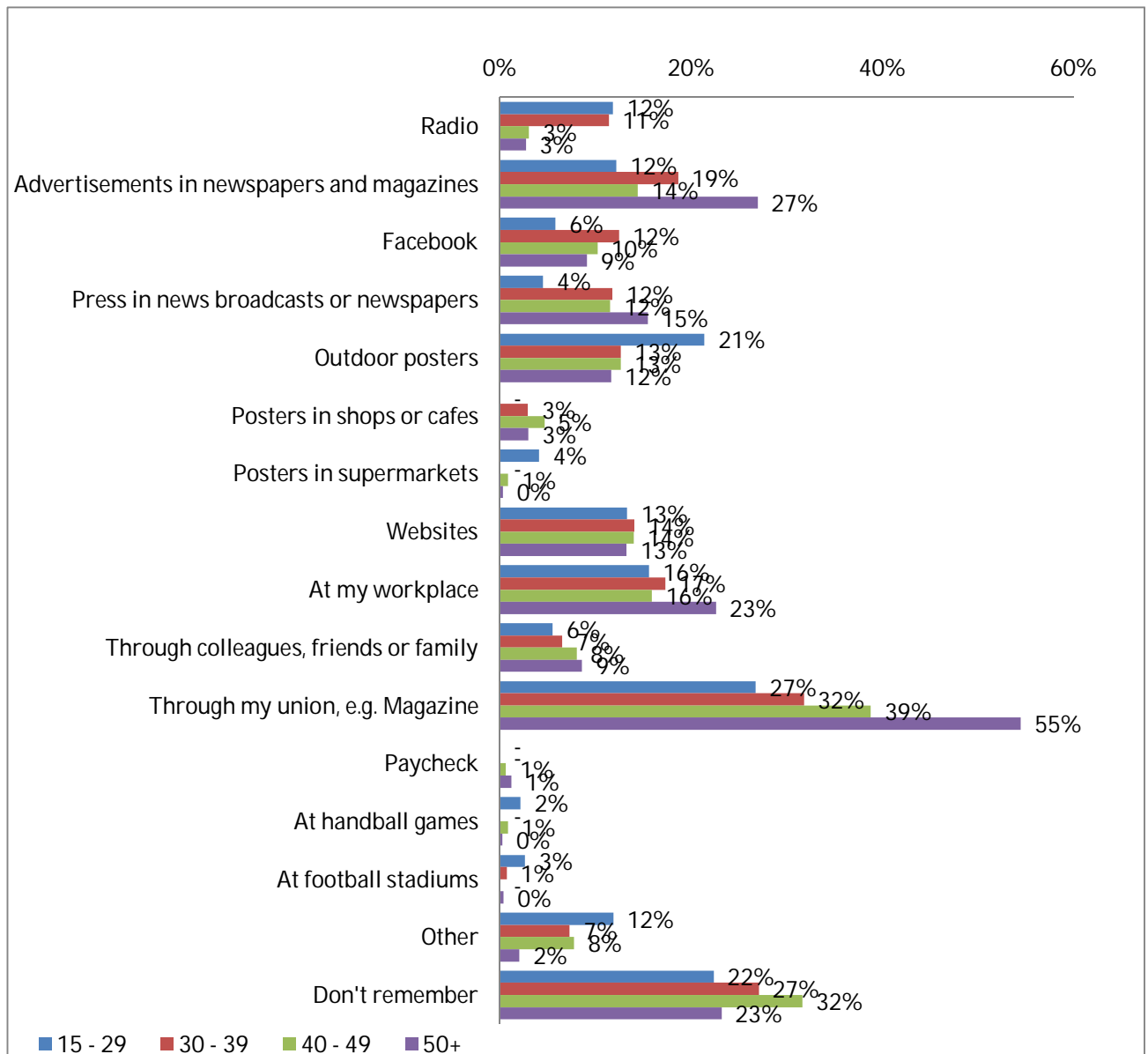
	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
Nov. 2012	29%	27%	28%	23%
Apr. 2013	25%	24%	19%	21%
June 2013	24%	30%	20%	22%
Dec. 2013	29%	31%	28%	23%
May 2014	29%	27%	28%	23%

¹¹ A recent study examining the impact of workplace union density on the likelihood of Danish union membership supports this shared sentiment (Toubøl and Jensen 2014).

A demographic breakdown of the survey data from May 2014 provides interesting insight into the reach of different forms of communication. The most common for 15-29 year olds were the union magazine (27%), outdoor posters (21%), the workplace (16%), the web (13%) and radio (12%). Facebook surprisingly had very little reach (4%). As one would expect, the older generations were much more likely to have come across the campaign or logo via print (union magazine, newspapers).

In order to reach the 60% target for 2015, the LO was advised that it would be necessary to incorporate video into the campaign due to its unrivalled reach and powerful emotive effect. In 2013 the LO began the video production process with external consultants and the first videos were made public in May 2014. They consist of brief conversations with people in the streets of Minneapolis, USA and Vilnius, Lithuania, in which they are told about some of the benefits Danish workers are entitled to such as six weeks holiday or 11% in pension contributions. The two-minute clips remind the Danish audience of the value of their entitlements and how they were achieved – through collective organisation.

Figure X: Where have you seen or heard about the logo?/age



While Danish law prohibits unions from advertising on TV because they are political organisations, the unemployment insurance funds that are linked to them are not as they are promoting a product, insurance, and not a political worldview. To disseminate the videos the strategy has therefore been to enlist the LO's four largest affiliates sampled in this study - FOA, 3F, HK and Dansk Metal - using their own channels, a dedicated website¹² which allows individuals to explore which union best suits their needs, social media (as of August 1, 2014, the embedded YouTube videos have received X likes on the OK-campaign Facebook page and been shared 240 times), cinema and two national TV channels. The May 2014 survey was the first round to include questions on the reach of the videos and it reveals that these videos have been very effective at reaching young people. Asked whether they had seen the commercial in TV, cinemas, or on the Internet, 65% of 15 to 29 year olds and 59% of 30 to 39 year olds answered yes, a quarter of whom thought the videos were very good. Compared to 42% for those 50 and older. This is twice the reach of all the other forms of communication examined earlier combined. Thus while the campaign has failed to reach young people through Facebook, it has succeeded in its use of video and YouTube.

The final question, then, is what impact this dissemination has had on young people's attitudes and their understanding of union's role in the labour market? The survey data from May 2014 reveals that the impact has been somewhat limited. While approx 60% of young people agree or partly agree with the campaign's importance and almost half like it, less than 10% of 15-29 year olds agree that they have a better understanding of collective agreements. The same is true of their awareness of the difference between LO unions and the ideological unions. Nevertheless, 7% of 15-29 year olds answered that the campaign had made them consider joining a trade union and 39% answered maybe (See Appendix X). In light of the existing research on positive union attitudes towards union membership and the increased propensity to unionize, this should be considered a success.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Using a combination of interviews and survey data the research has attempted to show how Danish trade unions are using the media in their attempt to engage and organize young people. Since the launch of the 'Are you OK?' campaign in 2012, it has managed to reach almost a third of all 15-39 year olds, through traditional forms of union communication as well as new media. Its failure to reach young people on Facebook demonstrates the importance of integrating federate youth consultants and other youth groups into the campaign so that the message is shared through their social networks. The successful use of video and YouTube also suggests that this form of communication has enormous potential for union organizing campaigns; it requires considerable resources and professionalism which trade unions often have in far more abundance than the network of grassroots organisations required to use social media most effectively.

¹² www.fagforening.dk

The key to sustaining the collaborative campaign network that has harnessed the power resources of the LO labour movement was a clever concept, a peak-led campaign with freedom of implementation, and a long-term goal whose importance was recognized by everyone. Targeting the entire population, with a specific focus on young people, also helped ensure that it was not relegated to a ‘youth effort’ but instead involved union officials from both the communication and organisation departments of the sampled federate unions and each layer of their organisational structure all the way down to the branches and shop stewards.

While the campaign is very specific to the local industrial relations context, the case reveals the theoretical and empirical importance of taking a holistic approach to the analysis of union media efforts, if one is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of new and old media. Future research could explore the role of media in union organizing efforts in different national and industrial relations contexts by adopting a similar approach as the one employed here. It remains to be seen whether the campaign will actually translate into an increasing level of union membership, but its success so far means that it is likely to continue and become an institutionalized dimension of trade union activity following the next LO Congress in 2015.

APPENDIX

Table X. Danish Union Membership 1985-2014

Trade Union Confederations (amount in thousands - union density in percentages)							
	1985	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013	2014
LO	1.119	1.208	1.167	1.142	955	895	867
FTF	309	332	350	361	358	349	346
AC	74	132	150	163	137*	146	203
LH	24	75	80	76	83	94	97
Ideological alternatives	13	53	68	94	173	229	236
Outside Confederations	161	62	55	57	98*	108	54
Total	1.700	1.862	1.870	1.893	1.804	1.819	1.803
Total (excl. alternative)	1.687	1.809	1.802	1.799	1.631	1.591	1.567
Employees and unemployed	2.434	2.547	2.614	2.640	2.676	2.614	2.605
Union Density	69,8 %	73,1 %	71,5 %	71,7 %	67,4 %	69,6 %	69,2 %
Excluding alternatives	69,3 %	71,0 %	68,9 %	68,1 %	60,9 %	60,9 %	60,2 %

Source: Ibsen et al. 2014

Table X. The aim of the campaign is to inform the Danish public about collective agreements and their function. Do you agree or disagree that this is necessary?

	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
<i>Completely Agree</i>	34%	25%	33%	44%
<i>Partly Agree</i>	28%	38%	33%	28%
<i>Neither/Nor</i>	19%	16%	18%	12%
<i>Partly Disagree</i>	3%	3%	2%	2%
<i>Completely Disagree</i>	1%	2%	2%	2%
<i>Don't know</i>	15%	15%	11%	13%

Table X. What do you think about the trade union movement doing this campaign?

	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
<i>I like it</i>	46%	42%	45%	50%
<i>I have no opinion</i>	38%	38%	37%	32%
<i>I dislike it</i>	2%	6%	8%	5%
<i>I don't know</i>	14%	14%	11%	12%

Table X. The campaign has made me more conscious of collective agreements and their function in the labour market?

	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
<i>Completely Agree</i>	1%	2%	1%	6%
<i>Partly Agree</i>	8%	6%	6%	8%
<i>Neither/Nor</i>	29%	27%	35%	31%
<i>Partly Disagree</i>	13%	10%	6%	5%
<i>Completely Disagree</i>	19%	21%	20%	14%
<i>Don't know</i>	30%	34%	32%	36%

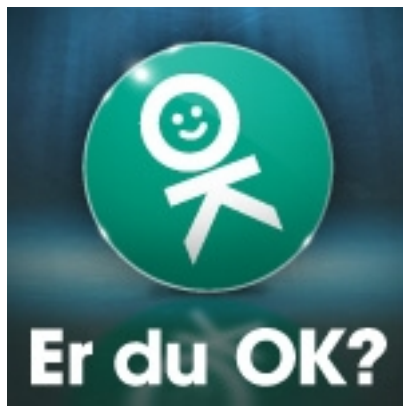
Table X. The campaign has made me more aware of the difference between LO unions and the ideological alternative unions?

	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
<i>Completely Agree</i>	1%	2%	4%	10%
<i>Partly Agree</i>	7%	5%	4%	7%
<i>Neither/Nor</i>	24%	26%	32%	30%
<i>Partly Disagree</i>	13%	9%	6%	4%
<i>Completely Disagree</i>	24%	24%	21%	14%
<i>Don't know</i>	31%	34%	33%	35%

Table X. Has the campaign made you consider joining a trade union?

	15 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50+
<i>Yes</i>	7%	-	-	-
<i>Maybe</i>	39%	8%	-	12%
<i>No</i>	40%	87%	100%	86%
<i>Don't know</i>	14%	5%	-	2%

Figure X. The 'Are you OK?' Campaign Logo



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