Reconsidering Membership

A Study of Individual Members' Formal Affiliation with Democratically Governed Federations

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Preface

This report is a result of a research project carried out at the Centre for Management and Organization at the Economic Research Institute at the Stockholm School of Economics.

This volume is submitted as a doctor's thesis at the Stockholm School of Economics. As usual at the Economic Research Institute, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present his research in his own ways as an expression of his own ideas.

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Prologue

The Swedish Climbing Association, its Stockholm local club and I go way back. In fact, we have been acquainted ever since the beginners' course I took in 1987. Little did I know then that those first frightening moves over vertical rock would lead me not only to become a deeply passionate climber, but also into a relation that has lasted half my life. Apart from my relationship to my family and a group of childhood friends, this is by far the oldest relationship I still maintain.

Although I climb as frequently and passionately today as ever before, I must admit that the relationship between organized climbing in Sweden and me has changed over the years. Today, I would characterize it as being rather distanced and indifferent. I keep renewing my membership every year, and for that I receive the official magazine and a few e-newsletters issued by the local club, as well as an insurance and certain discounts. Apart from that, though, the interaction between us is scarce. Yet, it was not always like that.

Why this relation has changed over the years I cannot tell for sure, but one reason may be that the climbing world itself has gone through quite substantial changes since the late 1980s. Although it may sound pretentious, nostalgic, and even false to some, I believe it is safe to say that the climbing world I got to know in the late eighties appeared to be smaller, simpler, more low profile, and community-like in comparison to the much more fragmented and, in part, highly individualized and commercialized reality of today.

The custom for climbers back in 1987 was to affiliate oneself with the local climbing association. At least where I 'grew up' as a climber. Why? Again, this is a mere guess, but climbing and climbers in the 1980s in Sweden were still as odd as snow in the summer. Even if the climbing club in Stockholm has always hosted a larger number of members than any other club in Sweden, I recall being convinced that I knew or at least could recognize most of the local climbers during those first years. Considering the 1.200 officially affiliated members, and the many thousands non-affiliated climbers in the Stockholm region today such a thought appears slightly absurd. Albeit some might disagree, I believe that then, a formal membership in a climbing club had a lot more to do with being identified and confirmed as part of a community than what it has today. Sure, climbers still seek recognition for what they are and for what they do in the mountains, but I believe that mechanism works differently today.

When I first entered the climbing scene, the premises of the local club in Stockholm played an important role. I was not one of the most frequent visitors, but this club was not only the place for socializing with the 'oldies' and meeting the 'newies' in the sport, or for looking at slideshows, telling war stories, and plan future climbing trips, it was also the only place in town where you could buy climbing gear. There were so few

of us back then that it literally sufficed with an ordinary closet for storing the essential climbing stuff that a couple of members earned extra money selling to the rest of us. Soon, however, climbing started attracting a never before imagined number of people, which rapidly brought along irretrievable changes.

One early sign indicating that things were changing was that the beginner's courses, arranged by the club since its infancy, started to be over-booked, and soon, the club could no longer meet the demand. With a need greater than the supply, some already established climbers of course realized the economic potential in teaching others to climb. After just a few years a market had emerged for all kinds of courses and guiding-related activities, which in its turn made many local climbers dream of becoming mountain guides and some to actually commit themselves to such a life. These private providers worked as a complement to the club's course activities during the first half of the 1990s, but during the late 1990s the situation began to change again. Today, there is even an organization that, among other things, looks after the interests of Swedish mountain guides, controls the examination of new ones, and ensures that mountain guide activities in Sweden are in line with international standards and practices. I believe that today one can describe those early signs of a forthcoming change as part of a professionalization process.

Notable changes have occurred elsewhere too. For example, with the influx of new climbers there was a rise in demand for equipment. Before long, more players were made aware of the economic potential in climbing and the earlier mentioned closet was made hopelessly redundant. During the last two decades, the numbers of producers, agents and retailers have doubled many times over. Almost any equipment can be bought over the Internet, and in Stockholm there are at least ten stores that sell climbing gear. Worldwide, climbing has become a multibillion business that has its own heroes and stars, world championship, glossy magazines, and guided trips to some of our planet's most remote places.

Around the mid 1990s, two friends and I volunteered to work with the Swedish Climbing Association's official magazine *Bergsport*. Apart from being a good personal experience for the journalistic career I was pursuing at the time, it also opened my eyes to, and completely changed my perspectives of, the rather complex organizational structures that comprise climbing in Sweden and elsewhere. Through the work with this magazine, I came to realize, for the first time, how my own membership actually made me part of a much larger formal organization than the local context my previous experiences derived from. Although I had both heard and read about the national association before, I had never before considered it as other than a distanced thing that really did not concern either my climbing or me.

During the same period, the Swedish Climbing Association and its local clubs joined the national umbrella organization for sports organizations in Sweden, the Swedish Sports Confederation (*Riksidrottsförbundet*). While working with *Bergsport*, I could not avoid being drawn into the rather intricate and infected process that preceded this affiliation. Some strongly opposed this development because they wanted climbing to stay alternative and peripheral, and for them this was an agonizing time. For others, this development was a path filled with opportunities and the only way forward. I never really choose strand in this debate, but nowadays I find it interesting to think of

this as one of the more important events that has taken place within the world of organized climbing in Sweden. This is so because it encouraged not only the leadership of the Swedish Climbing Association, but also many others to expand their focus and also include national and international competitions, sponsoring deals, indoor climbing gyms, etc. in their perspective of climbing.

Somewhere in all this, and before re-emerging as an official homepage (www.klatterklubben.com), the local club premises in Stockholm were abandoned. Today the club is best noticed through sporadic e-mails, containing a minimum of information regarding the whereabouts of the organization. When the season is over for climbing outside, Stockholm's four existing indoor climbing walls are the new meeting places. There, people gather to practice, compete, exchange experiences and stories, to meet new climbing partners, or just hang out. To a certain degree, these walls fulfill the same purpose as the former club. A major difference, though, is that no formal affiliation is needed to visit those places: You pay to stay.

However, one interesting consequence of all these changes is that most climbers in the Stockholm region today are likely to have not just one, but a number of affiliations with different climbing contexts. Let me take myself me as an example: I am a registered member with the customer club in one large local climbing store as well as with two Internet dittos. I am also an official member of two local indoor climbing gyms, and, as mentioned before, still affiliated with the Stockholm Climbing Club.

Well aware of the fact that these memberships connect me with different environments and situations, I do find their borders a bit blurred. For example, it can at times be hard to differentiate between my membership with the Stockholm Climbing Club and the ones I have with the different climbing walls I frequently visit. One reason for this might be the tendency to relate individual membership more or less exclusively with different discounts and other economical advantages rather than, for example, with being part of and supporting a specific community. One concrete example can be found on the homepage of the climbing club in Stockholm. Under the heading "membership", it is spelled out what one gets in return for signing up for an annual membership. In addition to such things as receiving the national association's official magazine and a possibility of exerting influence internally in the club, great emphasis is put on an exclusive low-cost climbing-insurance, and all kinds of discounts at specific stores, climbing walls, and magazines.

In retrospect, I find it intriguing to note how my perceptions regarding my affiliation with the Swedish climbing community has changed over time. From my perspective, this change can partly be described as a growing distance between the organization and myself. Where I before experienced a concrete and realistic opportunity for becoming involved and integrated in the climbing community through my affiliation, today I find it difficult to describe and define what the organization is or what it stands for. It is complicated even to pinpoint its location or to identify the people that are supposed to represent me internally. One of the few situations where I currently might get reminded that I am still a member is when vendors in climbing stores want to see proof of my membership in order to grant me my discounts.

Furthermore, even if I cannot recall a single instance during these two decades when I have interacted as individual member with managers or other official represen-

tatives of the association, I am genuinely curious of how those who lead this organization I belong to perceive all this. Do they see it in a similar way as I do? Are they aware of the growing distance I am experiencing? If they are, what eventual causes and/or effects of this reality can they depict? Do they really want me to get involved in the organization? What are their future perspectives of my relation to the organization they are set to lead? These are but a few of the questions and thoughts that have evoked my interest for individual membership.

1. From Members to Membership

> /…/ future social scientists will agree that [the 20th century] has been the century of membership-based organizations. Never before have so many millions of people voluntarily been engaged in political parties, unions, or other types of associations, as during the time that now slowly passes by (Papakostas 2003:8, my translation).

This study deals with membership. I have set out to explore how *individual membership* is perceived within the context of nine larger Swedish membership-based and democratically governed federations. Because this topic is complex and wide in scope, it is also possible to approach in a number of ways. The general idea, however, is to try to move away from what seems to be a common ***member*** orientation among both civil society academics and practitioners to a more pronounced member***ship*** ditto. A consequence of this alteration is that the analytical focus partly is shifted from the bearer of a membership towards the *relation* between him/her and the organizational context he/she belongs to.

In combination with the personal interest accounted for in the prologue, the overall reason for conducting this study is that, despite an empirical presence that appears to be as far-reaching as it is well documented, a more qualitative and systematic knowledge concerning this specific relation seems to be lacking (for a few exceptions see Stryjan 1989, 1994; Ahrne 1990, 1994; Cameron 1999).

The comparative study *"World Value Surveys"* shows that almost 50 percent of the population in 19 countries in North and South America and Europe claim to have at least one associational membership. At the top of that list we find Iceland where 86 percent make such a claim. With 38 percent of its population making similar claims, Ireland straddles somewhere in the middle. Spain is last with only 17 percent maintaining the same (reported in Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001, for further international and cross national comparisons see also Almond and Verba 1963, Pestoff 1977, Curtis et al. 1992, McCarthy et al. 1992, Dekker and van den Broek 1998, Baer 2007, and Albrow et. al 2008)

In relation to more country specific analyses on this topic, it has, for example, been calculated that the adult population in the U.S. (≈185 million individuals) accounts for over 260 million memberships. This equals some 1,40 formal member affiliations *per capita*. While estimates show that more than 50 percent of all U.S. adults declare to have at least one associational membership, it has also been suggested that close to 100 million affiliated members in the U.S. are committed to volunteering activities within the association they belong to (cf. Verba and Nie 1972; Grabb and Curtis 1992; Smith 2000; Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001).

An analysis by Sivesind *et al.*'s (2002) of the situation in Norway exposes a somewhat different picture. According to their estimates, more than 70 percent of the Norwegians are formally affiliated as members with at least one association, and 43 percent hold two or more such memberships. These authors also assert that Norwegians account for close to eight and a half million memberships in total, which gives almost two affiliations *per capita*. Another study states that about 70 percent of the population in Norway claim that it is either somewhat or very important to also conduct voluntary work in an association one is affiliated with (Wollebæk *et al.* 2000).

A common point of departure for much of the scholarly research focusing on Sweden's civil societal context is that individual membership supposedly constitutes one of its more salient features. Or as Lundström and Wijkström (1997: 16) put it: *"Membership is thus a central concept for understanding the specifics of the Swedish nonprofit sector."* This conclusion derives from estimates showing that Sweden accounts for more than 30 million individual memberships. With a population of about nine million citizens, that gives an average of about four associational memberships per inhabitant, and a top-score in most international rankings. It has also been revealed that as much as 90 percent of all Swedes have at least one such formal affiliation, and that 70 percent or more of those who hold a membership in a Swedish association also commit themselves to voluntary work for that particular organization (cf. Peterson *et al.* 1989; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Lundström and Svedberg 2003; Vogel *et al.* 2003; Jeppsson Grassman and Svedberg 2007).

Yet, no matter how common it may be empirically, the above-stated lacuna of more qualitative knowledge regarding individual membership seems to bring about both simplified and stereotype approaches and discussions. Moreover, I am surprised that the formal affiliation of members, in spite of everything, is still typically approached as *explicans*, an object serving explanations, rather than as *explicandum*, an object that needs to be explained.

1.1 Earlier Approaches Involving Members and Membership

When used as explanation, individual membership is generally referred to in analyses and discussions that are rooted mainly in two categories of survey data. One category builds on statistics related to issues such as the amount of affiliated members in a society or region; the numbers of affiliations *per capita* in a society; or the amount of members within specific social clusters, or across organizational fields. The other category tends to involve aggregations of more individually oriented information on, for example, socio-economic composition of specific member groups; personal motives for affiliating with associations; and on how and how often members interact with each other, their organizations, or other societal institutions.

Based on macro or micro contexts or not, this kind of quantified empirical material is then frequently used to analyze and elucidate more universal (civil) societal issues. Examples of such issues are general societal developments, social cohesion and integration, people's expected interaction with societal institutions, functions of democratic institutions in society, people's possibility to exercise societal governance through

membership-based organizations, or the creation and maintenance of trust and social capital within and among social groups or within entire populations.

This is also why it is possible to say that the typical approach to members' affiliation with associations is to employ it as a sort of approximation to, or explanatory factor for, specific social conditions, events, or developments. A classic account in this respect is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835/2000). Other well known examples along similar lines are Schlesinger's *Biography of a Nation of Joiners* (1944), and Almond and Verba's comparative study *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1963). Other and more contemporary examples are Putnam's studies from the 1990s (1993; 2000), in which he uses different indicators, among them the formal affiliation of individual members, in order to reach his conclusions regarding the creation and preservation of trust and social capital in different societal contexts (for more on this see e.g. Babchuk and Booth 1969; Åmark 1986; Curtis *et al.* 1992; Popielarz and McPherson 1995; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Curtis *et al.* 2001; Deakin 2001; Rothstein 2001; Sivesind *et al.* 2002; Wollebæk and Selle 2002; Amnå and Munck 2003; Rothstein and Stolle 2003; Vogel *et al.* 2003; Prakash and Selle 2004; Kumlin and Rothstein 2005; Rothstein 2005; Lorentzen and Hustinx 2006; Amnå 2007).

1.1.1 Membership in Relation to Organizations

Moving closer to the intentions of the present study, it should be noted that the concept of membership also has been related more explicitly to organizational contexts and issues. However, most of these discussions also depart from similar types of quantified data as mentioned above. Thus, one could say that the formal affiliation of members, even from this angle, tends to be applied as an indication of or an explanatory factor for other phenomena and events than itself (cf. Babchuk *et al.* 1959; Booth and Bisztray 1970; Knoke 1981; Adams 1983; McPherson 1983; Knoke 1988; McPherson *et al.* 1992; Barkan *et al.* 1995; McPherson and Rotolo 1996; Smith 2000; Tan 2000; Foreman and Whetten 2002).

In the literature on organizations in civil society one can trace an approach to membership corresponding to what could be labeled a resource perspective. This is a common theme that implies preoccupation with organizational needs for the mutual benefits that may emerge between affiliated members and their organizations (cf. Perrow 1970; Coleman 1973; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Knoke and Wood 1981; Jenkins 1983; Knoke and Prensky 1984; Knoke 1990).

In relation, substantial attention has gone into studying people's commitment to, involvement in, and contribution to the internal life of the associations they belong to. A standard reference here is Mancur Olson's (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action* (see Ostrom 1990 for an interesting critique of Olson). The typical study in this field of interest often includes an aggregated set of data, usually longitudinal measurements of numbers of formally affiliated members, or their level of activity in either larger civil societal settings or more particular associational environments. This or similar kinds of quantified data on members and their affiliation is then often applied to discuss and

explain different organizational issues and conditions (cf. Knoke 1981; Knoke 1988; Oropesa 1995; Cress *et al.* 1997; Vogel *et al.* 2003; Peterson 2005; Baer 2007).

One of these discussions, that seems to gain more and more interest, concerns how a less known and more individualistic future is on collision course with a more well-known and familiar modern and communitarian (civil) society. This transition is often problematized through descriptions of how people tend to abandon traditional membership-based organizations in order to affiliate with newer, more flexible and less hierarchical organizations, where they are treated more as supporters, donors, activists, or even customers, instead of as more conventional members (cf. Enjolras 2001; Skocpol 2003; Lorentzen 2004; Tranvik and Selle 2007a).

Democratic Governance and the Weber-Michels Tradition

Another approach to people's commitment and formal belonging to associations is closely interlinked with principles and procedures of democracy and self-governance. Through this aspect, individual members are viewed as principals of the organization they belong to (Abrahamsson 1993a, b), and their affiliation as above all a question of power and authority.

The empirical reality of this approach often seems to be associated with such well-known trends as increased centralization, bureaucratization, and professionalization. One of the classic landmarks here is Robert Michels' conclusions from the early 20th century (1911/1959) regarding an iron law of oligarchy in organizations in general and large membership-based dittos in particular. Along a similar track we also find renowned studies by, for example, Ostrogorski (1902/1982), Duverger (1951/1963) and Lipset *et al.* (1956) (see also Harrison 1959; Panebianco 1988; Johnson 1990; Baccaro 2001; Papakostas 2003; Torpe 2003; Jonsson 2006). An often-repeated theme here seems to be concerned with tensions between organizational discourses and practices. For example, to pursue maximum efficiency and economy of operation could become a bit complicated, if not contradictory, if it is put on par with a grassroot design of government in which local autonomy and democratic principles and procedures are emphasized. This somewhat contradictory situation Harrison (1959: 150) has described as *"/…/ the freedom to speak without the opportunity of being heard"*.

A parallel topic concerns institutional rationalization, which seems to involve a somewhat similar paradox where organizational practices are viewed as compromising stated principles and values. A common point of departure is Weber's ideas of bureaucracy (1914/1968) and the tendency among organizations to always become more bureaucratic. These ideas are construed as being interconnected with things like centralized power and control structures, escalating professionalization and tendencies towards diminished democracy (cf. Waters 1989, 1993).

An early Swedish observation in this respect was made by Heckscher (1944; 1951), who identified trends of increased bureaucracy and a growing democratic deficit among *folkrörelser* – the typical Swedish civil society organizations, which are generally understood as large, membership-based, and democratically governed federations of associations (see chapter 3 and 4 for more on this). More recent observers have noted

that Swedish associations gradually seem to decrease their dependency on internally derived resources – such as fees and other member related contributions – while increasing their dependency on external financial resources, such as state subsidies, public contracts, private donations, and corporate sponsor deals. This development has also been problematized as intensified interactions and dependencies between civil society organizations on one hand, and public authorities and private corporations on the other. These increased interactions and dependencies are tentatively also believed to propel a more general and sometimes heedless adoption of market-like behaviors as well as ever-increasing tendencies of rationalization and professionalization in civil society (cf. Johansson 2001, 2005a; Petersen 2006; Wijkström and Einarsson 2006). The latter is also believed to impel a growing distance between many civil society organizations and their constituencies, because *"/…/ the member becomes as insignificant as the draftee in a professional army"* (Papakostas 2003:12, my translation. For similar observations elsewhere cf. Enjolras 2001 and Skocpol 2003).

In sum, despite all the research conducted it is probably correct to say that there is no proper and coherent membership literature available. Instead, what exists is scholarly work involving members and individual membership that mainly attends to other issues and interest areas. Even if the review above is far from complete, I still believe that it captures some of the larger and more pronounced approaches and discussions where individual membership is either touched upon peripherally, or related to more explicitly.

Yet, the problem remains – members' formal affiliation with organizations tends to be approached and treated as a phenomenon serving as explanation for other things and issues rather than being analyzed and discussed in its own right. Hence, viewed from certain angles there is a lack of knowledge regarding individual membership. Part of this lacuna concerns how this relation is perceived and bestowed with meaning, which is also the main focus of this study.

1.2 A Variable Relation over Time and across Contexts

Just because members may exist in various social settings it does not necessarily imply that the relation tying them to these contexts is identical everywhere. Thus, from my point of view, the meaning of individual membership is an *empirical question*.

For example, while most of us are members of a family, some might also claim to be affiliated with street gangs, corporate boards, customer clubs, sport associations, or maybe with all at once. However, being considered a member of a street gang in Los Angeles is possibly quite different from sitting on the board of a Japanese car manufacturer, which is different from joining a local football association on the Swedish countryside. Or, a formal affiliation with, for example, the International Organization of Good Templars is probably quite different from an affiliation with Greenpeace (Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004). Similarly, it could also be assumed the membership with an organization such as the Swedish Red Cross differs from the membership offered by other Red Cross societies. In a study on political parties in the 1950s, Duverger made an early observation of this kind of variations:

> How do we define party members? The reply varies according to the party: Each holds to a concept of membership which is peculiar to it (1951/1963: 61).

Accordingly, any variations on the theme of membership are in this study considered to be a question of context and perception. That is, dependent on whom, when and where we ask about the affiliation of individual members, it could potentially be described quite differently.

1.2.1 A Pilot Study

The above-stated fact became almost tangible in a preliminary study where I had the opportunity to interview top-level leaders from five different European Red Cross societies about their views on membership. The analysis of this interview-data revealed that these leaders, who belonged to different national organizations at the same time as they all cooperated through the International Red Cross Federation, expressed quite different views regarding members and what individual membership meant to them (for more details on this study see Hvenmark 2002).

One example from this study shows that the two representatives from Sweden and Finland both deemed individual membership to be the core of their respective organization. An important reason for this was that they perceived the affiliation of many tens of thousands of members as legitimizing the entire existence and work of their organizations, but also because of other types of more tangible resources that members could contribute with. They also agreed that individual members, through an internal democratic regime entitling each member the right to participate in the affairs of the organization, constituted the basis for the organization's internal governance structure. Without hesitation, they could also specify the exact number of affiliated members in their organizations.

The French representative, on the other hand, was not able to tell how many members his organization had, even if he was well aware of their existence. The following passage is an illuminating example of this:

> /.../ we have 300 to 500.000 regular donors, and 60.000 volunteers. About 30.000 of those volunteers are first-aid workers. I can also say that we have 15.000 employees, but I cannot say how many members we have. It's a sign! **It's a sign of what?** It's maybe a sign of the relative importance we give to membership (national coordinator, French Red Cross, 2).

The vice president of the British Red Cross followed a similar line of argument. When I asked her about affiliated members, she spoke of volunteers and how important they were for the existence and concrete work of her organization. She even spoke at length of how many these volunteers were and how important it was to increase their number. It took some time before I realized that the individual members and the type of membership that the two Scandinavian representatives and I had had no problems discussing simply did not exist in the British Red Cross. The closest this vice president ever came to the topic was when she stated that they were thinking about opening up the possibility for people to affiliate as *"passive members"*, a type of affiliates

she described as those who pay a fee without doing voluntary work. This idea, she claimed, had arrived from the Spanish Red Cross, and she found it attractive because of its apparent lucrative aspects.

Accordingly, while the Nordic representatives clearly differentiated between those who volunteered for the organization they belonged to and those who did so without a membership, the secretary general of the Spanish Red Cross claimed no difference between these two categories. Instead, he asserted that they did not make any distinctions about whether you prefer to contribute with money or by voluntary work – a formal member, or a non-member volunteer are given similar rights and privileges internally in the organization.

A valuable insight gained from this pilot study is that the contextual embeddedness of organizations and people matters for how a phenomenon such as individual membership is perceived. That is, I believe that it is possible to say that what could be labeled specific, institutionalized, civil society frameworks are linked to the political, religious and economic backgrounds of nations and geographical regions (James 1989; Salamon and Anheier 1997; Anheier and Salamon 1998, see also see chapter 3 for more on this). These frameworks tend to function not only as cultural scripts for social activity, institutional characteristics, and developments at an organizational level, but also at a more disaggregated and cognitive level, where they also influence individuals' perception of what is legitimate and what values, norms and practices that are conceivable (Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001).

Accordingly, I believe my claim about the necessity of viewing the meaning of this relation as above all an empirical issue becomes even clearer. That is, membership potentially implies different things to different people at different times and in different places – an alternative perspective to how members' affiliation with organizations is approached in most other scholarly texts (yet, see Ahrne 1990, 1994; Cameron 1999; Stryjan 1989, 1994 for alternative approaches). Thus, to pursue this perspective entails paying close attention to context as well as maintaining transparency regarding whose perception is accounted for.

1.2.2 Federations, Leaders and Officials

Keeping the above in mind, my ambition with the present study is to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the social phenomenon of individual membership by treating it as the main unit of analysis.

The empirical material is closely connected with a type of civil society organization that could be characterized as federative, membership-based and democratically governed. This study includes the following organizations: The Swedish Red Cross, The Swedish Teachers' Union, The Swedish Union of Tenants, The Swedish Co-operative Union, The Swedish Football Association, The Swedish Social Democratic Party, The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, The Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired, The International Organization of Good Templars in Sweden ('Swedish' or 'in/of Sweden' is generally excluded in the following, and for more details on each organization see chapter 7).

These federations are not only deeply rooted and well known in Sweden, they are also often given the typical, and highly cherished, label *folkrörelser*. Their good reputation seems to derive partly from what is generally achieved through them in areas such as sports, leisure, religion, politics, unionism, lobbying, foreign aid, or drug prevention, but also from the general belief that they stimulate and foster highly honored civic values, virtues, and practices among their affiliates (Heckscher 1944, 1951; Lundkvist 1977; Johansson 1980; Micheletti 1995; Vogel *et al.* 2003; Amnå 2007, see also chapter 3, 7, 10 and 11 for more on this).

Apart from using internal documents and texts, such as bylaws, strategy declarations, and jubilee books, the analysis in this study departs primarily from two dozens interviews with leaders and officials in the above-mentioned organizations. The reason for founding the analysis on this kind of material is that it appeared to be the best way to get hold of more qualitative information regarding the meaning of individual membership. Although an alternative way could be to obtain it through juridical definitions and practice, it seems as if in comparison with parallel relations between individuals and larger social collectives, such as the citizenship or the employment, membership is largely left unattended in Swedish Civil Law (cf. Hemström 2000a, b). Another place where one could expect to find further guidance concerning this relation is in the official statutes of organizations affiliating members. Yet, even if bits and pieces of information can be found here, it is often quite dry and fragmentary. This is true at least for the organizations in this study.

Another relevant source of information is thus the people within an organization who are involved in the daily making and remaking of this relation. An important category among these persons is, of course, the organization's rank and file members. The perception of individual membership among members are studied in a parallel Ph.D-project conducted by a colleague of mine (see Einarsson, T. 2008). The focus of the present study is instead directed on another significant group of people, namely those who occupy positions as leaders and officials while, in most cases, also being affiliated as members with the above-mentioned organizations (see chapter 6).

An important aspect for why it is especially interesting and relevant to interview this category of people on the topic of individual membership is that they belong to what could be called an organizational elite, which assumingly gives them a certain amount of formal power and authority (see chapter 2). The following quote illustrates this point well. The passage stems from one of the interviews in this study and starts in the middle of a discussion concerning members' role vis-à-vis their organization.

> /…/ departing from the view that individual members constitute the organization I think contributes to a more humble attitude regarding this issue. However, the fact that certain members are assigned greater authority and power than others is just natural. For example, it is obvious that I, as chairman, have a considerable amount of influence and authority regarding a number of things compared to any ordinary rank and file member. There is in fact a tremendous difference regarding possibilities to exert influence and power in this respect /…/ (chairman, IOGT-NTO).

The strength of the power and authority these persons tend to be given or have ascribed to them could be further defined as a prerogative of interpretation. This

means that their ideas and opinions are given more weight and a higher status. To be assigned the privilege to interpret reality implies, for example, greater possibilities of being the one who decides what should be regarded important or trivial, right or wrong, good or bad. This is also a decisive mechanism for setting agendas and exerting influence (cf. Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1976).

1.2.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to develop concepts and conceptual relations that describe individual members' formal affiliation with membership-based and democratically governed federations.

This purpose is operationalized through an analysis of how a group of top-level leaders and officials from nine such Swedish federations perceive individual membership. The analysis is guided by the following research questions: How is membership perceived? What are the linkages between these perceptions and the societal context? How do these perceptions relate to the organizational structures and practices?

1.2.4 Outline for the Remaining Text

In **chapter 2** I present my ontological and epistemological stance. This means that the way I approach and analyze individual membership departs from a view where our world is (re)produced through social interaction, which is shaped, restrained, and enabled by cultural conditions and social structures. Since my approach towards membership requires that context is given priority in the analysis, **chapter 3** and **4** involve more detailed theoretical discussions on the larger societal and more specific organizational settings touched upon in this study. **Chapter 5** contains a conceptual baseline for how membership is conceptually approached in this study. This is also the final piece of this study's theoretical frame of reference. In **chapter 6**, I discuss project design and concrete methodological issues, such as how the case is built, selection of organizations and people to interview, the interview process, and how I structured and conducted the analysis. **Chapter 7** involves presentations of the nine included organizations. **Chapter 8**, **9** and **10** comprise thematical presentations and a first analysis of the empirical material. **Chapter 11** starts with a short recapitulation of the theoretical framework and the empirical material before engaging in further analysis and discussions. Here I also suggest a way in which the used conceptual model of membership could be advanced. From the findings of the analysis I end this chapter with a broadened discussion linking the topic of membership to some observed trends and developments in society in general, and to the organized parts of civil society in particular. With **chapter 12**, I close the study through a brief account of contributions, a few suggestions of future research, and an epilogue.

2. Ontological Perspective

Organizations and organizational phenomena can be approached and analyzed in numerous ways. An illuminating example is the many images and metaphors Morgan (1986) refers to in his discussions on the social making, or "*imaginization*" as he calls it, of organizations (ibid:382). The basic message here is that no matter who it is that *imagines*, there is always a specific view applied when sense is made of the world that we are confronted with. To specify that statement one can also say that the way in which we perceive reality (our ontology) always influences both what we think could be known about something (our epistemology) as well as how we believe that this knowledge may come about in terms of design, methods, and techniques involved in a research project (cf. Fleetwood 2005).

This chapter introduces my ontological and epistemological stance regarding organizations and organizational phenomena and what this means for this particular study. What follows below could therefore be described as an oscillation between more abstract meta-theoretical arguments and concrete clarifications of my perspective on the present unit of analysis, the individual membership, and the type of organizational context, federative organization that are included in the analysis.

Most of my inspiration in this respect stems both from more general accounts of critical realism (in particular Archer 1988, 1995; Archer *et al.* 1998; Archer 2000, 2003) as well as more critical realist enthused approaches towards organizations and organizational phenomena (cf. Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000b; Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004; Fleetwood 2005). What I argue for below is, however, *not* a full-fledged manifesto of critical realism. Nor is it an exhaustive disentanglement of the same. In all its brevity, this text is best understood as a personal account that hopefully provides the reader with a few necessary insights regarding the ontological and epistemological approaches I apply in this study.

2.1 A Conceptually Mediated Reality

From my perspective there are no such things as neutral observations, descriptions, interpretations, or explanations. This is so because the world as we know it comes mediated through concepts. This equals to saying that when we reflect upon a situation, a phenomenon or something else in the world, our reflections and perceptions are supported by sets of notions that mostly precede our own existence. And, since the concepts we use to make sense of the world depart from both our own subjective beliefs and ideas as well as from inter-subjective and socially shared perspectives, values and norms, they can by definition not be independent, impartial or objective (cf. Archer 1988, 1995; Fleetwood 2004, 2005, Reed 2000). This partiality of our world becomes

even more evident if we consider that people often, but not always, can be expected to have at least some idea of what they are doing, and why they are doing that instead of something else.

Thus, no matter how we choose to perceive events and phenomena related to, for example, an organizational context, it is never unbiased perceptions we never utter or elaborate upon. Yet, that is not the same thing as saying that the world that surrounds us only exists through our language. It merely means that the only way we can know something about the world is dependent on what people actually do, and the discourses and concepts they use to interpret, describe, or explain that.

2.1.1 A Socially Construed Reality

Any entity or phenomenon can be said to be real as long as it could make a difference in our life and affect our behaviour (Fleetwood 2005). This is also why it is possible to say that both material and immaterial entities or phenomena are equally real. For example, this means that the idea of Mammon or God is just as real as any office building we might have to enter each morning in order to get to work, since both could affect our behaviour and make a difference in our lives. However, they are dissimilar in that they are real in different ways.

Let me add another illuminating example: *"/…/ whilst an organization is a social object, the same cannot be said for the weather* [which is a material object]. */…/ the weather itself is <u>not</u> dependent on our discursively shaped understandings – although it may be dependent on our <u>actions</u> such as inappropriate burning of hydrocarbons. Our <u>understanding</u> of the weather, by contrast, is a social object and is, by definition, discourse dependent"* (Fleetwood 2004:32, emphasis in original). The fact that weather primarily has a material character means that it would continue to exist regardless of human existence. It was here before us and it will most probably be here after we are gone. Organizations and many related phenomena, on the other hand, are social constructs made up by humans, which means that they will not be around if we disappear. Even if an organization's materiality might be understood to be as real as an office building, a storehouse, or maybe a document, the organizational reality as such would, due to its predominant social character, vanish in the same instance as we humans abandon it. This means that organizations are not dependent on materia, but human interaction, which is an absolute necessity for their reproduction and transformation (Fleetwood 2005).

Our world and everything therein is real and can be said to exist, but everything exists on different terms and in different ways. While some of it is tangible and therefore more directly accessible, there are things we will never be able to see, smell, or reach out to touch, but whose effects we may witness, feel, and experience (cf. Archer 1988, 1995). This means that I regard concepts and discourses as being just as real as anything else in the world. However, social objects, such as unemployment, capitalism, hierarchies, governance procedures, and other organizational praxis, may be subject to our ideas and perceptions at the same time as they also have an extra-discursive dimension that makes them irreducible to whatever discourses applied to make sense of them (cf. Fleetwood 2004:34).

Thus, there are social objects with different ontological statuses. This means that most social events and phenomena exist prior to being explicitly identified and problematized by laypersons, scholars or others (Fleetwood 2005). An example of this is gender inequality, which most probably existed before its fairly recent 'discovery'. If that was not the case, however, and it only was an epiphenomenon of human discourse, that would mean that this kind of inequalities would vanish in the same instance as we modify our language regarding them. Unfortunately though, it generally takes a little more to achieve social change. But, to argue in that direction includes promulgating for a flat ontology in which different strata of reality are collapsed or conflated into each other. That is, reducing reality to what we believe or say it is; no more no less (for more details cf. Archer 1995).

2.1.2 A Multilayered Reality

As a result of the above-stated, it is possible to say that our social world is ontologically multilayered, or that it comprises diverse but closely interrelated strata (cf. Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000a). One stratum of reality entails social entities and phenomenon that are more or less logically related to each other through their dependency on cultural conditions and social structures. Two other strata are more empirical in the sense that they involve either human experience and perceptions, or larger social events and activities, which primarily derive from causal relations between interacting agents. This means that while the first ontological layer displays more of an abstract and systemic character, the other two depend predominantly on concrete interaction between people within certain contexts. One could also say that this gives us a layered reality that is a result of social interaction on one hand, and of the products that this social interaction generates on the other (cf. Archer 1988).

Altered worldviews or discursive changes might just be the first steps toward transformation of reality. Human activities and interaction that lead to alterations of real life events and praxis are also needed. Another way of putting this is to say that talk of action and action itself could, but do not necessarily, correspond in our daily lives. Hereby, I see the membership, and the context in which it is embedded, as two social objects that maintain or alter their meaning because of either human attention or neglect. Yet, even if social events and phenomena need human activity to subsist, they are not always the results of conscious identification and deliberate actions. Membership, bureaucracies, market behaviour, or similar social phenomena, might just as well be reproduced or altered through unreflected habits and conventions stemming from sets of shared tacit rules and norms as well as institutionalized structures and behaviours (cf. Fleetwood 2005).

Analytical Dualism

That reality can be perceived as multilayered means that culture and social structure on one hand and agency on the other compose ontologically independent but closely interconnected aspects of our reality. Archer (1988) suggests that although it might

appear hopeless to even try to determine what is cultural, structural, or agential in real life situations, it is still possible to conduct scholarly research that seeks to investigate and explain how these parts of reality interconnect and influence each other. According to Archer, this is done by analytically separating them and organizing them onto different ontological strata of reality. She calls this analytical dualism. *Analytical* comes from the fact that they are inter-reliant and mutually dependent, and *dualism* from the fact that each is believed to have its own tendential powers to cause effects with respect to how we perceive things and behave in relation to others (see Archer 1995 for more on this). This also means that each part is dependent upon, but not reducible to, the others (cf. Willmott 2000).

Applied to inquiries of organization, I believe this implies that organizations could be perceived from both an ideational, non-human systemic side and a more socio-interactive ditto, in which people interact and reproduce, or transform the specific context they are confronted with. These two perspectives correspond to the different but interrelated ontological levels discussed earlier. Of those, we can only access the socio-interactive level; we cannot examine anything but people's perception of things, what they do together with others, and in relation to the reality that concerns them.

Nevertheless, by attending to what we can access we are also rendered the possibility to gain insights and knowledge of the former, more systemic level, which people either refer to, draw upon, or reject through what they do, say or think. Archer (1995: 168) asserts that even if cultural systems and social structures belong to an ontological level that we cannot access directly, they can be identified and brought into a social analysis *"/…/ because of their irreducible character, autonomous influence and relatively enduring character, but above all because this means that they pre-date any particular cohort of occupants /incumbents. A position* [in an organization] *necessarily has to exist before someone can fill it and this remains the case even in circumstances where individuals and groups have been able to define positions for themselves"* (see also Archer 1995 for more on this).

Consequently, organizations and related phenomena can be conceptualized as relatively durable entities entailing both constraining and enabling cultural conditions and structural features that people refer to, draw upon or reject in order to either (re)produce or alter the specific context with which they are affiliated (cf. Reed 2000).

2.2 Cultural and Social Structures vis-à-vis Human Agency

Although organizations and members' affiliation with them could entail many things, I adhere to an understanding that their existence and transformation primarily are either constrained or enabled by culture and social structures (Archer 1988). One could also say: *"like structure, culture is man-made but it too escapes its makers to act back upon them."* (Archer 1995: 109). Or, as I prefer to put it: cultural conditions and structural features restrain or facilitate our perception, reproduction, or transformation of social phenomena and institutions, such as membership and federative organizations.

Nonetheless, this does not imply that we are dealing with a one-way process. Instead, it needs to be recognized that even if the cultural conditions and social structures that surround us have what can be called causal powers, i.e. the potential capacity

to act upon us, we are not just marionettes in a predetermined puppet theatre. Using that metaphor, one could say that we potentially can modify the cultural and structural strings we hang in and thereby change our environment. In short, people have agency. That is, at the same time as we might be constrained or enabled by culture and social structures we have a latent ability to act back upon them, which makes it important to also include agency into this equation.

This means that the connection between culture and social structures on the one hand and their connection to purposeful human actors on the other form a sort of three-way intersection. However, in order to understand certain social events and phenomena it is also necessary to consider the larger context (i.e. the puppet theatre itself). Because nothing just happens out of nothing, neither do cultural conditions nor social structural features emerge from nowhere. That is, social objects and human activity are not only reliant upon each other, they are simultaneously also contextually dependent (cf. Archer 1995: 182; Porpora 1989; Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000a).

My definition of culture is deliberately rather broad, which means that it includes whatever basic assumptions, theories, beliefs, values, and norms that groups of people adhere to and embrace within specific contexts in order to make sense of things and solve different kinds of problems (cf. Swidler 1986; Archer 1988). It also include more specific cultural artifacts such as policy documents, annual reports, written rules, and role descriptions, and all other kind of intelligibilia that have the capacity of being interpreted, deciphered, grasped, understood, or even changed by someone in a specific setting (cf. Garfinkel 1967; Morgan 1986; Schein 1992). When these cultural conditions or components come together in real life situations, it even becomes possible to speak of larger cultural systems whose existence both transcend the perception and action of individual actors, and are used to construe specific strategies for how to act and behave (cf. Archer 1988). The *"/…/ symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action"* (Swidler 1986: 284).

I define social structures as including configurations or hierarchical complexes of interrelated positions and roles that come ascribed with certain practices that may affect or be affected by the people involved (cf. Porpora 1989; Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000b; Fleetwood 2004). Within a regular for-profit company, for example, the archetypical set of interrelated roles and practices are probably that of owners and managers, and that of white- and blue-collar workers. In universities it is perhaps that of professors and students. In the federative organizations included in this study, the typically interrelated positions and functions would concern officials and executives, elected representatives, members, volunteers, and activists. It might also concern donors as well as recipients of what an organization actually accomplishes.

2.2.1 Positioned Practices and Causal Powers

While cultural conditions and the features of social structures may precondition or enable the way people perceive, act, and interact within social collectives, they are also

relational in the sense that they interconnect people into specific and fairly stable patterns. What above all brings stability to these patterns stems from the fact that they entail certain prescribed positions, practices and specific power resources, which tend to guarantee a certain amount of internal sluggishness among organizational actors in response to changes of the already established, honored and privileged (Fleetwood 2004). Consequently, being part of an organization and its relational matrix implies occupying certain slots or positions. This means that when a person enters and becomes part of an organizational frame he/she will occupy unique, pre-defined, and interrelated positions or roles, such as administrator, manager, elected representative, voluntary worker or, of course, member. These and other similar positions tend to come with both particular sets of functions and typical behaviours. Or, as they also can be called – positioned practices (ibid.).

This could, for example, mean that if I formally apply for a membership with the Swedish Red Cross, I will first of all be asked to pay an annual fee upon entrance, and later on probably also be asked to further support the organization through donations or other types of contributions. From time to time, I might also be asked to sign a petition in support of something the organization works for or protest against. I might even be offered the possibility to get involved further in the internal life of the organization, for example by committing myself to do voluntary work or to participate as a responsible, voting member in an internal decision-making process.

Whether we are aware of it or not, this implies that a specific relation has been established between the ones working for and representing the organization, and myself as a member. And, this relation brings about expectations, rights, and duties regarding my own behaviour as well as that of others.

Moreover, even if I would be removed from an organizational position that I occupy, this does not necessarily imply that the position itself or its related practices would vanish. Fleetwood (2004: 45) states that this should not be misunderstood in terms of the "death of the subject'" or any other predetermining negation of agency. Instead, he asserts, that even if we change former practices or invent more or less new ones, the 'new' generally can not be too different or deviating from the 'old' in order to be accepted and established. For example, while a leader in the Social Democratic Party in Sweden might be free or even encouraged to invent practices aimed at attracting new members, it would probably fall short if the invented practice would cause effects that fundamentally went against the basic assumptions and norms dominating the organization. Thus, while it might be perceived as odd or maybe even wrong to treat members of a political party as if they were regular customers acting on a market, the same may be generally accepted or even expected within a context of a consumer co-operative.

It is in relation to this that causal powers, which are what constrain or facilitate agency, should be understood. Just as social objects entail a potential to cause some specific effects but not others, so do also social relations that bind people's structural positions together. This means that when we join an organization we come to occupy specific positions through which we have the capacity and potential to do certain things, but not others. In short, by affiliating with an organization we tend to become endowed with certain causal powers. These powers do not reside with us *per se*, but

with the specific way in which we hereby become positioned and related to others. Or, one could say that the causal power referred to here *"/…/ lies in the entire web of relations, not in the particular individual or component"* (Fleetwood 2004: 46.). Still, this does not necessarily mean that everyone continually exercises or actualizes whatever powers their role and position may be associated with. It just implies that we are empowered to potentially do things.

2.3 Implications for the Study

What kind of relevance do these ontological and epistemological claims have for the present study? One aspect of it is tightly connected to the position and function of the people I have interviewed. Individual membership, in contrast to parallel social relations, such as citizenship or employment, receives little or no official regulation through Swedish law or most organizational bylaws (see Hemström 2000b and chapter 1). A direct consequence of this is that the meaning of individual membership largely becomes a question of people's perception. With reference to earlier discussions in this chapter, occupying a leader position in an organization could be assumed to imply the potential capacity to influence and cause effects. This is also why I have decided to interview people at top-ranked positions in membership-based organizations, since their perceptions could be expected to have a more profound impact of things than most other single person's (for more see chapter 6). Thus, to include the perception of organizational leaders' in a study such as the present one is a crucial aspect to understand how individual membership receives meaning.

Furthermore, it is important to consider what specific member roles and functions these leaders attribute to individual membership. This is especially relevant since the meaning of members' affiliation with organizations is subject to interpretation, and therefore constantly (re)produced and/or transformed.

Additionally, it is here also assumed that the way in which individual membership is perceived tends to be closely connected to the unique character and development of the actual organizational context *and* to whole sets of beliefs, norms, values, and praxis that are spread and shared in the wider societal environment in which each organization is embedded. This is also why the subsequent chapter is devoted to what I claim to be a typical Swedish or Scandinavian outlook on civil society, and also as why chapter 4 problematizes the specific federative organizations that this study includes, and why chapter 7 consists of more detailed descriptions of the same organizations.

Finally, it needs to be stated that I make no claim to have uncovered the final truth or meaning regarding individual membership. Nevertheless, this is a study that hopefully contributes to our knowledge of this specific relation between members and their organizations.

3. The *Folkrörelse* Tradition

The primary aim of this chapter is to offer an account of one of the more pronounced and decisive aspects of Swedish civil society. The discussion below centers on the idea of *folkrörelse* (plural *folkrörelser*), and how it has become what I would call the archetypical way in which to address issues, problems, and organizational phenomena in relation to Swedish civil society. In fact, the position of the notion of *folkrörelse* in Sweden seems to be so well-institutionalized that it has even been resembled with a *"holy conceptual cow"* (Wijkström and Einarsson 2006:26, my translation).

From this I would like to argue that *folkrörelse* today is a unifying idea and tradition for a whole system of both coherent and contradictory values, norms, beliefs, and practices that together form a cultural backdrop for Swedish civil society in general and individual membership in particular. Thus, my hope is that the following will clarify that it is difficult, not to say impossible to approach and make sense of membership in Sweden without some basic knowledge of *folkrörelse*.

3.1 Different Civil Society Frameworks

Due to comparative research, such as the *Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project* (cf. Salamon and Anheier 1997; Anheier and Salamon 1998), it is nowadays known that interesting and intriguing patterns as well as substantial local and regional differences exist between the various civil society contexts around our globe.

It thus seems plausible to argue that social, political, religious, and economic developments within nations and regions may create larger civil society frames, which influence and shape everything from, for example, legal and rights systems to norms for how to organize and behave appropriately. However, these frameworks seem to operate, not only at a more systemic-like level, but also as a sort of cognitive scripts at a more disaggregated, cognitive level, on which they affect individuals' perception of what values, norms, and practices to deem legitimate and 'thinkable' (Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001; Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004).

For instance, within a liberal welfare regime such as contemporary U.S. (Esping-Andersen 1990), it is probably quite difficult to depict a civil society context without considering the idea and praxis related to charity or non-profit activities. In fact, in a contemporary North American civil society context this seems to be leading ideals in everything from media discourses and public policies to scholarly theory and descriptions of how things not only are, but also how they ought to be. It might even be possible to assert that the notion of non-profit, despite the fact that it only has been applied since the 1960s (Dobkin-Hall 1999; Skocpol 2003), either already is or that it is

well on its way of becoming an essential part of a dominant civil society framework in the U.S.

Correspondingly, it seems possible to state that the strong and dominating emphasis on what might be labeled a charity and voluntary tradition add a certain distinctiveness to both Irish and British civil society respectively (Donoghue 1998; Kendall 2003). Furthermore and without going into any details, one could also add that while the idea of a *dritte sector* seems to dominate in Germany, French civil society context appears contrastingly marked by a framework with deep roots in a social economy paradigm (Archambault 1996). And, while the so-called 'pillararization process' often is held forth as a central idea for how civil society has evolved in the Netherlands (Veldheer and Burger 1999; Burger and Dekker 2001), a similar argument could be made with reference to *folkrörelse* and Sweden (Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004).

Thus, in the sections that follow I will discuss how *folkrörelse* has been, and still largely is, approached in above all two ways. The first approach concerns how the concept of *folkrörelse* is often applied as a core element in the grand narrative of how Sweden, from the late 19th century, evolved into a modern nation state. Accordingly, *folkrörelse* has been frequently attended to in Swedish media, politics, and academia since the first half of the 20th century. Yet, despite all this attention and although several classifications have been attempted (cf. Thörnberg 1943; Heckscher 1951; Johansson 1980), there is still not one generally accepted definition of what it supposedly encompasses theoretically or empirically (cf. SOU 2007: 66).

The second way in which *folkrörelse* seems to be approached, which also might explain its continuously ambiguous character, is as a generic and assembling notion for several huge and complex organizational contexts and events. And, as such I would state that it has become more of an empirically important and effective discursive resource than a theoretically sound concept. Thus, from my viewpoint, *folkrörelse* serves political agendas much better than it serves scholarly analyses.

Additionally, the more than century-long use of this term seems not only to have made it widely embraced and honored, but also into a seemingly taken for granted way in which to address civil society related issues and phenomena in Sweden. For example, say *folkrörelse* and membership in the same sentence and most Swedes will probably just nod affirmatively at you. It is along these lines that I believe *folkrörelse* encloses what I would like to label a dominant cultural framework not only in relation to individual membership, but also for contemporary Swedish civil society as a whole. Thus, when it comes to civil society one might say that the idea of *folkrörelse* is just as difficult to avoid in Sweden, as it is to avoid the concept of non-profit in the U.S.

3.1.1 Lost in Translation

Before continuing, a few words are called for regarding my refusal to translate *folkrörelse* in this text. When *folkrörelse* is mentioned and discussed in English, it is often translated literally into "popular [*folk]* movement [*rörelse*]". Sometimes it is also translated into "popular mass movement" in order to indicate that the 'movement' one is talking about includes many people. Another well-liked way of referring to *folkrörelse*

in English, especially among scholars, is to replace it with the much more theoretical concept social movement.

I do not object to any of these English versions, except from the fact that vital parts might get lost in the mere process of translating. "Popular movement" or any other English paraphrase of *folkrörelse* does not, at least not in my mind, mediate the same aura or *geist* (to use a another non-English word). Instead, what these translations do is that they tend to lead to an unnecessary neutralization and downgrading of the otherwise charged, values-rich, and well-institutionalized original. Moreover, replacing *folkrörelse* with the theoretical concept social movement is also unfortunate, since it gives it a theoretical status it simply does not deserve (see above). Even if the Anglo-American social movement also implies empirical connotations, it is in my view above all a firmly grounded theoretical concept (cf. Tarrow 1994; McAdam *et al.* 1996; McAdam and Snow 1997; Snow *et al.* 2004; Davis *et al.* 2005). Thus, to substitute *folkrörelse* with theoretical concepts would only produce even more ambiguity and confusion, not the least because what *is* hereby may easily transform into more normative perceptions of what *should* be, which in its turn also may hide what *might* be. For these reasons alone I have decided to use *folkrörelse* throughout the text, which I believe gives me better chances of steering clear of unfortunate and preventable misunderstandings.

3.2 *Folkrörelse* and the Grand Narrative of Swedish (Civil) Society

There is a rich and rather homogenous literature on the topic of how Sweden went from being a traditional, authoritarian, and rural society to an industrialized, democratized, and modern welfare state. However, in order to depict the part *folkrörelse* has been given in this transition without embarking upon a too detailed historical analysis, I will here go only a few centimeters deep into the many running meters of books covering this area.

The origin of *folkrörelse* seems to be forever related to the fundamental and sometimes turbulent societal changes that took place in Sweden between 1850 and 1940 (cf. Thörnberg 1943; Lundkvist 1977; Micheletti 1995; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Trägårdh 2007c). This era could be described as both distinctive and formative for what from around 1950 and onwards would develop into the modern Swedish welfare state that we know today. Or as Jeppsson-Grassman and Svedberg (2007:130) put it: *"/…/ the modern history of Sweden is viewed as 'a history of popular mass movements'* [i.e. *folkrörelser*]. *This tradition, with its wide range of popular organizations demanding the broad involvement of the people, has been a source for great pride in Sweden and has shown by international comparison to be unique in character".*

As in most Western countries, the later half of the 19th century implied the start of fundamental transitions within Swedish society. Triggered by an increased population, an escalating industrialization, and both geographical and social mobility, Sweden began to transform from being a traditional and rural society, in which people's loyalties, solidarities, and sense of belonging above all followed vertical social lines towards a modern class-based nation state, where loyalties and solidarity were more horizontal (Lundkvist 1977). One could also say that what basically happened in this period was

that resources gradually were shifted and spread out from a smaller and privileged societal elite onto broader social groups. But, this transformation was not without its problem. As Lundkvist puts it: *"Individual resources were transformed into collective goals, while the established society counter-mobilized"* (ibid:228, my translation).

Confronted with such things as a new land reform that permitted a systematic parceling out of land (Jansson 1985; Micheletti 1995), and a never before seen increase in population, which augmented from around 3,5 million in 1850 to just short of 6 million people in 1920 (Johansson 1980), many Swedes were forced to move around in search of new ways to support themselves. Consequently, a growing number of people moved temporarily or permanently to new and more densely populated regions and to some extent also to the larger and fast expanding urban areas. In the 1850s only one out of ten Swedes lived in larger cities. In 1920 that number had tripled (Lundkvist 1977). The main attraction of these places was the work that was offered in the iron works, sawmills and all the other emerging small-scale industries. These events lead to a slow but general change in occupational structures: a growing number of people was proletarianized but, although the two often concurred, not necessarily pauperized (Jansson 1985).

Another characteristic feature of this period was emigration. It has been estimated that about one million Swedes left the country between 1850 and 1920 (Johansson 1980). The great majority went to the U.S. This exodus affected the Swedish society profoundly not only because of all the people who left, but also in terms of the ideas and foreign influences that came back, either with the 15 percent or so who returned or it seeped back in letters from those who emigrated but stayed in contact with friends and relatives in Sweden (cf. Lundkvist 1977; Lundström and Wijkström 1997).

An important explanation behind this flow of ideas and influences is literacy, which increased considerably in Sweden from around the mid 19th century. A law on compulsory school attendance was passed already in 1842, and that soon implied that far more than just people from the highest social strata learnt to read and write (Lundkvist 1977). Another aspect of this transatlantic exchange is that it, together with other international influences that reached Sweden in those days, appears to have been an important drive for how the pre-modern Swedish associational life (cf. Jansson 1985) evolved into something that soon would be understood as *folkrörelse* (Johansson 1980).

Even if the social situation improved for many people during this period, the radical societal shifts that took place also forced numerous people into new settings and situations where rootlessness and misery was an everyday reality. The transition from a reactionary agrarian society, built on individual privileges, to a modern and industrialized welfare state associated with social cohesion, solidarity, equal rights, and democracy is often described as anything but straightforward. These early days of what was to become is often described as being filled with social tensions and conflicts, and some even characterize this period as a political tug of war (Micheletti 1995).

One of the things that seems to have marked a dividing line between the 'old' and the 'new' here was the struggle for equal rights and a more democratic society, which apparently provoked strong feelings and antagonism (ibid: see also Premfors 2003). It was not until universal and equal suffrage was introduced in the beginning of the 1920s that the Swedish society became modern in a more political sense of the word.

3.2.1 A Flourishing Civil Society in the Era of Membership-based Associations

It has been argued that these turbulent and changeable times caused an increased atomization in society, which together with a widespread feeling of social insecurity assumingly made people look for others with similar experiences and ideas in order to create and renew a sense of community and belonging. This is at least how the increased will among Swedes to affiliate with all kinds of associational endeavors during the 19th and 20th century is often explained (cf. Micheletti 1995).

Around 1900, about one in ten Swedes were involved in associational life through a formal membership in at least one civil society association. Less than a century later, that ratio is the exact opposite. Since the late 1970s and onwards Sweden has had a stable affiliation rate of around 90 percent, which means that today only one in ten Swedes does *not* maintain any formal membership with an association (Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Vogel *et al.* 2003; Amnå 2007). Thus, in parallel with the development of a future welfare state during the late 19th, and early 20th century it appears possible to conclude that Sweden's civil society also began to flourish. As I have already hinted at, this is also where the idea of *folkrörelse* enters the picture. The narrative of the emergent modern Swedish society tends to ideally include *folkrörelse* as a descriptive umbrella term for some of the larger and enduring societal currents and membership-based associations that appeared and thrived both in Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries around 1850 and onwards (cf. Thörnberg 1943; Lundkvist 1977; Johansson 1980; Klausen and Selle 1996; Sivesind *et al.* 2002).

Different Epochs, Different Folkrörelser

The epoch between the 1850s and the 1920s is often put forth as a breakthrough for modern civil society in Sweden in general, and for its associational life in particular (cf. Lundström and Svedberg 2003; Amnå 2007). Not without a certain sense of nostalgia, it has been labeled the *"golden years of Swedish collective action"* (Micheletti 1995:180), and one typically describes how Free Churches together with temperance societies and the labor movement established themselves in Sweden in this period. These three, large collective action initiatives, often class-based, and with multifaceted ideologies (Amnå 2007) and utopian-like belief systems intending to challenge prevalent social ideas and conditions, constitute what often is referred to as the 'classics' among *folkrörelser*.

Moreover, this 'golden age' is habitually also depicted as the first of several *folkrörelse* waves, which, from around mid 19th century up until our time. While some see only a few, others talk of several such 'waves' (cf. Lundkvist 1977; Micheletti 1995; Bäck and Möller 2003, see also Sivesind *et al.* 2002 for the Norwegian case).

No matter how many waves there have been, a common feature is that each wave is given its specific explanation for how and why new *folkrörelser* emerge, and for why former ones either increased in size or stagnated. As stated above, the first wave occurred between 1850 and 1920/1930, and apart from the three 'classics' mentioned above, the later part of this period is also said to have seen the genesis of *folkrörelse*r within consumer cooperation, adult education, and sports (cf. Johansson 1980; SOU 2007: 66).

While some *folkrörelser* are said to stagnate and decline in relation to later waves, others would at the same time be said to experience growth and expansion. For example, whereas many Free Churches, temperance societies, and lodges began to dwindle and lose ground early on, associations and clubs in areas such as labor market and sports flourished and proliferated during most parts of the 20th century (cf. Johansson 1985, Micheletti 1995). Continuously, several new *folkrörelser* were added to the existing repertoire. The era from 1950s and onwards is often described as containing the birth of *folkrörelser* such as the women's lib, environment, peace, handicap, and client movement respectively (Lundström and Wijkström 1997).

Here I would like to add that I find the role *folkrörelse* is ascribed in this Swedish transition from an agrarian and traditional society to a full-blown industrialized nation state, to be a bit vague. The reason for this is that while *folkrörelser* in some accounts are described as forerunners of this shift (cf. Lundkvist 1977), they are elsewhere, such as in the example below, portrayed as the offspring of an emergent industrial society:

> In parallel to and in the wake of the evolving industrialized society, the modern party system together with the idea-ridden and original *folkrörelser* emerged and broke through as organized mass movements on a wide front. /…/ It is therefore possible to assume that the new political parties and *folkrörelser* were so dependent on the industrialized society that it is doubtful whether they could have existed without it (Axelson and Pettersson 1992:179-80, my translation).

Inclusion in the Rhetoric of Swedish Social Democracy

The citation above also suggests that the formation of modern political parties in Sweden is closely associated with the process through which the idea of *folkrörelse* has become established and institutionalized. Thus, one of the more decisive reasons for why *folkrörelse* has preserved its much-honored position in Sweden is that the notion early on became associated with the labor movement and then also with the overall societal vision of the Social Democratic Party, a party that came to dominate Swedish politics for most of the 20th century.

Even if the Social Democratic Party formed part of different minority governments already in early 1920s, it was not until the general elections in 1932 that it won its own majority position (cf. Elvander 1980). At that time, though, no one knew that the social democrats would have seven decades almost to themselves in which to realize the welfare state they envisioned as *Folkhemmet* [the People's Home] – a concept that later on would earn international recognition as the 'Swedish model' (cf. Micheletti 1995; Trägårdh 2007b). In my view, the key to the Social Democratic Party's association with and near-adoption of *folkrörelse* is to be found here, and in language; in the common Swedish prefix *folk* [to be compared with the German *volk*].

The Swedish historian Trägårdh, who has written extensively on the development of both the Swedish welfare state and civil society (cf. Trägårdh 1990; Aronsson and Trägårdh 1995; Trägårdh 2002; Berggren and Trägårdh 2006), argues that the potency of the Swedish *folk*, as applied in *folkhem*, *folkrörelse* and other similar words, derives from the fortunate unification of two concepts of 'the people' – i.e. demos and ethnos (Trägårdh 2007c:27). He asserts that this seems to have paved the way for more

stereotypical descriptions of Swedes as an essentially freedom loving people: they have *"/…/ 'democracy in their blood', as Social Democrats put it in the 1920s and 30s"* (ibid.). Along this thread, he also argues that it was common among Social Democrats in those days to convey the image of an unbroken line from ancient and legendary Swedish peasant leaders to the more modern movement related to *folkrörelser* (Trägårdh 2007b). The reason why this kind of reasoning evolved in relation to the Social Democratic Party in the 1920s and 30s was probably that *folkrörelse*, by that time, had evolved into a much sought for organizational identity.

Micheletti (1995), a Swedish political scientist, discusses how Swedish social democracy incorporated the word *folk* early on into its rhetoric. She states that by associating *folk* with issues such as social responsibility and solidarity, as well as equality among social groups, made it possible to realize the social democratic vision of a modern democratic welfare state – the *folkhem*. She adds that a more general acceptance of both *folk* and the idea of a common People's Home *"/…/ allowed for the integration of political democracy, the people, social democracy and social movements* [i.e. *folkrörelser*]*"*. She concludes that *folk* also became a firmly rooted perception in Swedish mentality (ibid:62), which, I would add, seems particularly true with respect to *folkrörelse*.

An important aspect of this institutionalization process seems to be that during the decades that followed upon World War II, a specific relation on one hand developed between civil society and many of the professed *folkrörelser* and on the other the Swedish Welfare state with the Social Democratic Party at the rudder (Lundström and Svedberg 2003). It has been argued that many of the *folkrörelser* that emerged during the 20th century gradually became allied with what they originally had challenged. Some even claim that this development implies that almost all contemporary *folkrörelser* have lost parts of their former role and character as representing an avant-garde, struggling for new and alternative societal orders (cf. Lundkvist 1977; Micheletti 1995).

The Road to Corporatism

A frequent explanation of why these so-called *folkrörelser* came to occupy a position as allies to the Swedish State generally departs from a seemingly well-developed mutual understanding and co-operation called corporatism (cf. Heckscher 1944; Heckscher 1951; Rothstein 1987; Pestoff 1991; Rothstein 1991; Lewin 1992; Rothstein 1992; Rothstein and Trägårdh 2007). This means that while these large collective endeavors, labeled *folkrörelser,* are assumed to above all fulfill a function as pressure or lobby groups in society, the State and its authorities make use of *folkrörelser* both in order to formulate and execute its policies and decrees. Micheletti (1995:72) elegantly captures this mutual bond between Swedish civil society organizations and the State in the following lines:

> It became a Swedish practice for government and collective action organizations [i.e. *folkrörelser*] to meet and solve political problems in a pragmatic, quiet way. Another name for this dialogue between the state and interest organizations [i.e. *folkrörelser*] is corporatism. It is institutionalization and legitimization of the role of collective action organizations in the political process.

A parallel development to corporatism is state interventions, or takeovers. On par with the implementation of social policies and reforms in Sweden during the 20th century – such as child care benefits and old age care, a universal pension system, social and health care insurances – the Swedish State has also taken over societal functions that have formerly been executed by civil society organizations. The argument promoting these events was that certain welfare tasks that could be viewed as highly important for an equal treatment of and welfare provision to citizens should be guaranteed by their State and its authorities (cf. Lundström and Wijkström 1997: chapter 3).

A result of what happened during the post-war era was that the advocacy or 'voice' function of many Swedish civil society institutions got promoted. This was mainly made possible by a generous subsidy system, through which substantial public resources have been and still are designated to promote social integration and democratic training of Swedish citizens (Wijkström *et al.* 2004). In addition, a frequently expressed notion of *folkrörelse* is to be a 'school for democracy', where democratic principles and patterns of behaviour should be learned and trained to the greater advantage for the entire society (cf. Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Amnå 2007).

Another emerging trend in relation to the above-stated is an escalating presence of formal contracts through which Swedish State authorities invite civil society to produce and deliver certain welfare services in exchange for money (cf. Wijkström *et al.* 2004; Johansson 2005a, b). For example, in 2007, a year after the Swedish right-wing government had ascended to power, it announced that it, within the frame of what is called *folkrörelse* politics [*folkrörelsepolitik*], should concentrate on how to expand the involvement of civil society in the production and delivery of welfare services to the general public. In a press release, issued by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality on the 6th of September 2007, it was declared that representatives from civil society organizations had been invited to discuss how they *"/…/ could be developed as producers and suppliers of different forms of welfare services to the general public,"* and how these organizations *"/…/ in parallel to being producers and actors on a market, will be able to continue to create public opinion and maintain their advocacy functions"* (my translation).

3.3 What does *Folkrörelse* stand for?

As stated earlier, the notion of *folkrörelse* still lacks an exact definition. This has convinced me that it is better to view *folkrörelse* as being highly subjective, values-rich, and to some extent also as a politically contested notion rather than an analytically sound concept. This means there are probably quite few Swedish politicians, journalists, or researchers who would not claim that their view on *folkrörelse* and any empirical reality it depicts is the correct version.

After *folkrörelse* had been associated with the Social Democratic Party's rhetoric in the 1930s, it did not take long before it also ended up on the scholarly agenda. At times, it seems to have been so popular a focus within the limited field of civil society studies that an unofficial subfield developed: *folkrörelse* research [*folkrörelseforskning*]. Below, I will supply a small selection of examples of how scholars have approached and tried to define *folkrörelse* and the empirical reality it is believed to encompass.

One of the pioneers in this area is the sociologist Thörnberg, who, in his lectures in the 1940s and 1950s, apparently used to state that he first encountered the term via a young man who claimed affiliation with one large *folkrörelse* (this anecdote is mentioned in Johansson 1980). In his own writings, Thörnberg elaborates upon a broad characterization of the social groupings of people that *"we summon as folkrörelser"* (1943:7-8, my translation). His definition could be summarized as large, organized efforts in relation to specific values, such as religious, economical, political, and moral dittos, that tend to generate attitudes that bring about actions oriented toward a certain situation or condition (ibid.).

In another text, a year later, the political scientist Heckscher (1944) asserted that the real nature of *folkrörelse* must be searched for in every characterizing spirit that marks the art and motives for the specific demands of solidarity raised by each and every specific *folkrörelse*. He adds that the term signifies altruistic as well as interest-based organizations, and that in order to qualify as true, it must have a broad nationwide representation, and be democratically governed by its cadre of affiliated members.

Another *folkrörelse* researcher is Johansson, who has written extensively and been frequently cited on this topic (here I only refer to Johansson 1980). His definition of *folkrörelse* refers to organizations that, over a period of several years manage to attract and on voluntary grounds affiliate large numbers of people from widely separated parts of a country and around specific and in-common ideas and interests. He also states that, in order to qualify as a *folkrörelse*, it needs to involve democratic structures and functions; build on the activity of rank and file members in local associations; promote of ideas and values-rich programs both for individuals and for society at large; and comprise community groups where camaraderie, equality, self-assertion, emancipation, and a fighting spirit are always present. He also claims that *folkrörelser* should occupy a free and independent position in relation to the State.

One of the most cited researchers in this field is the historian Lundkvist, who claims that *folkrörelser* by no means are unique for Sweden or Scandinavia. He draws this conclusion from his own observation of many foreign social movements and civil society organizations demonstrating a number of characteristics that strongly remind of the Swedish case (1977:25). Thus, he claims, the typical structures and functions associated with *folkrörelse* requires that its empirical examples should best be problematized with reference to more traditional organizational theory (ibid:216). In 1981, almost four decades after the first attempts, the authors of a government report (Statensungdomsråd 1981) suggest that a *folkrörelse* is distinguished by the following characteristics:

– Promotion of an ideology
– Opposition to, while creating public opinion for shortcomings in society
– Affiliation of a certain amount of members, equaling a large portion of the population
– Nationwide representation through a structure of local associations
– Open to everyone who wants to affiliate as member
– Works democratically
– Independent and self governed vis-à-vis State authorities and municipalities
– Includes an ideologically and values-rich community that promotes internal cohesion
– Continuity over time

This classification has since then appeared both in the handling and stipulation of state subsidies to *folkrörelser* (Wijkström *et al.* 2004), and in several government commissions (cf. SOU 1987:33, 1992:130, 1993:71). A government commission of a later date (SOU 2001:1, see also SOU 2007:66), emphasize that *folkrörelse* implies:

> /…/ large and well-structured organizations that are represented both at a local, regional, and national level in society. The organizations are hierarchical and governed in accordance to representative democracy's principle of one individual member/member association, one vote. In addition, they should also have a lasting character and be driven by an ambition to change society (my translation).

The next example concerns not such much believed inner qualities of *folkrörelse*, but more a concrete view of what kind of 'large and well-structured organizations' some believe it to encompass. This taxonomy has been suggested by Engberg (1986, my translation), who construes *folkrörelse* as involving four larger categories of movements, which, in their turn, include a number of different types of organizations:

Movements of labor – where professional position defines which organization one belongs to. Typical organizations are e.g. trade unions and employers associations.
Movements of identity – where categories such as gender, ethnicity, handicap, social class, age, etc., are guiding ideals and principles. Typical organizations are e.g. tenants' associations, handicap, and women's lib organizations.
Movements of interaction – where things like spirit of community and individual achievements works as common denominators. Typical organizations are e.g. sports, leisure, and hobby organizations.
Movements of ideology – where norms, values, attitudes and personal convictions among affiliates define and promote togetherness. Typical organizations are e.g. congregations, temperance, and peace organizations.

The last example I will display involves a specific emphasis on the role of membership. The citation below comes from Ahrne and Papakostas (2002:155), who establish a link between what they call membership organizations and the idea of *folkrörelse* by stating some of the more decisive features of this particular type of organization. Note that they write in past tense since this passage comes from a discussion where they argue that parts of what traditionally has been related to *folkrörelse* currently are changing.

> /…/ the obvious and mutual dependencies that have evolved between organizations and the affiliated member. /…/ The membership organizations should mobilize many people and their limited resources, and was as such a work intensive organization. Membership organizations have been marked by agitation and meticulous member registers, and member meetings and membership fees have constituted central features. All this forms typical characteristics of what has been labeled folkrörelserna in Sweden (my translation).

Even if no single and unambiguous definition may exist, it still seems possible, with reference to the above-mentioned (cf. Peterson *et al.* 1989; Jonsson 1995), to pinpoint a few repeated criteria of what *folkrörelse* is believed to be. It is often put forth that it concerns broadly based and democratically governed organizations that carry specific ideological messages. *Folkrörelse* also seems to imply a creation of opinion for a better

society and a simultaneous independence from government agencies. It also includes the offering of an open membership, and a possibility for affiliated and committed members to take an active part in the internal life of the organization.

Still, with all due respect to the kind of normative and performative definitions and classifications that have been attempted over the years in this area, as I see it, they can, never become more than rough estimations of, and orientations towards a much-varied empirical praxis. This is primarily underpinned by a fact the attentive reader probably has noticed already – there seems to exist a large portion of vagueness regarding what kind of empirical reality *folkrörelse* actually is believed to include.

3.3.1 Talking Movements while Looking at Organizations

From the definitions discussed above it is clear that *folkrörelse* denotes far more concrete, established, and even institutionalized organizational manifestations than what *rörelse* [movement or current] indicates. Without certain knowledge of earlier meanings, the concept of *folkrörelse* in Sweden today equals "organization", which also is noted by Wijkström and Lundström in their study of the Swedish non-profit sector (2002: 91f). However, it is not an indicator of just any sort of organization. Instead, one can say that it constitutes an exclusive qualifier of huge complexes of mostly separate legal entities, associations, which tend to be formalized and hierarchically interconnected through different federative constructs (cf. Lundström and Wijkström 1997). In the same vein, some claim that the concept has become synonymous with large and highly formalized Swedish civil society associations that for a long time have undergone extensive processes of bureaucratization and professionalization (cf. Johansson 1980; Antman 1993; Ahrne and Papakostas 2002).

Apart from the scholarly examples displayed above, this link between *folkrörelse* and large, formalized, and well-institutionalized federations is also often emphasized in these organizations' self-portraits. For example, in a larger survey carried out among Swedish civil society organizations in 1993, almost 45% of the respondents claimed that the organization they represented was a *folkrörelse* (Lundström and Wijkström 1997:29). Another, more specific example, is the Swedish Red Cross that used to advertise for new staff in the 1990s by presenting itself along similar lines. One of the more common descriptions in those ads, stated that the Red Cross were 'the largest *folkrörelse* in the world' (Hvenmark 2000). Another illuminating example surfaced in one of the interviews that were carried out for this study. In the following passage it can be noted how the interviewee struggles with pinpointing the organization he represents with reference to the idea of *folkrörelse*. And, while doing so he also manages to associate it with the kind of federative construct that it so often has come to denote empirically.

> /…/ we call ourselves the IOGT-NTO movement /…/ where movement in principle becomes synonymous with organization or a group of organizations since we are several different and independent organizations that co-operates through something we understand as a larger organization /…/ **Is this what you referred to when you earlier said 'classic *folkrörelse* structure'? Is that a mosaic of different organizations?** Yes, together with the fact that our structure includes local associations, regional organizations, as well as a national and an international level. This is the same for almost all [larger Swedish civil society

> associations]. /…/ all our organizations are at the same time also part of what we then call the temperance movement. /…/ But, then it becomes more an issue of people's behaviour – not organization (ideologist, IOGT-NTO, 15-16).

3.3.2 A Rosy Tradition that 'Marinates' Swedish Civil Society

Research conducted on the Swedish *folkrörelse* has also received critique. A commonly heard objection is that some approaches lack a critical perspective and portray both the idea of *folkrörelse* and the reality it supposedly encompasses in a somewhat rosy and nostalgic shimmer (Blomdahl 1990). Micheletti (1995:181), for example, is harsh in her assessment of large parts of the scholarly work in this area, which she sees as being overly biased. She asserts that this has led to an exaggeratedly friendly and often glorifying attitude of everything that is associated with the label *folkrörelse* (see also Thörn 1997 for a similar critique of how the concept of social movement tends to be approached).

As shown above, when definitions of *folkrörelse* have been attempted they are often coupled with strongly positive words such as democracy, openness, collective action, community, commitment, solidarity, a broad popular anchorage, etc. Antman (1993:84, my translation) confronts the issue by saying: *"It [folkrörelse] smells of participation, active and committed people, protest and democracy – people in movement towards a certain goal. Various almost mythical code words seem to link this term to our political subconscious"*.

To be identified as *folkrörelse* seems also to be one of the more important official recognitions that Swedish civil society organization needs in order to be approved for and rendered access to different forms of state subsidies and government support (cf. Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004; Lundström and Svedberg 2003; Stryjan and Wijkström 1996). Similarly, this highly appreciated organizational label can also constitute an absolute necessity in order for civil society representatives to ever be invited to both informal and formal talks, dialogues and consultations that ministers and other important decision- and policy-makers may initiate (see section above). In short, for contemporary Swedish civil society organizations it seems decisive to both earn and preserve the label *folkrörelse*, since this could be a door-opener and key factor rendering access to important societal arenas and resources.

After more than a century, *folkrörelse* appears to also have become a default of thinking about and dealing with organizational matters and phenomena in Swedish civil society that today it appears natural to speak of it in terms of a distinctive praxis and a unique tradition. For example, in their analysis of what they call the Swedish non-profit sector, Lundström and Wijkström conclude: *"The popular mass movement tradition [folkrörelsetraditionen] is of major importance both for the structure of the sector and its internal affairs. The latter involve what might be labeled the 'culture of the sector', the way things are done and the ethos and procedures of its organizations"* (1997:104).

Lundström and Svedberg (2003) also discusses the *folkrörelse* tradition as an important cultural aspect for how activities in what they prefer to call the Swedish voluntary sector are perceived, organized, and assessed.

> A factor already mentioned is the Swedish *tradition of popular mass movements* [*folkrörelsetraditionen*]. The influence of this is obvious, not least in the fact that the Swedish voluntary sector in terms of composition is so totally dominated by membership organizations, where member activities and the importance of the movement for democracy are values often stressed, and where the measure of success and influence is a large body of members and widespread participation. It is also worth pointing out that this is the type of organization that has consistently been encouraged by State policy and the system of subsidies and, correspondingly, organizations structured along other lines have been viewed with deep suspicion. This is true, for example, of *Greenpeace*, which, compared to our ideal picture of the Scandinavian popular mass movement, is not based on a democratic structure (ibid:224).

Jeppsson Grassman and Svedberg (2007) state, along a similar thread, that one of the major findings in their research regarding Swedish civil society is that its scope and character seems highly stable. They explain that with reference to a dominating *folkrörelse* tradition that imposes certain conventions and orthodoxies that apparently counterweight hasty fluctuations in society in general at the same as it dictate the direction and shape of civil society in particular. However, before reaching these conclusions, they cannot avoid adding a bit of nostalgia over past times and the customs and conventions related to *folkrörelse* (ibid:131):

> This tradition, with its wide range or popular organizations [*folkrörelser*] demanding the broad involvement of the people, has been a source of great pride in Sweden and has shown by international comparison to be unique in character.

From what I have shown so far, it may be argued that the idea of *folkrörelse*, deliberately or not, has become synonymous with a limited range of organizational practices within Swedish civil society. Accordingly, *folkrörelse* constitutes perhaps the most significant way in which the contemporary associational life in Sweden is referred to and made sense of. In this respect, it is almost as if a vague idea and a complex praxis have merged into a normative whole dictating how civil society related issues and phenomena *ought* to be organized.

This normative whole implies both limitations and advantages. While the various approaches may induce theoretical ambiguity into the idea of *folkrörelse,* they may, at the same time, have empirical value for studies such as the present one. Although the notion of *folkrörelse* may not be theoretically sound, it is a highly interesting and relevant empirical phenomenon in itself. Thus, instead of viewing it as a clear-cut conceptual tool, I prefer to view it as a dynamic, highly endorsed and widely used ideal, and discursive resource employed to serve specific interests.

All in all, the idea of *folkrörelse* is so deeply institutionalized in the Swedish mentality that its presence and meaning are often taken for granted. Most contemporary understandings of Swedish civil society in general and its associational life in particular seem to be more or less 'marinated' by the idea of *folkrörelse* (Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004; Wijkström *et al.* 2004; Wijkström and Einarsson 2006). In relation to the present study, this means that this *folkrörelse* marinade constitutes an important cultural backdrop for the analysis of how individual membership is perceived.

4. Federative Organizations

From the previous chapter one may get the impression that *folkrörelse* is tantamount to single organizations. Yet, this is largely a misleading picture. Most Swedish organizations that are associated with *folkrörelse* appear to be complex constructs gathering everything from tens of thousands to several million individual members through a vast number of small or large independent but interconnected associations and other forms of organizations (cf. Einarsson 2007; Einarsson, S. 2008). The overall composition of these conglomerates could in most cases be described in accordance with the concept of federation.

The intention in this chapter is therefore to present my understanding of this particular type of organization. Accordingly, I will first account more broadly for earlier research regarding federative organizations in general before narrowing down the discussion to a more limited amount of approaches that specifically deal with membership-based and democratically governed federations. Towards the end of the chapter I also propose a model for how I prefer to further problematize this particular type of federation in relation to the present analysis of individual membership.

4.1 Approaching Federative Organization

It seems difficult to find exact numbers showing just how common these federative constructs are. The very few examples I have found in this respect do, unfortunately, not concern Sweden. In relation to a comprehensive historical research project on how U.S. civil society became modern, a process largely similar to the Swedish case, Skocpol *et al.* (2000) demonstrate that almost 80 percent of local associations in U.S. cities were nationally federated during the early 20th century. When Skocpol then summarizes this research project she uses an illuminating metaphor that describe the impact of these federations: *"/…/ as I talk about the origins and development of translocally federated voluntary associations, the reader can be sure that I am not talking about the icing on the U.S. associational cake but the cake itself"* (2003:30). In a more recent estimate, McCarthy (2005) calculates that at least 25 percent of what he calls local social movement organizations is affiliated with national federations in the U.S. today.

Klausen and Selle (1996:103) state that the civil society contexts in Scandinavian share an important similarity in that they do not have a dual organizational environment, where the local and the national levels are separated. Instead, their claim is that a majority of the larger civil society organizations in Scandinavia are represented at the local, regional as well as national levels, and that these different levels often are *"/…/ integrated into a hierarchical and nationwide organizational structure in which the local branch historically has been the core of the organizational society."*

The closest estimates I have found in relation to the Swedish case report on the amount of associations, without discriminating whether they are federated or not. For example, Lundström and Wijkström (1997) show that Sweden has roughly 23.000 middle-sized or large [20 or more employees] associations, and some 16.000 neo-cooperatives.[1] In an earlier study, (Wijkström *et al.* 1995, referred to in Lundström and Wijkström 1997) it is estimated that Sweden also has close to 60.000 small, local and unregistered membership-based associations, but with no employees. The last figure is partly supported by a government commission report (SOU 1987:33, my translation), which states: *"About 50.000 associations with an unknown number of members exist outside the national organizations* [i.e. national federations]. *These include joint ownerships, most of the country's house-owner associations, and numerous local associations created for one specific reason"*.

Yet, even if exact numbers of existing federative organizations in general and in Sweden in particular may be hard to come over, it appears wrong to doubt their presence and impact in society. For example, in a follow-up to their statistical mapping of Swedish civil society, Wijkström and Lundström state that: *"There is a large number of associations in Sweden, and we find them engaged in almost all kinds of areas and activities. This is commonly referred to as the 'associational life'. And, it is also often different systems of associations in more or less complicated combinations that we refer to when we use terms such as folkrörelse, interest organizations, national organizations or federations. The great number of federations or different umbrella organizations is yet another typical aspect of Swedish civil society"* (2002:83, my translation). Thus, it seems possible to argue that although human collaboration may come about for various reasons and take many forms, the federative organization is still common and important (cf. Friedrich 1963; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; McCarthy 2005).

4.1.1 An Early Organizational Form

The federative organization appears to be one of the older, and maybe also one of the more complex, forms of human collaboration (for a 2.500 years historical overlook of federal ideas and related empirical phenomena see Davis 1978). This early organizational form can be described as an edifice existing somewhere between ideal-based and loosely coupled social networks and more institutionalized and hierarchical constructs, intended to effectively coordinate many dispersed local units (cf. Sjöstrand 1985; Swartz 1994; Sjöstrand 2001).

One early example of how small and dispersed associations joined forces and developed a hierarchical collaboration through a translocal federative form can be found in the first part of Webb and Webbs' *Industrial Democracy* (1897/1920). Here the authors analyze how the medieval guild system in England gradually transformed into an emerging and fast growing labor movement during the 19th century. The analysis includes descriptions of how small, patriarchal and geographically isolated crafts began to organize on a local level, and, later on, also to create translocal coverage on a regio-

[1] Neo-cooperatives refers to a variety of young, often small-scale, mixed service cooperatives, or cooperative-like organizations, active in the field of welfare service provision (cf. Wijkström 2004).

nal level before finally establishing themselves as nationally anchored federations. However, this process was often filled with problems. One of the difficulties had to do with size, because the larger and more complex the organizations became, the more complicated issues such as governance and economy also became. Webb and Webb's study clearly illustrates how the unification of many smaller organizational units may lead to not only an valuable pooling of resources and a larger societal impact, but also to an ever-increasing number of rank and file members in need of coordination and control. The often-applied governance principles of direct democracy, in combination with the geographical outspread of all the people and integrated fraternities within those emerging federative amalgamations, meant that large amounts of members had to be transferred back and forth whenever overall and important decisions had to be made. This soon led to almost insuperable problems, because this was not only costly, but also time-consuming, and slow. Webb and Webb also manage to exemplify how these federations' internal governance system facilitated a gradual centralization of power, which, they state, resulted in internal despotism and, in some cases, a crystallization of a ruling elite. To counteract some of these problems, the authors assert that a governance model based on representative instead of direct democracy gradually got adopted in the vast majority of those early-federated unions. They conclude that this change allowed both for an improved nation-wide representation and for the additional affiliation of many more tens of thousands of members (for a similar discussion on democracy in organizations, see e.g. Michels 1911/1959; Weber 1914/1968; Dahl 1998; Held 2002).

4.1.2 Federations in Diverse Settings

However, federative organizations have been discussed within many other settings as well. One example is what could be called supranational bodies or meta-organizations (Ahrne and Brunsson 2001), such as the European Union and the United Nations (see also Smith *et al.* 1997; Young *et al.* 1999; Smith 2005). A somewhat related area, which mostly attracts political scientists, is federalism in relation to nation states (Wheare 1964; Boschken 1982; Provan 1983). Larger corporate forms and conglomerations, such as multinational corporations, cartels, and financial groups are also being discussed with federative aspects in mind (cf. Drucker 1982; Sölvell 1991 cited in Swartz 1994; Handy 1992; O'Toole and Bennis 1992; Baucus and Baucus 1996; Bradach 1998; Williams 1999). Some scholars also prefer to discuss federative non-profit or social movement organizations in analogy with profit-driven franchise systems (cf. Young 1989; Oster 1996; McCarthy 2005).

At the expense of such approaches, the focus below is set on studies that primarily, but not exclusively, focus on civil society-related federations that comprise organizations on a local, regional, and national level; that have individual members as the smallest affiliated unit; and that have a governance apparatus formally based in democratic values, principles and practices. This is also why I label the federative organizations included in this study *membership-based* and *democratically governed*.

Collective Action and Federative Forms

Coming back to the area of civil society, federative structures have been widely applied and referred to in different disciplines in order to capture various kinds of large-scale solutions for collective action. Below follows a few examples (see also Knoke 1990; Tarrow 1994; Selsky 1998; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). Smith (2000), for example, mentions federations in relation to the frequency with which small and local grassroot organizations in the U.S. tend to be part of larger and federative national bodies. McCarthy and Zald (1977) refer to the federative term when defining specific complexes of social movement organizations, and Smith et al. (1997) in relation to transnational social movements and their structures (see also Smith 1998, 2005). Ostrom (1990) concludes that the formation of larger federative systems is a successful design principle for the survival of smaller organizations governing specific sets of common resources within certain areas or regions. Kanter (1972) discuss how smaller and less institutionalized utopian communities tend to take on the federative form as they grow and want to increase their political significance. Departing from Tönnies' (1887/2001) classical twin concept *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Kanter characterizes this development by saying: *"/…/ history suggests that the process by which large social systems are constructed out of small, intimate ones is the very process by which Gesellschaften (societies or complex organizations) are created out of Gemeinschaften (close, family-like communities)"* (1972:229, see also page 148-58). Stryjan (1989, 1994) discusses the federative form in relation to Israelian Kibbutzim and other types of cooperatives, or self-managed organizations, as he calls them. Apropos, it seems especially common among Scandinavian scholars to discuss the federative form in relation to cooperative organizations (cf. Utterström 1980; Jonnergård 1988; Røkholt 1990; Jonnergård 1993a, b; Svensson 1993; Volk 1993; Jonnergård 1994; Normark 1994; Søgaard 1994).

Empirical or Ideal-Type Approaches

Another way to sort scholarly approaches to federative organizations is to divide them into those that are empirically driven and focused on issues such as organizational design and operations (cf. Svensson 1983, 1993; Young *et al.* 1996; Selsky 1998; Young *et al.* 1999), and those that discuss and problematize federations in a more abstract and ideal type manner. The general point of departure in the latter case is that federations and their member associations are viewed as constructs existing somewhere in between a not so institutionalized ideal-type like market sphere and a more formalized and hierarchical organizational domain (cf. Daems 1983; Sjöstrand 1985).

In relation to the more empirically driven approach, Jonnergård (1993a, b) identifies two different versions. The first one, in which Provan (1983), for example, has recognized three distinct forms of federations, implies a primary attention to *inter*relations in networks of dispersed organizations. This means that the federation, from this perspective, is being conceptualized as just one out of several alternatives for how collaboration may come about within networks of organizations (see also Warren 1967; Whetten 1981; Oliver 1990; Selsky 1998).

The second version of the empirically driven approach departs from the establishment of more distinct and coherent boundaries around specific sets of organizations that together form an integrated or federated 'whole'. The analytical focus here is concentrated on *intra*organizational relations, that is, the reciprocal ties between the various organizational parts within these isolated federations. Consequently, the federation is here viewed and problematized as a distinctive and proper organizational form in which the member organizations deliberately chose to affiliate, share a common ideology, and collaborate on democratic grounds (cf. Svensson 1983; Jonnergård 1993a, b; Svensson 1993; Jonnergård 1994; Soegaard 1994; Swartz 1994).

4.1.3 Federations and the Law

Even if federations are present within most areas of our society it is a phenomenon that largely exists outside Swedish Civil Law. That is, there is no specific law prescribing when something is a federation, what it entails fiscally, or what forms of governance it requires. This means that federative organizations have to find and formulate proper bylaws with respect to issues such as form, how to cooperate, and how to arrange internal control and decision-making procedures (for an overview see Swartz 1994). Although, this does not imply that everything related to federations is completely unregulated in a juridical sense, but there is no specific unitary regulation for federations alone. Instead, what receives some attention in Swedish Associational Law in this respect concerns, for example, a federation's affiliated associations.

Two Forms of Associations

In legal terms, there are two main categories of associations in Sweden. The first type is *ideell förening* [*ideell* association, or approx. idea-based association], including everything from large federated trade union associations, with perhaps several hundred thousands individual members, down to smaller freestanding, sport or leisure associations and tiny Pentecostal congregations, with perhaps a dozen or so members. The second type is *ekonomisk förening* [economic association], which in practice equals the co-operatives. To separate these two types further one can apply the following principle: if an association, through economic activities, primarily promotes its members' economic interests it is by definition an economic association. If not, it should be regarded as an *ideell* association (cf. Hemström 2000b).

Without digging too deep into the legal situation regarding associations in Sweden, it deserves to be said that while the *ideell* association is the most common, it is only the economic association that is thoroughly defined by law. However, this does not imply that the *ideell* association goes unregulated, only that the juridical definition in part follow praxis, and in part the law of economic associations. This means that the law largely treats *ideell* associations analogous with the legislation of economic associations, unless the particular constitution of an ideell association prescribes something else (Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Hemström 2000a, b).

Thus, the following criteria, which have been developed both through legal praxis and doctrine, apply to both types (Hemström 2000b). Consequently, an association gains legal status when a number of juridical persons come together in order to cooperate for a common purpose under organized forms. The association then needs a board of directors and a constitution that states its name, purpose, basic structure, and prerequisites for its formal internal governance process. The law also advises that both types of associations should offer a membership that ought to be open to everyone, and apply an internal decision-making process that departs from democratic principles and practices. However, the following criteria is specific for economic associations: return on invested capital should be limited and the distribution of surplus should be based on what the members' buy from or delivers to the organization in question.

Although one of the organizations in this study entails economic associations, I will, unless called for, below not discriminate between these two types of associations For more on the legal aspects of associations in Sweden see Rodhe (1988) or Swartz (1994). For interesting comparisons, see the cooperative principles as they are presented in Craig *et al.* (1995) or by the International Co-operative Alliance (www.ica.coop).

4.2 Depicting Membership-based and Self-governed Federations

Etymologically, "federation" stems from the Latin noun *foedus*, indicating alliance, agreement, treaty, and union. "Federation" also carries tight connections to the Latin verb *foederare*, which means to amalgamate, affiliate, ally, unite, and join. It is also closely connected to the Latin word *fides*, which means faith, trust, and binding assurance (cf. Davis 1978; Sjöstrand 1985; Swartz 1994).

Just as in the case with the legal aspect, there is no single and unambiguous academic definition of "federation" to rely on (Provan 1983; Svensson 1993). However, because I see more convergence than deviation in many existing approaches, I apply what could be characterized as a rather eclectic attitude towards federative organizing, which the following section partly mirrors.[2]

One starting point is to say that federations could be characterized as ways to organize cooperation, coordination, and control within a larger framework of affiliated, but still independent and largely autonomous organizations. However, as Svensson (1983) points out, a federative organization does not really exist until the included member organizations create a mutually owned entity, often called the common or the central unit, with specific duties and responsibilities. This would indicate that the federative 'whole' *"/…/ includes both member organizations and a central organization"* (ibid:182) and that it is construed bottom-up. Empirically though, there are numerous federations that have been formed the other way around (cf. Skocpol 2003; Young 1999).

The above stated seems to concord more or less with other categorizations, one of which is Sjöstrand's (1985:210-23). With reference to observers such as Warren (1967),

[2] Many Scandinavian scholars interested in federative organizations write in their native languages, but since this thesis is authored in English, I have decided to exclude many of these non-english texts. Nevertheless, studies such as Forssell (1992) Holm (1984), Jonnergård (1988); Jonnergård *et al.* (1984); Nilsson (1990; 1991); Normark (1994); Søgaard (1990), and Volk (1993) would have been relevant for this disucssion.

Rath (1978), and Daems (1983), he concludes that federations and their member associations are the hierarchic answer to more asymmetric and less institutionalized movements and communities (cf. Kanter 1972:chapter 9; Sjöstrand 2001). Sjöstrand adds that federations could also be seen as amalgamations of social collectives that have federated because they share a sense of being better off collaborating while retaining a fundamental independence. He argues:

> /…/ a federation is constructed 'from beneath' of antonymous parts, which voluntarily choose to collaborate. The form is characterized by cooperation in certain areas (cooperative functions), while for other functions and activities, the members maintain total autonomy (Sjöstrand 1985:218, my translation).

Thus, one could say that certain federations comprise member organizations that cooperate where necessary, in order to remain independent where possible (cf. Søgaard 1994). Focusing on the central or common unit (henceforth called the common unit) and its specific role and functions in relation to the included member organizations, Svensson (1993) states that its mere existence is what in part also separates a federative organization from more loosely coupled coalitions and alliances. An argument that seems to echo of Provan (1983:79-80), who claims:

> What distinguishes a federation from most other linkage networks is the control and management of the activities of the network. /…/ In a federation /…/ affiliated organizations agree to relinquish control over certain activities to the federation's management. In return, affiliated organizations expect the federation's management to minimize the complexity of the linkage network and reduce environmental uncertainty.

An additional federative feature stressed by scholars is, for example, the existence of a dominant internal ideology, which is believed to infuse stability in structures and relations (cf. Svensson 1983, 1993). In short, this means that the more members and organizations share values and norms, the more unified they become and the better they cooperate. Often-mentioned key elements in such a shared value system are solidarity, independence, and a belief in the advantages of collaboration within the frames of a common federative structure (cf. Sjöstrand 1985).

Jonnergård (1993b) specifies this by saying that a shared value system within a federative organization generally is structured around norms and principles including the position and function of the common unit, the relationship between different member units, and the overall importance of being affiliated with the federated whole. She adds that this type of shared value system also has to involve a social memory, which includes common norms and values that establish and foster a belief in the idea that all included parts will be treated equally in the long run. In this respect, it is also necessary to have a unifying language in order to facilitate both communication and a mutual understanding between the included units.

4.2.1 Contractual Relations

With reference to this idea of a shared value system promoting cooperation *and* autonomy simultaneously, federative organization appears almost to be a contradiction in terms. Or, as Søgaard (1994:106) puts it: *"/…/ as an attempt to eat your cake and have it."*

This both-and aspect is also often identified as the reason for why federations are believed to imply built-in conflicts and tensions. Just because a federative organization may be rooted in a specific values-rich movement or community context does not necessarily spare it from containing diverging ideas and contradictory norms (cf. Sjöstrand 1985:220). That is, when forces are joined through a federative construct, it does not automatically imply homogeneity, cohesion, and harmony. The need to integrate and counteract large portions of uncertainty and tensions could be so fundamental that not even a common language or a shared value system might be enough. Thus, another way to deal with the potential conflicts and tensions that might exist in a federation is to establish more commonly accepted formal regulations and agreements – or as Jonnergård (1993a) calls them, *double binding contracts* (cf. Jonsson 1995).

Moreover, the specific relations that emerge from these kinds of formal contracts and ties are generally viewed as another fundamental aspect of a federative context. One important reason for this is that hierarchy and lines of authority in a federative organization can best be described as reversed in comparison to other, similarly large organizational conglomerates that has traditional top-down structures (Jonnergård 1993a). Thus, while the affiliated organizations in a federation could be seen as owners of the common unit, the main role and function of the latter is generally to coordinate the federation as a whole. From this, Sjöstrand (1985) argues that even if authority in a federative organization is chiefly distributed in accordance with voluntary but formal contractual agreements, which does not necessarily imply a more traditional dominance and subordination hierarchy. Instead, these contracts may just as well prescribe both a reversed hierarchy and also a heterarchy (ibid:214).

To summarize, the establishment of formal contractual relations in federative organizations is generally seen as clarifying lines of authority, balancing troublesome power issues, and as providing the entire federative construct with stability, direction, meaning, and identity (cf. Sjöstrand 1985; Svensson 1993). To this I would like to add that the presence of an overriding and shared ideology, a common language, and formal contractual relations constitute three fundamental prerequisites for internal coordination and governance within most federated contexts (Jonnergård 1993b).

In relation to this discussion, it is also worth noting that the formal ties, contracts or memberships, as they also are called (cf. Jonnergård 1993a, b; Swartz 1994), that help binding a federation together are almost exclusively approached by scholars at an *organizational* level. That is, in the literature concerning federations, the main interest is generally directed to the problematization of the formal relations between affiliated organizational units rather than between affiliated individuals and the federative organization. Selsky's (1998:286) definition of federative organizations provides an illuminating example of what I am aiming at here: *"Federations are /…/ associations in which the affiliates are organizations rather than individuals. Thus, individual interests are aggregated into associations, and organizational interests are aggregated into federations"*.

No matter which research tradition, perspective, or question one pursues, to automatically exclude the individual members of a federation from the analysis appears to be more a rule than an exception. Therefore, what gives the present study its unique character is the placement of the relation between members and the federative context they belong to at the core of the analysis.

4.2.2 Governance *and* Administration

On par with a need for formal systems that handle things like collaboration, coordination, and governance within the type of federations this study includes, there is also a need for an administrative arrangement through which daily internal operations can be executed. Yet, this seems to be a somewhat underdeveloped topic within existing research on federative organizing. From identifying the above-discussed formal contracting and a common norm system as principal mechanisms for coordination and control in federations, Jonnergård (1993b:93) adds that *"/…/* [administrative] *arrangements can be viewed as implementations of the contractual relations as well as embody the value system. /…/ In other words; the coordination of a federative organization is performed by three interrelated means; contracting, value system, and administrative arrangements"*.

Examples of activities taking place within the administrative arrangements in federations like the ones included in this study could, for example, be to provide for newly arrived refugees; coordinate foreign aid campaigns; execute rehabilitation programs for drug abusers; coach football teams and arrange sports events; administer local, national or even international games and leagues; participate in the general political debate in society, or lobby for whatever cause or goal the organization in question pursue. It could also involve short-term or even ad hoc based projects and actions directed at, for example, organizing local or national manifestations and rallies, recruiting new members and volunteers, or planning and executing marketing or fund-raising campaigns. There are also more permanent and supportive administrative functions to take care of, such as organizing recurrent local, regional, and national meetings and assemblies; budgeting; bookkeeping; producing material for internal decision-making processes; and negotiating rents and administrating salaries for staff and officials. Another typical administrative involves the formulation of applications for state and municipal subsidiaries.

Some of these activities take place on a horizontal and local level and may therefore only involve a limited number of officials, staff, or volunteers. Other operations may very well cut across an entire federative structure, which also means that they could also occupy a great many officials, staff, rank and file members, and volunteers.

Regardless of which, the point here is that large parts of everyday operations as well as more ad-hoc campaigns and events within a federation, come about through a more or less coherent administrative arrangement. In contrast to the earlier mentioned governance function and structure, which in most federative settings ideally seems to follow a bottom-up perspective related to principles and procedures of representative democracy, the administrative arrangements intended here better fits the description of traditional hierarchies with more or less clear Weberian bureaucratic features.

An Hourglass Construct

My view of the federations in this study departs from a combination of the two above-mentioned, distinct but intermingled structures. I name this an hourglass construct, or an hourglass organization[3] (see figure 1).

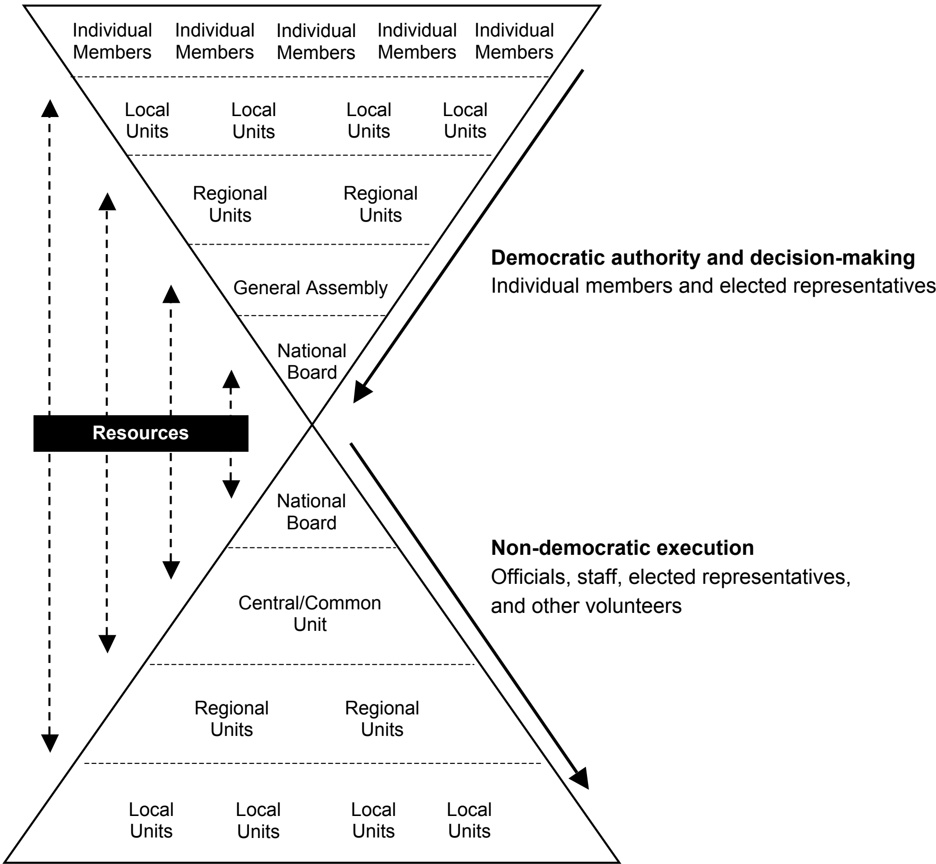

Figure 1. The Hourglass Organization.

To simultaneously consider a twin-asspect of a federation's internal life seems rather atypical. However, they tend be acknowledged and at least partially discussed in above all empirically rooted investigations. Young *et al.* (1996), for example, mentions these two main frames while discussing accountability in relation to what they call trade, federal, and corporate federative models within a sample of national asso-

[3] Bergström (1994) and Normark (1994) also use the image of an hourglass when discussing cooperatives.

ciations in the U.S. Another example is Provan (1983), who sporadically hints at these two structures and functions in relation to a discussion on what he calls participatory, independent, and mandated federations. A third example is Swartz's (1994) study of the management and organization of federations. One of the things he identifies and develops further is an unclear boundary between what he calls a federation's governing ownership structure and its more executive counterpart, which I understand as being equivalent to the upper and lower triangles in figure 1.

Before continuing, it needs to be stated that the following description of this superstructure departs from an idea of a norm, a standard solution or an ideal-type explanation that does not necessarily exist in reality. The fact is that I do not think any image or narrative could do full justice to the real life version of these federative organizations. In short, figure 1 and the accompanying accounts below is not a 1:1 map of reality. Yet, they do summarize common empirical features that are relevant and important for this study. So, even if the following is an oversimplification in every imaginable aspect, it is still clarifying and useful for how I would like to develop the discussion on internal structures, relations, functions, and processes within these federations.

In line with Swartz (1994), and with reference to the upper pyramid in figure 1, the kind of federation included in this study could be said to have a governance structure based on two or three interrelated levels. This means a local and a national level with mostly a third regional or district level in between. And, as the upper echelon of this upside-down pyramid demonstrates, this governance and decision-making structure has its base among the individual members (aka the grassroots), who, from a more conventional perspective on hierarchy, probably would have been placed at the bottom of the triangle. However, due to the ruling ideas behind federative solutions, they are in this picture placed at the top, which gives a scenario where the many govern the few, and not the other way around.

Accordingly, one could say that the local level in many ways resembles a locus from where the rest of the federative setting departs. It could also be compared to a gateway leading to the rest of the organization, since the affiliation of rank and file members ideally, and in most cases also empirically, tends to primarily link them with local associations. Moreover, because of the commonly applied principles and praxis for internal governance, the local level is often also where democratic influence and control get exerted in a more direct way. Elsewhere it follows the logic and procedures of representation.

Again, note that this is the general model, or the norm. In reality, there seems to exist several variations for this theme. For example, some memberships imply that the person who wants to affiliate may chose where he/she should primarily belong – to a local association where he/she lives or to the national level directly. Another variation is that members may attend meetings and assemblies elsewhere in the federation, but only as representatives for themselves, not for any affiliated organization or specific group of members.

To continue, associations on a local level are generally affiliated with a regional organization to which they also appoint representatives and delegates. If this intermediary regional layer is included in the structure, this is also the place from which representatives are formally appointed for the national or general assembly. In those federa-

tive organizations that do not have a middle regional level, or where it has been given a less important role, the delegates that go to the general assembly are often elected at and sent directly from the local level. The general assembly, which gathers regularly (in some cases once a year, in other cases as seldom as every fourth year), constitutes the highest formal decision-making arena in this type of federative organization.

Whatever decisions or strategic guidelines the general assembly settles on, these are expected to trickle down into the executive structure. The executive structure is represented by the lower triangle in figure 1, which, in terms of hierarchical layers, tend to follow its upper counterpart. This is also the reason for why it is possible to say that these twin structures overlap and mix in reality, even if they, for analytical purposes, are separated here.

An institution that as a matter of speaking sits between the upper governance and lower executive structure is the national board of directors, which thereby is assigned an important liaison role and function. This means that the board is supposed to interpret and transform the general assembly's decisions into overall directives and objectives. It is also the highest ranked formal decision-making organ between the general assemblies.

The directives and objectives are then passed on from the board down into the executive hierarchy, where paid officials and staff members as well as volunteers take on the task of setting up, executing, and managing daily operations or more ad-hoc campaigns and events intended to realize general assembly and national board decisions.

Despite some obvious resemblances between the upper and lower part in this hourglass construct, the main difference is that while the upper governance and decision-making structure mainly builds on representative democratic values, norms, and procedures for its functioning and credibility – the lower, executive structure constitutes more of a traditional bureaucracy, characterized by things like a top-down hierarchy and a clear division of labor. What I find so interesting with this construct is rather than each part on its own, the simultaneous differences and interdependencies, strengths and advantages as well as potential tensions and problems this blend may give rise to. As a way to extend and further problematize the conceptual discussion of this hourglass construction, I will here turn to the idea of organizational hybrids.

An Organizational Hybrid

From the somewhat trivial statement that organizations are made up of multiple components, one could say that a hybrid organization typically bring together different organizational forms (Albert and Whetten 1985) and seemingly incompatible value systems (Foreman and Whetten 2002). A further qualification of the concept is to say that hybrid organizations, such as the federations in this study, are simultaneous unifications of both hierarchical and egalitarian modes of power (Ashcraft 2001). And, that they comprise the co-existence of fundamental but opposing principles of organization – decentralization, self-determination, and autonomy on one hand, and centralization, domination, and dependency on the other (Romme 1999). Courpasson and Clegg say the same when they conclude, with reference to de Tocqueville (1835/2000), that hyb-

rids emerging from *"/…/ apparently strange and unexpected combinations of bureaucracy and democratic principles are a direct result not only of the political ambivalence of systems, but also of organizational members, who 'feel the need to be led and the wish to be free'"* (2006:333).

Thus, seen from this perspective one could say that the idea that hybrid organizations concurrently encompasses intrinsic oppositional or even conflicting organizational principles, values, forms, and functions seems largely to echo the earlier presentation of federative organizations in this chapter. That is, that federative organizing has its base in the unification of contradictory values and norms such as solidarity and collective action on one hand, and independence and individual gain on the other. Or, that federations, such as those in this study, include both egalitarian democratic regimes, which concurrently are put on par with and closely intermingled with more conventional bureaucratic and executive structures and principles (see figure 1 above).

Accordingly, one could say that these two opposing, but still merged organizational frameworks quite well translate into Weber's (1914/1968) ideas of monocratic and polycratic organizational structures respectively. A monocracy can be summarized as a pyramidical social structure with fewer people at each level as one approaches the top. Power and control derive from above and trickle down the pyramid in accordance with a formal bureaucratic hierarchy where officials and paid staff at each layer are supposed to execute policies and directives that arrive from the structural echelon superior to their own.

In contrast, polycratic structures comprise arrangements where *"/…/ power is divided upon members on a theoretically egalitarian basis but which in principle is capable of being aggregated in an 'upward' direction"* (Waters 1993:56). This potential aggregation of power upwards is also why I have placed the upper pyramid in figure 1 on its 'head', so to say. However, that is not the same thing as saying that these settings lack hierarchy. On the contrary, it just means that formal power relations and hierarchy in polycratic and democratic structures operate in unconventional manners because the rule is different. But, there is still a rule (de Tocqueville 1835/2000:551).

Moreover, Weber (1947/1964) also identifies three possible polycratic organizational forms, each one representing an alternative to and a possibility for human emancipation that monocratic bureaucracies are incapable of providing. These three different forms are collegiality, direct democracy, and mass/representative democracy. The latter form is the most relevant one in relation to the present study.

Regarding the differences between monocratic bureaucracy and polycratic representative democracy one could, ideally, say that while people are selected to official positions within the former by appointment on the basis of technical qualifications or examinations, the same procedure for assortment in the latter departs from democratic elections carried out by rank and file members and their representatives (Waters 1993:72). Other notable differences concern, for example, decision-making processes. Within a typical polycratic bureaucracy this means that decisions ought to be universal, impartial and should not incorporate personal interests in order to appear legitimate. In mass democracy, however, elected representatives are theoretically free to act in whatever way they like, as long as it occurs within the frames of local organizational charters and constitutions (ibid:75). In close connection to this; a monocracy implies that decision-making always occurs at a higher hierarchical level before decisions and

decrees may trickle down the structure in an authoritative way. Within representative democracy decisions must, instead, be referred to the electoral constituency for approval. This means that elected representatives and officials who formulate decisions and policies are, at least technically, controlled by the ones electing them (ibid.).

Additionally, in the intersection between two such obviously diverse and seemingly incompatible structures as a polycratic democracy and a monocratic bureaucracy it is not far-fetched to imagine the emergence of strengths and advantages as well as ambiguities, tensions, and struggles. Or, as Ashcraft (2001:1304) puts it: *"A hybrid unites multiple forms; many reflect deliberate combinations designed to meet tricky problems; and most blends create considerable conflict."*

To further describe the ambiguities and tensions that may emerge within hybrid organizations, it could be useful to once again return to Kanter's (1972) discussion on how less institutionalized utopian communities tend to take on federative forms as they grow and want to increase their political significance (p 40 above). She elaborates upon this transformation with reference to what she calls the two incompatible pulls of social life (1972:148). She equates this with Tönnies' (1887/2001) dual concept of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and discuss it in terms of a continuous balancing act or struggle between things like community, solidarity, value-orientation, emancipation, empowerment, political equality, and democracy on one hand, and bureaucracy, expediency, effectiveness, instrumentality, economic rationales, business-oriented systems, and contractual relations on the other (cf. Asplund 1991; Jonnergård 1994).

Incorporating these ideas into the present discussion on federative organizations as hybrid hourglass constructs would, accordingly, imply an incessant pull between one internal setting, where emphasis is primarily concentrated to principles of democracy and issues of solidarity, equality, and mutual dependency, and another, more hierarchical and bureaucratic setting occupied by ideas of how to manage and execute practical economic and political issues as rationally and effectively as possible.

Considering the seemingly awkward and complex situation that must derive from harboring two such fundamentally distinct frameworks and structures under the same organizational roof, one can wonder how it is at all possible. There are probably several ways to answer that question. The easiest way is maybe to simply accept the idea that dualism constitutes an immanent and necessary feature of every federative endeavor (cf. Sjöstrand 1985; Svensson 1993).

Another way would be to say that there is also room for considerable amounts of dialectics between the hybrid's upper and lower part. The main ground for the latter statement stems from the fact that bureaucracy and democracy both share some basic norms and values. Courpasson and Clegg (2006:330f) assert: *"Paradoxically, the power of bureaucracies could also be due to the strength of certain types of beliefs and feelings toward two basic principles of democracies: equality and freedom"*. With inspiration from de Tocqueville (1835/2000), Courpasson and Clegg then develop this claim by arguing that freedom, within a democratic context, in principle derives from a sense among its members that they are unconditionally equal, at the same time as this perceived equality, in its turn, stems from a sense of being entirely free. The sum of this circular argument is that freedom, as a direct result of equality, is in the deepest sense a democratic ideal. Furthermore, they state that it is difficult to undermine the sovereignty of equality in democ-

ratic settings since it would imply a transformation and renewal of an organization's central features, such as its bylaws, charters, and core ideals and goals, as well as the habits of its members (ibid.).

Thus, while equality constitutes a central feature of democracy, it is at the same time also a major common denominator for bureaucracy. With Weber's (1914/1968) bureaucratic ideal type in mind, Courpasson and Clegg (2006) argue that the power and stability of bureaucracies in part rely on a deeply embedded belief that everybody is equal before the rule. That is, when everyone shares this belief of being equal and being treated equally, that adds strength and cohesion to the organizational community in question.

However, just because something is democratic does not necessarily mean that it *per se* implies solidarity and equality. Both de Tocqueville (1835/2000) and Michels (1911/1959) argue persuasively that the very dynamics of democratic governance may just as well point in the direction of despotism. Just recall Michels' conclusions regarding how things like the passivity of the masses combined with a professional leadership elite clinging to power at all costs tend to turn democratic organizations into oligarchies. Or, as he also put it: *"/…/ we find everywhere that the power of the elected leaders over the electing masses is almost unlimited. The oligarchical structure of the building suffocates the basic democratic principle. That which IS oppresses THAT WHICH OUGHT TO BE"* (ibid:401, emphasis in original).

In addition, one could also argue that if bureaucratic arrangements exist side by side with democratic dittos they may very well strengthen the despotism that may emerge from the realities of democratic structures and practices. An important reason for this derives from the top-down hierarchy in bureaucracies that distance people from each other, which may facilitate a depersonalization of the relationship between individuals and the organization they belong to (Courpasson and Clegg 2006:332).

4.2.3 But, where are the People?

From the perspective that federations, like the ones in this study, could be seen as including two diverse but tightly interrelated structures and functions – a governing polycracy and a more operational and bureaucratic monocracy – I have so far argued that they could be conceptualized and further problematized via the idea of hybrid organizations. This hybrid perspective implies above all two things. First, an explicit emphasis on the dialectics between two overriding structures, which enables an open-ended and dynamic analysis of the internal life of federative organizations. Second, along with this hybrid perspective comes also the necessity to acknowledge that federations entail not only structures and functions, but also purposeful individuals. However, it appears strange that this seems to be a much-neglected aspect in most approaches to federative endeavors. Even such empirical cases where federations obviously include individual members, the general tendencies among scholars are to either touch upon this in passing, or to ignore it completely.

In parallel, what has hopefully been clarified above is that when membership is explicitly discussed in the literature on federations it seems to occur exclusively in

terms of the affiliation federated organizations carry (cf. Sjöstrand 1985; Franz *et al.* 1986; Fleisher 1991; Selsky 1998; Ahrne and Brunsson 2001). If, however, individual membership is discussed, it is almost always the relation between rank and file members and their local primary association that is in focus. It is as if one deliberately wants to avoid the idea that federative organizations could also be seen as extensions of the spirit and deeds of single individuals. What I want to state here is that I find it difficult, if not impossible, to escape the fact that these large and complex organizational constructs not only depart from, but also are constantly (re)produced by the members they affiliate. I therefore concur with the following statement by Stryjan (1989:146):

> /…/ the federative organization is dependent on individual members' inputs, as long as its constituent organizations are being steered by their members. This fact should be taken into consideration in further theory construction. /…/ No scenario for the change, or betterment of society can count on organizations, federative or otherwise, being reproduced by other organizations alone. Models that can link members in primary organizations, and the federative, second tier organizations that their primary organizations form, ought, therefore to be an important item on the agenda for future research.

Consequently, it is now called upon to bring the individual members and their formal affiliation into the picture. It is time to take a closer look at the concept of individual membership.

5. Individual Membership

Given the society we have created, it is in principle unavoidable not to belong to an organization. However, the way in which we are affiliated with all the social collectives that surround us is not given. Rather, variation on this theme is huge. As I stated already in chapter 1, it should not be assumed that the meaning of the relation between people and organizations is fixed just because it carries a similar label across time or contexts.

This insight is presumably important for this study on individual membership, since the specific character of organizations seems to play an important role in how we relate and are related to organizations. Despite, or maybe because, of this there seems to exist only a few scholarly efforts that have actually tried to conceptualize this particular relation between man and organization. The sociologist Yohanan Stryjan (cf. 1989, 1994) has put forth one of the more pronounced examples in this respect. This chapter is, to a large degree, a summary of his ideas regarding membership.

5.1 A Conceptual Baseline Resting on Three Theoretical Strands

The aim in Stryjan's work on membership is to theorize on stability and change within and among so-called self-managed organizations.[4] The driving force in the reproduction process he elaborates upon is what I find to be a rare, and, for my purposes, especially inspiring and comprehensive conceptual baseline regarding an intrinsic character of individual membership. Still, one could say that Stryjan and I use this conceptualization for slightly different purposes. He applies it to clarify the reproduction process of self-made organizations. I, on the other hand, use it as a basic framework for analyzing how the meaning of membership is construed within a certain context.

Stryjan's framework rests primarily on above all three different theoretical strands. The first is a meta-theoretical perspective regarding organizational reproduction more or less derived from Giddens' structuration theory (1984). The second is a view on people's commitment to self-managed organizational endeavors that chiefly rests on Kanter (1972) and her study on commitment and communities. The third is a depiction

[4] Stryjan applies three conditions to define self-managed organizations: a) the organization in question has a clear, formally defined body of members; b) all members take part, actually or potentially, in decision-making and implementation; and c) the locus of all decisions is situated within the organization (1989:4). That is, self-managed organizations are *"/.../ manned, steered and continuously (re)designed by its members"* (1994:63). Stryjan bases his theoretical discussions on earlier empirical studies of organizations such as worker-owned enterprises, worker cooperatives and Israelian kibbutzim (Stryjan 1983, 1985; Stryjan and Mann 1988). Yet, he suggests that his theoretical arguments might also apply, maybe with some reservations, to all kinds of membership-based and democratically governed associations as well as to the kind of larger federative organizations that are included in the present study (Stryjan 1989:chapter 7).

of a repertoire of action building on Hirschman's ideas on how individuals' may deal with problems and shortcomings in their organizations (1970; 1982).

Although Stryjan adheres to Giddens' basic ideas regarding analyses integrating both macro and micro levels, individual action in terms of people's agency, social structures, and structuration, I find the way he incorporates this in to his own framework to be a bit unclear at times. I will return to this issue in chapter 11 (p 205). However, the contributions of the other two theoretical strands in Stryjan's model are without a doubt much clearer. The main reason for why I favor Stryjan and his ideas is that he adopts and develops both Kanter and Hirschman in relation to the particular organizational context that interests both him and me. Kanter, for example, does not develop her arguments with a particular focus on the kind of formal affiliation that an individual membership implies. A similar argument could be put forth regarding Hirschman, but with one exception – the theoretical claims he makes are intended to cover a broad spectrum of organizational types. Yet, the downside of making this kind of broad generalization is often a loss of clarity and details. From my own reading of Hirschman, I therefore agree with Stryjan when he says that the Hirschmanian framework is especially apt for dealing with members and their organizations on a more general level, but it is not applicable to associations and other types of self-managed organizations without adjustments (1989:72).

5.1.1 Reproduction of Membership and Organizational Survival

One of the basic assumptions behind Stryjan's model is that an organization's survival, identity, and necessary adaptation to the surrounding environments is a question whether or not its core element(s) is being reproduced successfully or not. He claims that the core element in the case of self-managed organizations is the individual membership (ibid:64).

Moreover, Stryjan assures us that what makes membership so important in this particular context is that no other category of affiliates within this type of organization can, at least in theory, accomplish and execute what the members may. This is so since the members govern their organizations at the same time as they also may participate in its daily operations. One could also say that a self-managed context needs a constant input from its affiliated individual members in order to remain self-managed (ibid:63f).

From this stand-point, Stryjan concludes that the reproduction process itself has a prime anchorage in common routines, operations, and functions of an organization, and that the entire reproduction process is best understood in terms of a loop or a constant interplay between purposeful member agents and the social structures that comprise the organization to which they belong.

> The central challenge is thus that of 'shaping' members who are capable of successfully running their organization, and of redesigning it so that it can accommodate and eventually mould its future members. In other words, the core process of self-management is that of *reproduction of membership* (1994:65).

Here one could argue that individual membership resembles a crucial intersection where organizations and their members either meet or separate. Moreover, at the very heart of Stryjan's conceptualization, one finds three interlinked and partly overlapping aspects of membership (1989:65) that helps determine who the members of an organization are, how they are connected to the organization, and on what premises and in what ways they interact with their organization (1994:65). These three aspects are: **bearer(s)** of a membership, which aggregates into the demographic composition of an organization's entire corpus of members; a shared **frame of reference,** facilitating interpretations and definitions of particular situations and problems related to the organization in question, and to the environment in which it is embedded; an explicitly recognized **repertoire of action**, through which members could manifest and channel their participation and inputs within the organization they belong to.

With reference to the above-stated interplay between members and the organizations they belong to, Stryjan explains each of these aspects as an outcome both of people's actions, *and* of organizational features and conditions. Something that enables him to argue that the reality of self-managed organizations is shaped *"to a great degree by structural features and routines"*, which, in their turn, are *"are formed by members' decisions and inputs"* (1989:65) with the membership as an intermediary. Figure 2 illustrates how he sees the reproduction of individual membership and its three aspects as an outcome of people's actions on one-hand and structural features on the other. Accordingly, this process involves a great deal of dynamics, even if figure 2 maybe not illustrates that very well.

Individual action (re)shaping membership	**Membership**	Structural features shaping membership
Joining/exit	**Bearer(s)**	Recruitment
Discourse	**Frame of reference**	'Organizational culture'
Precedents, personal example	**Repertoire of action**	Rules, procedures

Figure 2. Individual and structural antecedents of membership (Stryjan 1989:65).

The rest of this chapter entails an outline of this conceptual model, with a special emphasis on the three aspects of individual membership. This means that I, for most parts, will draw on Stryjan's work (1989, 1994), but at times also expand the discussion with a few additional references that I find particularly relevant for the present study. For the sake of simplicity, I have divided the following sections in accordance to the three aspects of individual membership as they are presented in figure 2. This might give the impression that they are separated and occupy a relative position to each other while in fact being tightly interconnected, partly overlapping, and mutually dependent in real life. Before continuing, it should also be noted that the following by no means is a complete account of Stryjan's framework, but a condensed version of how I have understood it and also come to use it in my analysis.

5.1.2 Bearer(s) of Membership

The ones holding a membership are fundamental for what this formal relationship between an organization and its affiliates will mean. From the idea of a loop, in which members may remodify their organization at the same time as it may reshape them, Stryjan states that an organization's corpus of members is decided upon *"/…/ two flows, namely, recruitment and initial retainment on one hand and exit on the other"* (1989:82). With reference to figure 2, this means that such things as internal recruitment policies and activities together with personal decisions to either join, renew, or end an already established affiliation is what ultimately decides who will be bearer of a membership, as well as how a cadre of members could be characterized demographically.

Furthermore, from viewing organizations as open systems, the membership places its bearer in a unique and specific straddling position on the very border between the outer and the inner world of the organization they belong to (ibid:155). Hence, the boundary of a membership-based organization not only separates members from non-members, it also cuts across right 'through' its current affiliates (ibid:157, for a similar discussion see Kunda 1992). *"Members' extraorganizational activities, ties and resources ought thus to be seen as an important segment of the organization's immediate environment"* (Stryjan 1989:157). As a result, one could say that the demarcation line between a membership-based organization and its environment is as flexible as the mobility of its affiliated members. Or, put in another way, organizational boundaries follow in this case the individual wherever he goes and whatever she does. If I have understood Stryjan correctly here it might, in addition, be possible to say that the degree of personal commitment to and interaction with an organization largely seems to depend upon the distance between members and their organizations as well as how intense their relation is. In short, the closer one is to an organization, the more commitment and interaction there is.

Along with the argument that organizational boundaries pass through affiliated individuals, one can also say that the individual membership is tantamount to an important two-way link or gateway between an organization's external and internal realm. That is, a self-managed organization may call upon its members' commitment and engagement in order to mobilize necessary resources from the surrounding environment (ibid:157ff; see also e.g. Perrow 1970, and McCarthy & Zald 1977). Thus, the membership also functions as a sort of channel or medium through which members' input together with both material and immaterial resources may enter the organization, at the same time as organizational outputs may exit:

> /…/ member organizations /…/ present an interesting example of an organization-membership-environment triad. With the organization's activities carried by a professional apparatus, members in such organizations would find themselves in a particular position, straddling, as it were the organization's boundary. Naturally, they come to play a role of an important two-way link between the organization and its environment, shaping markets (in the case of consumer cooperation), bringing in new members, and also mediating environmental feedbacks and grassroots preferences back to the organization by way of corrective inputs (Stryjan 1989:157).

A Gate-keeper

However, the formal affiliation of individuals does not only function as a gateway, but is in this respect also a guardian of the borders between the internal and the external world of an organization. Depending on such things as how strict and comprehensive recruitment policies might be, a self-managed organization's openness or closeness towards the external world is largely dependent upon the character of the individual membership it offers. So, at the flipside of the coin there is also a specific control, or gate-keeping function associated with the individual membership. This function implies an emphasis on fundamental issues, such as whom is recognized as member and thereby included in the realm of the organization, and who is not and thereby excluded. Consequently, membership also carries a meaning closely related to recognition, inclusion, and creation of identity on one hand, and exclusion and anonymity on the other. In short, one is either 'in' or 'out', and there is really nothing in between (cf. Kanter 1972:81). Or, as Ahrne (1994:5) puts it:

> Gates of organizations are locked and guarded. Only affiliates have a key, but not always all of the affiliates. Those who are not affiliated have no right to enter. If you are not recognized you are not let in. All organizations are exclusive.

This means that those who want to join and are accepted are entitled to specific rights, are given certain obligations, and perhaps access to certain internal contexts and facilities. Those who stay on the 'outside' remain anonymous and without privileges or responsibilities in relation to the organization in question (ibid.). Consequently, the gate-keeping function is hereby crucial for issues such as internal decision-making and governance. This is mainly because organizations, membership-based or not, have to set up limits on *"/…/ who is allowed to take part in the decision-making process and who is not. No organization can afford to let simply anyone be present and have a vote"* (ibid:68), since that would make it extremely vulnerable to ill-intentioned people.

5.1.3 A Frame of Reference

In accordance with Stryjan's model (figure 2), membership also incorporates a shared frame of reference, which is supposed to guide people's perspectives and help them interpret situations. In his book, Stryjan claims that sharing a set of beliefs with others not only supports, but also reproduces a commonly accepted repertoire of what affiliated members can and are supposed to do. In the case of self-managed organizations, this means that a shared frame of reference entertains such fundamental questions as what members are for and what they should do (1989:48ff). A similar argument has, for example, also been put forth by Warren (2001:52) who, with reference to Parsons (1971), argues that: *"/…/ the means through which the association is bound together into a collectivity consist in the social resources of consensus, shared goals, and norms."*

From viewing a shared frame of reference as a direct result of a set of commonly held basic assumptions, values, norms, and goals Stryjan concludes that this constitutes an important part of what might be referred to as a cultural pattern binding a

specific organization together. At the same time, though, he also asserts that affiliated members' personal values, perspectives and action contribute to a process in which dominating values, premises, and norms within organizations are constantly exposed to remodification (1994:65). This means that while construing a reciprocal relationship between a sort of dominant cultural pattern and a shared frame of reference, Stryjan also emphasizes how personal values, norms, and discourses may affect this shared frame of reference and thereby the larger and dominating cultural context within organizations (cf. figure 2).

In addition, Stryjan maintains that a shared frame of reference ought to be further understood with reference to the notion of commitment, which he sees as an important underlying rationale for membership. To make this case in relation to self-managed organizations, he draws on Kanter's (1972) work on people's commitment to utopian communities. From her discussions he argues that commitment, at both an individual *and* an organizational end, derives from a meta-factual assumption of **permanence**, of **mutual dependence**, and of the **intrinsic worth** of the social collective in question (Stryjan 1989:48f).

Permanence

An assumption of permanence (ibid:51-53) is here presented as a general prerequisite for the existence and maintenance of any social collective, because it largely conditions things like rules, routines, procedures, and rituals – all vital features in Stryjan's argument for organizational reproduction and survival. The stability and durability these and other similar features and repetitive actions contribute to stem from the idea that they are more or less permeated with whatever dominating values, rules, and procedures that are typical for specific organizations or groups of organizations.

Stryjan also applies a similar argument in relation to individual members' affiliation with organizations. He asserts that it is, both from an organizational and an individual point of view, decisive to suppose that both will be there tomorrow (cf. Ahrne 1994). That is, for everyone involved it is simply crucial to expect certain tenure at either end of the membership. This is valid if we accept the fact that social collectives *"/…/build on mutual exchanges of favors over long periods and /…/ on accumulation of open obligations and debts"* (1989:51).

Mutual Dependency

Stryjan links the assumption of mutual dependency (ibid:53-55) to ideas such as solidarity, reciprocity, mutual obligations, interaction, and interdependence between fellow and equal members. All of these, he claims, are part and parcel of membership. This idea is based on the proposition that a majority of members, in most cases, interact with fellow members before they do so with the 'organization at large'.

Moreover, the assumption that my personal well-being as member in an organization depends on other affiliates' well-being, goodwill, and concern for me as a fellow member rests with a principle saying that most problems are solved best in interaction

with other members. Turning to each other in order to solve problems and difficulties has, according to Stryjan, the huge benefit of strengthening internal relations and interconnectedness, which nurtures the above-discussed assumption of permanence. Essentially, this is why Stryjan concludes that a common belief in mutual dependency is a crucial aspect of every self-managed endeavor.

However, he states that mutual dependency can be a rather vulnerable topic. This is mostly because an assumption of mutual dependency easily erodes if the meaning of membership is either ambiguously defined, or if it for any reason becomes blurred. That may happen if groups of affiliated non-members such as paid staff, volunteers, and more ad-hoc activists, are introduced and given privileges and constitutional rights that compete with those of the individual members. Stryjan refers to such a development as a breeding-ground for internal mistrust, discontent, and a collapsing belief in the mutual dependency, since:*"/…/ one is no longer sure /…/ who it is one helps and whether the beneficiary is worthy of the extra effort"* (ibid:55).

Stryjan concludes that since an assumption of mutual dependency is so crucial for self-managed organizations, they are probably also more vulnerable to emerging breaches and conflicts between internal sub-groups than other types of organizations. Michels' (1911/1959) argument about democratically governed organizations and their specific proneness to become oligarchic is maybe one of the more renowned examples supporting such a proposition. Another danger Stryjan mentions regarding the assumption of mutual dependency in self-managed organizations is their notorious vulnerability towards the implementation of more conventional managerial ideas and practices. He even issues a warning, saying that such pursuits may not only harm an internal unity in an organization, it can also lead to its complete disintegration.

Intrinsic Worth

The third and last assumption is the one of intrinsic worth (1989:56-63). Behind this postulation lays the acceptance and appreciation of, and care for an organization on its own terms and for its own sake. In this vein, an intrinsic worth could also be explained as if those who belong as members to a certain organization tend to share the belief that 'their' organization is unique and therefore worth joining and maintaining. Still, even if a belief in an intrinsic worth might be recognizable between different contexts, Stryjan asserts that it may be difficult to establish any generalizations regarding a more precise content. Instead, its gist is clearly an empirical issue since the construal of uniqueness or intrinsic worth tend to differ more or less *"/…/ from one organization to another"* (ibid:56). This is probably why Stryjan labels this the hardest assumption of the three to pin down.

Nevertheless, it seems possible to argue that an organization's intrinsic worth often indicates some sort of general approval and support for the more concrete objectives and directions of that organization as well as what is actually achieved in its name. In short, this assumption's *"/…/ prime import is in legitimating the organization's 'right' to conduct its affairs in its own way"* (ibid.). That is, an assumption of an organization's own worth seems to drive legitimacy. In relation to membership-based organizations this

means that legitimacy is *"/…/ directly dependent on the members' conviction that the task they engage in has some meaning"* (ibid.).

Whether this assumption withers or even fails could, subsequently, be directly related to a situation where its rank and file members no longer believe in or perceive their organization as legitimate. If this were to happen, that would imply that members might start abandoning their organization in search for better and more 'legitimate' alternatives. Understood in this way, legitimacy becomes a crucial matter of survival for every membership-based organization.

In addition, Stryjan claims that if an organization is loosing credibility in this way, it might imply that ideas and practices from other more successful and more 'legitimate' organizations are copied as a way to restore legality and status (cf. Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Related to the discussion in the previous section regarding tendencies and drives for increased rationalization and efficiency, Stryjan claims that maintaining an assumption of intrinsic worth *"can be a well-needed threshold against uncritical adoption of externally generated practices"* (1989:57).

What seems to be another common belief related to the assumption of intrinsic worth, at least within the type of membership-based organizations dealt with here, concerns the honoring of democratic values and norms and a general commitment to internal democratic processes and procedures. Stryjan submits that the democratic character of these organizations – often described in accordance to the principle of "one member, one vote" – constitute a normative focal point where individual members' expectations, empirical and theoretical definitions, and also some scholars' normative hope tend to converge.

An example here is Warren (2001), who sees this as the basic organizational rationale for associations, which does not depart from hierarchical power or money, but from democratic influence. This approach to authority and coordination, he says, turns associational relations, such as the membership, into a dominating means of coordination, because this is the only way in which the association in question are able to relate *"/…/ the political question 'what should we do?' to collective decision and action"* (ibid:55). However, although democratic arrangements in organizations may ensure a theoretical equality between its affiliated members and their possibilities to contribute with steering inputs, they do not, according to Stryjan (1989:58), define the character or the quality of such corrective inputs.

Yet, usually for reasons of efficiency and expediency (Dahl 1998), the standard democratic form applied within larger and more complex organizational structures tend to follow principles for indirect-elective, mass, or representative democracy (see also Weber 1947/1964, 1914/1968). Still, as Stryjan asserts, the volume of decisions that generally has to be considered within these generally larger and complex organizations impedes most intentions to handle every single decision in plenum. This automatically implies that every self-managed organization needs to develop suitable and transparent shortcuts for decision-making, steering and control in order for democracy not to be fully drained of its content and meaning. This is because the relevance and authority of any governance system based on representative democracy lies in every formally affiliated individual's possibility to participate, monitor, and control what goes on in the system. Or, as Stryjan puts it: *"The credibility /…/ of the whole democratic*

system of governance is determined by democratic organs' demonstrated ability to challenge administrative decisions and their readiness to test this ability whenever dissent arises" (Stryjan 1989:59; see also discussions in chapter 4 on hybrid organizations and the relationship between a democratic polycracy and a more bureaucratic monocracy).

With reference to scholars focusing on the issue of authority and power, among them Lukes (1976), Stryjan emphasizes that if this kind of delegation of authority does not occur, and of rank-and-file members' are kept out of internal power loops and arenas, the organization in question runs an acute risk of ending up with leaders, managers, and officials clinging, more or less unchallenged, to office for extensive periods of time. He describes such a development by saying that *"/…/ permanent hierarchic structures grow in a way that somewhat resembles processes of stalactite formation"* (1989:61). He also explains leaders' and officials' possibility to cling to office with their more or less unhampered control over information and agenda setting, as well as their option to monopolize expertise and to make sure that certain people obtain certain positions. Were this to happen, it would not only be a source for mistrust and discontent among members, but also for a growing distance between those who occupy power positions and those who do not (Michels 1911/1959). Having said that, there is only a short leap from the second to the third aspect of membership in Stryjan's model – a repertoire of action describing what the members can do to contribute to their organization.

5.1.4 A Repertoire of Action

Stryjan defines repertoire of action as a collection of activities that the members can employ in order to maintain and contribute to a continuous well being of their organization. And, in the same way as the shared frame of reference could be described as a sort of partial imprint of temporarily dominant values and norms within an organization, one could say that a repertoire of action is mainly operationalized through generally accepted and formally recognized policies, procedures, and behaviors. Stryjan asserts that this third aspect of membership could even be viewed as a *"/…/ sedimental agglomeration of past innovative actions and precedents set by individuals"* (Stryjan 1994:65).

Drawing on Weick's (1979) argument that every organization would immediately fall apart if we did not constantly engage in its reconstruction, Stryjan acknowledges that the relentless task of reproducing self-managed organizations to a large extent falls within the domain of its affiliated members. He even states that this is among their most important contributions to their organization: *"A considerable portion of an organization's energies would normally be devoted to correcting and managing the consequences of old decisions, not making new ones. It is in this 'unglamorous' context that we should view the full import of members as bearers of their organization"* (1989:150f).

From this 'unglamorous' situation, it is not so far fetched to also view individual members as a sort of owners of the organization they belong to. However, in his study from 1989, Stryjan dedicates an entire chapter to discussing why the concept of membership ought to be separated from ownership. His basic argument is that this represents two different and largely mutually exclusive entities, since each one ideally represents a distinct way of associating individuals with different organizational contexts.

Thus, he claims that while ownership links shareholders with joint stock corporations, membership associates members with associations, cooperatives and other membership-based organizations. Mixing them up, which Stryjan claims happens frequently, implies a risk of throwing out the baby with the bathwater and ending up in confusing and obscured discussions (for a similar argument see Abrahamsson 1993a, b).

Moreover, Stryjan claims that individual members' prime contribution could also be associable with *"/…/ the perpetual and decentralized activities of troubleshooting and correction, directed both inwards, to remedy or prevent deterioration in their organization, and outwards, to help push it through periodically encountered environmental quicksands"* (1994:66). So, for a member to engage in this 'unglamorous' situation of reproducing his/her organization would mean to do more than uncritically follow official policies, attend meetings, and partake in formalized decision-making procedures. However, to follow Stryjan's arguments further, the constitution of a repertoire of action is a matter of where and how individual members are positioned within the structural matrix that makes up their organization (see also Stryjan and Mann 1988). This means that what actions and activities members actually may resort to partly boil down to how the relation between members and their organization is dealt with by leaders and officials. One could also say that this largely is an issue of integration and distribution of power.

Moreover, action in Stryjan's conceptual framework includes both what people *do* and what they *say* when they interact with their organizations. With reference to Hirschman (1970; 1982), who develops ideas on how individuals assumingly deals with organizational problems and shortcomings, Stryjan adopts four main activity categories to the case of self-managed organizations. These categories are: **loyalty**, **involvement**, **voice/protest,** and **exit**. Each of these categories could be viewed from two angles. From a member perspective, they mostly appear to be specific modes of behaviour. From an organizational outlook, though, they are probably better understood in terms of the steering or correcting inputs mentioned earlier. Below, I end this chapter with an account of how Stryjan portrays them in a book from 1989 (p 73-82), and on a journal article from 1994 (p 67-70).

Loyalty

Being loyal to an organization generally means to follow its stipulated rules and norms. With reference to Giddens (1984), Stryjan states that rules and rule systems only work provided that they are repetitively followed and obeyed. After all, that *"/…/ is the essence of loyal behaviour"* (1989:75). From this, and from the fact that loyalty implies a sort of 'good enough', or satisfactory execution of functions (ibid.), follows that it composes a baseline for the establishment and for the running of an organization's internal functions. In other words, modes of loyalty among members seem not only to enable the execution of day-to-day functions and the establishment of an organization's formal steering apparatus, it seems also to be an important overall *raison d'être* (ibid.).

At the same time, loyalty could be viewed as an unreflective state of mind and an utterly inert and inactive behaviour, if viewed as being based in a *"/…/ deep-rooted reluctance to consider or conceptualize, let alone problematize alternatives that, at the same*

time, are very tangible within reach" (ibid.). In this sense, loyalty represents more a preserving than an innovative force, tending towards support of the already established and taken for granted.

Stryjan's conceptualization of loyalty differs from other observers, who describe a similar behaviour among members as equivalent to passiveness, disinterestedness, apathy, or even lack of commitment – all rather negative and detrimental aspects of collective action (cf. Putnam 2000; Vogel *et al.* 2003). Passiveness among members is frequently also construed as one of the more decisive mechanisms behind oligarchic tendencies in organizations (cf. Michels 1911/1959).

For this reason it could be important to make a similar distinction as Stryjan does between loyalty and compliance. That is, one may remain loyal to an organization without necessarily complying with and being committed to every decision, deed and aspect of it. In this sense, Stryjan asserts that loyalty can be likened with a *"/…/ residual left after power has been subtracted from structure"* (1989:75), which I interpret that it is a mistake to construe loyalty as insignificant and brush it aside too hastily without reflection. On the other hand, organizations cannot subsist on modes of loyalty alone. In order to survive, there is also a need for other kinds of inputs. Still, regarding the way in which Stryjan depicts loyalty here, I agree that it could be likened to a necessary stage on which other required modes of behaviour may evolve (ibid.).

Involvement

One of these other modes is involvement, which could be distinguished from loyalty in standing for the readiness to oppose and transcend routine-like behaviours and activities related to loyalty. This difference may even be described as that which could be found between innovation and non-innovation. In this sense, involvement means that member(s) take the initiative to achieve something that they believe would advance or improve the situation of their organization. Or, put in another way, involvement means that *"/…/ a member simply may roll up his sleeves and deal with whatever problem he encounters /…/"* (Stryjan 1994:68).

In the crossroad between a Hirschmanian take on involvement and a Kanterian view on commitment, Stryjan concludes that the underlying rationale for members to involve themselves in an organization rests on a willingness to do what it takes to maintain the organization. And, that the mere act of doing so provides people with what they need and strive for. To put this last thing simply: *"Involved action is intrinsically rewarding, rather than keyed to an expected external reward"* (ibid.). This stands in a glaring contrast to Mancur Olson (1965), who would probably say that members get involved in the well-being of an organization merely to have it satisfy their particular needs (for further critique of Olson on this matter see Ostrom 1991).

From an organizational perspective, involvement may involve everything from resource mobilization, innovations for learning, solving problems and conflicts, to identifying new strategic directions to pursue. However, no matter how positive this may sound, Stryjan also argues that the spontaneous and innovative character of involve-

ment among individual members could provoke work overload, chaotic situations, and problems related to governance. He states:

> Involvement is, obviously, an enormous source of energy, but at the same time it gives rise to a considerable steering and coordination problem. Too high levels of involvement are likely to cause overload and incapacitate the organization rather than invigorate it (1989:85).

This is also a reason for why his assertion that leaders and managers tend to frown on individual members' often unpredictable and unstable impulses to get involved. *"Large, formally democratic organizations would often tend to impose limits on legitimate involvement. The democratic principle of 'one person, one vote' is reinterpreted so as to mark not a mere baseline for participation but its ceiling as well"* (1989:86).

Voice/Protest

There is a thin and ambiguous line between involvement and voice/protest. Yet, while the former would tend to follow norms and values specific to particular organizations, protest *"/…/ generally departs from universal norms or an ideal model of the organization as it ought to be"* (1989:79, emphasis in original). In a more specific way, when the function of an organization for some reason fails and its 'quality' is perceived as deteriorating, it generally means that dissatisfied members start raising their voices in order to question the state of affairs and demanding radical internal changes. In contrast to involvement, giving voice to one's discontent and frustration means that the protestors no longer *"/…/ take the organization, or his or her place in it, for granted"* (ibid.).

In the best of worlds, Stryjan declares, allowing more space to protests and criticism may work as an important input for representatives of an organization to reconsider and maybe even change earlier decisions, policies, directions or applied methods and activities (cf. Stryjan 1994:68).

However, dissenters and nonconformists are not always appreciated internally. From an organizational outlook, a *"/…/ protestor's position would often appear unrealistic and impractical"* (ibid.) and thereby awkward and difficult to deal with by those who resist change and defend *status quo*. The level of tolerance for internal protest and criticism within organizations in general and democratically ditto in particular may vary greatly, despite the fact that it could be useful to take care and nurture the kind of input emerging from those who raise their voices in protest. While tolerance and openness may stimulate diversity, innovation, and change, the opposite often leads to resignation among protesting members (ibid:69, table 2).

To openly display discontent and challenge a collective consensus could, however, prove risky and costly for the individual. Stryjan asserts that when someone has been identified as troublemaker or 'whistleblower', it is difficult to go back: *"It is seldom that protest would be given the chance to return again to involvement"* (ibid:80). Would this occur, there is only room for two alternatives – conformist behaviour or exit. Either way, Stryjan proclaims both the individual member(s) and their organizations potential losers.

Exit

Individual members may leave their organizations for just as many reasons as they once joined. Yet, no matter the reason, when it happens, he/she vanishes from both this conceptual framework and the organizational reality it supposedly covers. Still, Stryjan concludes that the ultimate response from an individual member towards his/her organization is to exit out of dissatisfaction. Even if the individual disappears from a particular organizational horizon, it is important to note that the act itself remains an important steering input that may cause more or less serious effects within the organization long after the individual has left.

Within the larger membership-based federations that are in focus in the present study, it is probably no real danger if one, two, or even several dozens of individual members would exit at once. However, if more and more members choose to leave that should, according to Stryjan, be interpreted as a sign of warning that something is wrong (1989:81). Not the least because would such a development escalate, the aggregated effects could be devastating. A steady outward flow of members may lead to a negative selection and a changed internal demography. Furthermore, if more individuals would be leaving than joining, this could, in the long run, also imply internal impoverishment, slow destruction, and even demise. An organization finding itself in this kind of situation must, according to Stryjan, either: *"/…/ regain its clientele, find a new one, or perish"* (ibid.).

Nonetheless, in opposition to what one might think, Stryjan asserts that the tendency among those who remain when others are leaving is to only reluctantly view the ones exiting as a critique against their own organization. And, to *"/…/ regain 'renegade' members"* (1989:81) is generally not viewed as an option. Instead, *"/…/ this unwillingness would often be accompanied by a tendency to deny that the quality of the organization has played any part in their exit decision /…/, ascribing the blame for 'defection' on the leaver alone"* (ibid.). As a possible result of this, what potentially could be a sound experience of self-critique, learning, and innovation, runs the risk of becoming the reverse and of moving the organization moves *"/…/ in a direction opposite to that for which the departing members(s) strove"* (ibid.).

Stryjan states that the propensity to allow any of the above-discussed types of behaviour and inputs that together form an outer frame for a more concrete repertoire of action is ultimately dependent on organizational specific structures, principles, and demographic characteristics. In this sense he concludes:

> Thus, the embarrassment of protest, and the unruliness of involvement, is often dealt with through the banning of protest and the condition of the right to involvement to those who lead, or even banning it altogether. In doing so, organizations cut off a major source of innovation and, through exit of involved members, precipitate a deterioration of the quality of membership (1994:69).

In sum, I believe that the ontological and epistemological claims in chapter 2, the discussions in chapter 3 and 4 regarding *folkrörelse* and federations, together with the more detailed conceptual baseline accounted for above, form a useful framework for my analysis of the empirical material that will be presented in the following chapters.

The nearest following chapter contains a shorter description of how I have generated, sorted, and analyzed the empirical data. In chapter 7, I describe each of the nine organizations included in the study. On that follows three chapters where I thematically present and discuss the interviewees' perception of individual membership.

6. Methodological Considerations

The present chapter is an extension of the ontological and epistemological discussion in chapter 2. Focus here, though, is more on the background and design of this study, the character of its empirical material, and how I have interpreted and analyzed the same. I will also discuss a few ethical considerations related to social research.

This study is part of a larger research project that was initiated in the autumn of 2001, when it also received a four-year financial support from the Swedish Co-operative Union's Research Foundation. This independent research foundation was set up by one of the organizations that later on was also included in the study.

Originally, the project entailed a reference group with representatives from the nine included organizations, one of my co-supervisors, and myself as a Ph.D-student. Not before long, though, the project was expanded so that it also came to involve another Ph.D-study (see Einarssson T. 2008 for more on that project) and various research assistants who have contributed with valuable pilot studies (cf. Hultén and Wist 2004).

From the preparatory work before the launch of the project in 2001 (cf. Wijkström and Hvenmark 2001; Hvenmark 2002), we soon realized that while individual membership has been attended to many times before, there seemed to be few studies that deliberately made it the actual unit of analysis, especially in relation to organizational issues. Accordingly, and as an alternative to earlier research, the overall ambition in this project focuses on people's perception of individual membership, an approach that gives this project a somewhat explorative profile.

Even if the project's two Ph.D-studies depart from the same organizational contexts and share a few basic ideas, their empirical focus, as well as their methods differ. The present study has a qualitative approach and is primarily focused on how leaders and officials in the nine included organizations perceive membership. The other study, conducted by my colleague, has a quantitative approach and aims at exploring the same issue among the rank and file members in the same organizations (Einarssson T. 2008). The intention within the larger, combined project is to, later on, unite these two approaches through a common analysis.

6.1 Putting the Case Together

The approach and research design in the present study derives from three early insights. First, in comparison with other similar formal relations linking individuals with social collectives (e.g. citizenship and employment), there is not much found in the Swedish legal system regarding membership (cf. Hemström 2000a, b). Second, the particular regulations of Swedish membership-based organizations are not very specific on this matter either. Third, from extensive readings I was soon able to conclude

that even if individual membership appears in numerous studies and academic investigations, it seems predominantly to be used as a proxy for things like social capital, the state of democracy in a society and people's political activity level rather than to be problematized on its own grounds (for more on this see chapter 1). Therefore, I decided to initiate a preliminary study with the purpose of testing a few basic questions and to see how valuable it might be to conduct interviews on this topic (summarized in chapter 1 above and partly accounted for in Hvenmark 2002). The result was surprisingly interesting, despite a fairly rough and simple approach. This encouraged me to proceed and, together with my supervisors, start thinking of how to select organizations and people to interview further.

6.1.1 Selection of Organizations

From discussions with my supervisors regarding which civil society organizations to involve in the study, it was decided to choose them according to such criteria that would imply both similarities and differences.

Thus, we began to look for organizations that offered a formal individual membership, shared a more or less common historical background, and that were of a comparable age. They should also include similarities regarding formal structures. Another criteria concerned their size and/or recognition, but what mattered then were not necessarily the similarities. Instead, we aimed at including organizations that were either the largest or among the largest and/or most well known within a number of fields of activity. The field of activity was another selection criteria applied. The assumption here was that depending on what an organization actually does, and what kind of purpose and concrete needs it fulfills in the life of its members, that might have bearing on what meaning is attributed internally to the individual membership offered. As a result, the project came to include organizations concerned with things like religion, labor market, sports, inter-/national social welfare delivery, physical disability, politics, life-style issues, consumption, and housing conditions (see next chapter for a more detailed account of the organizations).

In contrast to what one might expect, though, it is important to note that the primary case in my study hereby is *not* comprised of nine separate organizations, but of a group of 24 interviewees *representing* these nine organizations. However, just because the organizations are then pushed more into the background, that does not mean they are insignificant. Rather the opposite, because what my analysis partly clarifies is that organizational context constitutes a prominent aspect of how individual membership is perceived.

6.1.2 Selection of Interviewees

My belief is that the meaning of individual membership is (re)produced within the frames of a complex process that potentially involves all kinds of persons both inside and outside an organization. Thus, to end up with a 'complete' picture one would ideally have to involve everyone that potentially have anything to do with this. Such a project

design may, however, run the risk of getting caught in its own trap. This is also why the overall research project focuses on what could be considered two main categories of actors – individual members in an organization and the formal leaders and representatives in that same organization.

As indicated above, at the centre of attention in my study stands leaders' perception. The idea behind this choice is that an important aspect of occupying a position such as official or elected representative involves a certain amount of formal authority. This power can be described in numerous ways. One concerns being ascribed a preferential right to interpret the surrounding reality. This privilege is also what may enable these persons to decide what problems are worth solving, to control the setting of agendas, to influence decision-making processes, and to introduce and to implement concrete ideas and measures (cf. Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1976). Another assumption here is that the higher up in a formal organizational hierarchy one goes, the greater becomes this ascribed power. Accordingly, the present study includes interviews with people occupying three different types of positions in the nine included organizations: highest ranked elected representatives, highest ranked officials, and a third category, which I have decided to call 'ideologists'.

The Highest Ranked Elected Representative

All the elected representatives interviewed in this study, except one, occupied positions as chairman of the national board. The only exception was the party secretary in the Social Democratic Party, who substituted the actual chairman. The reason for this is two-fold. First, at the time of the interviews the chairman was also prime minister in Sweden, since the Social Democratic Party then formed Government. It was therefore impossible to arrange an interview with him. Second, when this party forms Government, which it has done numerous times over the years, the custom seems to be that its chairman generally takes a cabinet minister position, which means that the party secretary steps in as the organization's highest ranked elected representative.

To hold a position as an elected representative in these organizations generally involves being elected by the organization's highest decision-making body, the general assembly or the like (for more details see subsequent chapter). The positions these interviewees occupied did not necessarily imply unpaid voluntary work. Among the interviewees in this category, there was only one that was not remunerated for the job.

The Highest Ranked Official

The position as highest ranked official seems to come with many names in the nine organizations. For example, while the position in the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is called mission director [*missionsföreståndare*], the corresponding position in the IOGT-NTO was, at the time for the interviews, national director [*förbundsdirektör*], and their counterpart in the Social Democratic Party is entitled head of organization [*organisationschef*]. The Co-operative Union reserves the more business-like term corpo-

rate executive officer [CEO] for the highest ranked official, while the corresponding title in the Red Cross is secretary general.

No matter how this position is entitled, it differs from the position of the chairman of the national board in some fundamental aspects. For example, the highest ranked official is generally counted as an employee, which means that he/she normally is not elected for this position. Instead, it is often the board that has the final word in appointing someone to this position. Another difference is that the highest ranked officials are generally in charge of managing the executive structure of the organization. That assignment has more of an administrative character and operative responsibility, which often includes things like the overall responsibility for employees, financial control, and follow-up of activities and performances. In short, he/she should make sure that the decisions and guidelines ratified at the general assembly and governed by the board are realized correctly and in time.

The Ideologist

In contrast to the former two positions, the idea and function of the ideologist do not correspond to a formal position in any of the included organizations. Instead, I invented this 'ideologist' category after having interviewed a group of persons who had substantial experience from their organizations, and who at the time of the interview were formally linked to the national level. These persons were also involved activities such as formulating official strategy and policy documents, writing speeches and/or serving other top-level officials and elected representatives with information regarding organizational/ideological matters, lecturing in internal educational programs, (co)-authoring annual and jubilee publications, or acting as advisories in complicated and delicate internal matters.

Hence, this category was not included initially. But, from conducting a few pilot-interviews with persons who either worked or had worked for the Co-operative Union, they mentioned a specific person they believed I just had to talk to. They all referred to this person as an "ideologist". When I then interviewed this person, I immediately realized that if similar persons could be identified in the other organizations, this was a category that absolutely needed to be part of the study. In order to find out I asked the elected representatives and officials I was about to interview if they could help me identifying someone in their respective organization that would match a description of this 'ideologists'. It turned out that such a person was identified in six of the nine organizations. However, the typical answer in the Swedish Red Cross, the Association of the Visually Impaired and the Union of Tenants was that this kind of more ideologically laden issues and activities were distributed among different persons. This is also why I finally interviewed 24 and not 27 persons, which would have been the case if I had been able to identify an 'ideologist' in all nine organizations.

6.1.3 Background Information Regarding the Group of Interviewees

The groups of interviewees included seventeen men and seven women. Broken down on the three categories, there were six men and three women among the chairpersons; eight men and one woman among the nine highest ranked officials; and three men and three women among the ideologists. The average age was 54, with a variation between 34 and 74. Seven were 50 or younger and five 60 or older.

In the group, there were only three who were not formal members of the organizations they represented. These three were all employed officials. In the case with the two persons from the Teachers' Union, they were, according to the organization's regulations, simply not allowed to affiliate as employees. The interviewee from the Association of the Visually Impaired stated that he had not affiliated because he had no problem with his eyesight. On average, the others had been members of their respective organizations just over 30 years, with a variation between 1 and 52. Most of the interviewees had apparently spent quite a number of years in their respective organization. The most extreme example was the 'ideologist' in the Swedish Football Association, who had been closely involved in the preparatory work for the organization's 50th anniversary, and at the time we met in 2004, he was also involved with its 100th anniversary.

There was no typical way for how and why the interviewees had become involved in their respective organization. For example, some said they had started out as "ordinary" members before becoming more and more involved later on. Others claimed to have been "born" into their organization due their parents' deep and sincere commitment. No matter what the entrance looked like, several maintained that the initial involvement gradually had increased to a strong commitment for the organization and its activities, which in some cases had even been transformed into professional careers. A few others asserted that they had applied for and gotten a job in the organization while working elsewhere.

When speaking about themselves and their commitment, some mentioned how they had wandered in and out of their organizations. That is, there were those who had occupied positions as elected representatives at different levels in their organization during certain periods while also working simultaneously in other types of organizations. The secretary general in the Football Association, for example, had before taking on the present job, worked both as a managing director for an insurance company and as a vice president of a bank in parallel to holding a position as elected representative in one of Sweden's larger football clubs.

6.2 The Empirical Material

The empirical material in this study derives from two sources – interviews and texts. The interview data derives from twenty-four (24) in-depth, semi-structured interviews that lasted between one and a half and two hours. Each interview was taped and all, except two, were conducted at the interviewees' respective workplaces. All interviews were also transcribed verbatim. The texts included in the empirical material are regu-

lations, annual reports, strategy/policy documents, web pages, yearbooks, and similar documents that describe the included organizations and their work.

6.2.1 The Interviews

I had no problem accessing the interviewees. One possible reason for this may have been that most of them knew, when I first contacted them, that their organizations were already part of this research project. I established contact through an e-mail in which I introduced myself, the purpose of the study, its design, and my plan for the upcoming interview. Several dates were also suggested for when to meet, and I encouraged each person to choose location for our encounter. None of the interviewees, with the exception of one case of misunderstanding, took more than two days for confirming a date and a place.

Each interview began with a quick introduction of the study's purpose and design. I also asked if the person opposed the use of tape recorder, which no one did. I explicitly said that my aim was to use the person's title and organizational belonging while excluding his/her personal name when referring to what had been said during the interview. No one objected to this, even if it meant that they could easily be identified.

As stated above, the interviews were semi-structured, which means that I followed a prepared set of questions, including both open-ended/exploratory and more specific and thematic queries (see Appendix II), at the same time as I paid close attention to and tried to follow up on the interviewees' individual answers. Consequently, the interviewees were confronted with a similar set of questions, at the same time as most interviews also involved unique questions and discussions depending on the interviewees' answers and how the conversation developed during the interview.

However, it must also be noted that even if all interviewees were confronted with a similar set of questions, everyone was not presented with all the prepared questions. Moreover, the questions posed were not necessarily formulated in the exact same manner in all interviews, nor was the order always the same. For example, the ideologist in the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden did not get the question regarding his spontaneous thoughts about membership since we touched upon that topic anyway. The interviewed official in the Association of the Visually Impaired were not either presented with this question since it had not been included in the prepared set of questions at the time for this first interview.

The explanation for some of these deviations probably derives from the fact that several of the prepared questions had an exploratory and open-ended character, which often meant that the interviewees' answers and/or my follow up questions made other fixed questions superfluous. Another aspect of this is that the interviewees had different opinions and/or experiences of things. For example, while some could relate to and provide anecdotes regarding an issue such as that of conflicts between individual members and their organization (question 29 in Appendix II), others claimed not to know of any such conflicts. One way to summarize this is to say that even if the interviews largely resembled each other, they were also different with respect to what,

how and in which order some questions were posed. It is also possible to say that the prepared set of questions was slightly adapted to each particular interview.

All twenty-four interviews were realized over a period of two and a half years, between spring 2002 and autumn/winter 2004. I transcribed 21 of them during the summers of 2002, 2003 and 2004, and the secretary at my department helped me transcribe the remaining three in the winter of 2004 (for more details see Appendix I). The reason for not conducting all interviews in a sequence was that I purposefully wanted a break about halfway in order to make space for new insights and a bit of self-reflection in the process. Accordingly, after having conducted and transcribed the first half of the interviews I decided to make a first preliminary analysis, both to create a more structured overlook of the material, and to see if I needed to alter or add new questions.

However, no questions were added at this stage, but I gradually dropped a few older ones. For example, in the second interview phase I tended to more and more skip questions regarding the interviewees' background (question 5 and 6, Appendix II), since I then had decided to make a joint follow-up on this information at a later stage. Similarly, I also noticed that it was mostly superfluous to pose questions of how to become a member and if there existed any particular restrictions regarding that process (questions 12-14, Appendix II) to interviewees representing the same organization. Also, I did not insist on the questions regarding the economy and formal structure of their respective organizations (question 8 and 9, Appendix II), since I figured that I would have to look into that separately anyway. Since I had also noticed that some questions (e.g. number 11 and 24, Appendix II) appeared a bit awkward, they were also gradually left out of the interviews.

In 2006 I sent another e-mail where I posed a few questions regarding complementary demographic data. I also took the opportunity to ask about how the interviewees believed the meaning of membership would develop, both on a more general level and in the organizations they represented at the time for the interview.

Finally, in the spring of 2007, I mailed each of the respondents an edited version of the interview accounts that I wanted to use from each interview. The main purpose here was to have each interviewee confirm the use of these accounts, or to propose any eventual changes if they felt that they no longer supported what they once had said. In September the same year, I sent out a reminder to those who had not answered. In this reminder I stated that had I not received an answer one and a half month later, I would take that as a confirmation that I was free to use the interview material without any changes. In this process there were a few of them that wanted to discuss what it was they had said, and in what context I was going to use it. While one or two wanted to change a few sentences, which did not comprise the content, there were also those who asked me to improve their language by skipping things like humming and swear words. Where I use exact citations, I have strived to meet all these requests.

Notable Reactions Among the Interviewees

Most interviewees said, either during or after the interview, that they had appreciated our discussions since they so seldom had the opportunity to sit down and reflect upon

the kind of fundamental issues and themes that were brought up. Some were even grateful that the interview had provided them with partly new perspectives and insights. Likewise, my overall impression is that none of the interviewees or I left each other dissatisfied or annoyed. Instead, most of them appeared both relaxed and enthusiastic both before and after we had met.

However, this does not necessarily mean that everything proceeded with complete mutual understanding and without tensions. Some interviews started out in an atmosphere permeated with what could be described as a strongly ideologically laden hesitation regarding the study as such, and me as a researcher from a business school. This was, for example, explicitly pronounced in some interviews from the Social Democratic Party, and from the Association of the Visually Impaired, where I was asked directly why someone from a place such as the Stockholm School of Economics would be interested in their kind of organization and the topic of membership. My interpretation of these reactions is that my academic affiliation with a business school did not match their expectations of what type of research and researchers one may find in a traditional business school environment. Nonetheless, I believe I managed to reduce some of these initial reservations by dedicating time to further explain the purpose and design of my study, the larger project, and the entire research program that is dedicated to civil society related issues, and that has been located at the Stockholm School of Economics since the early 1990s. My impression is that these explanations dispelled most of the doubts, since the interviews then continued in what I would characterize as a good atmosphere.

Another interesting thing that might require a comment was the reaction among some respondents in relation to questions of why their organizations affiliate individual members, and if it was possible to depict their organizations without these members at all. Especially a few interviewees from the Union of Tenants, the Co-operative Union and the Teachers' Union seem to have reacted with bafflement and, in some cases, also explicit indignation over these, as they said, trivial and misguided questions. Or, as they seemed to claim, was it not obvious that one had to have members in an organization that are membership-based? Superficially, one could credit them for this opinion. Nonetheless, despite any potential triviality, these questions and the answers they generated were both interesting and relevant, since they brought attention to important aspects of the otherwise often taken for granted attitude towards membership and organizational efforts in today's Swedish civil society.

Reflections on Interviewing Leaders

No matter the topic, or who is involved, every interview runs the risk of becoming an arena for someone's interests and an amplifier for his/her individual voice. Yet, since we are social beings it is impossible to be fully objective or distanced whenever we interact with others. That is, we respond to others and others respond to us, and no matter what we say or do, it is for most parts anchored in some kind of position or attitude (cf. chapter 2 above).

When interviewing, I believe that it is particularly important to maintain an attitude that does not compromise one's credibility. Problems tend to arise when biases become many and weighty, or if explicit prejudices and presumptions are left unattended. Therefore, even if we cannot escape all biases, one ought to strive for reducing as much of this as possible. From my perspective this means that I as researcher constantly need to be cautious about my own reactions, insights, interpretations, and conclusions. It also means being attentive to what the people one interacts with say and do.

This is perhaps especially true if we interact with people that can be expected to have something to gain by trying to communicate and induce specific interests or certain agendas. One such group is leaders, executives, and other official representatives of organizations. However, there is not much we can do about this, other than be aware of the fact and try to pay constant attention to it. This is something I have tried throughout the work with this study, especially in relation to the interviews, and my analysis of the empirical material.

Apart from a few examples, I must say that another impression of mine is that most interviewees seemed to engage in discussions in a manner that I would characterize as fairly relaxed and impartial. One who especially deviated from this pattern, though, was one chairman who, regardless of what questions I posed, seemed to steer and relate most answers to an internal process that just had been launched in his/her organization. When I realized this, about one-third into the interview, I did not point it out but tried instead to constantly pose follow-up questions that forced the person to provide answers containing additional information besides this internal process.

In another case, one of the highest ranked officials in one of the organizations leant over and grabbed my list of prepared questions before I even had the time to pose the first question. In the few seconds that passed while he/she quickly read the list through out loud I considered my options. And, when he/she then also had answered the first question with a short sentence and began with question number two, I stood up and kindly asked for the list. This made the person look up and hand it over with a somewhat surprised gesture. After this rather peculiar start the rest of the interview proceeded without incidents. This occurrence could be interpreted in several ways. My impression, which I put down on paper immediately afterwards, is that this could have been an attempt to reduce uncertainty by becoming sure of what questions and issues the interview would concern and, at the same time, also take control over the whole situation by answering the questions on the list with as few words as possible and without having to engage in any discussions.

6.3 Structuring and Analyzing the Data

Every attempt to structure information inevitably involves interpretation and analysis. Structuring empirical data is an important part of an analysis, and vice versa. Consequently, no matter how I present the empirical material in this study it will always be a result of my own interpretations and analysis. The reason behind this, as I see it, is that since reality cannot be portrayed in any neutral objective way it is also impossible to create neutral descriptions of the same (cf. chapter 2). In this case, I believe this means

that my ontological and epistemological perspective, together with my research questions and theoretical framework, mark the way I have structured and analyzed the empirical material. Yet, by providing a few short glimpses of how I have worked with and structured this material, it is perhaps possible for others to better assess the credibility of my interpretations and discussions.

After much reading, underlining, thinking, writing, rewriting, more reading, thinking and rewriting again and again, I decided to present the empirical material in this study divided into four chapters (7-10 below). In order to create an understanding for the organizational contexts in which this study is situated, the first of these chapters offers separate descriptions of the nine organizations included in the study. These descriptions, which contain several linkages to the discussion found in chapter 3-5, are not primarily based on interview material or my own previous knowledge, but on texts that have been produced and/or published by the organizations themselves or people closely related to them. This includes annual reports, bylaws, strategy/policy documents, Jubilee- and yearbooks, texts from web pages, and other similar publications. In about half of the descriptions, I have also used some scholarly work involving historical reviews of particular organizations. However, the amount of information available regarding each organization varies. It has therefore been a challenge to create nine more or less equal descriptions in terms of length and depth, and as a result, the presentations differ in these respects.

6.3.1 My Interpretation Process

As stated above, I made a first preliminary analysis after having conducted and transcribed the first twelve interviews. In order to get familiar with the material, I began by simply reading it through twice without adding any comments. The third time, though, I did not read each interview straight through. Instead, as soon as I found something interesting in one interview, I made a note in the margin and marked the section in a specific color before starting to look for the same theme in the other interviews. Wherever I found something similar I marked that section with the same color and added a short comment that also contained an indication where to find this theme elsewhere. After I had gone through all twelve interviews searching for one particular theme, I returned to the first interview and started looking for another, and so I continued all through the interviews.

However, the themes that were identified in this way did seldom, if ever, appear in only one place in each interview. Instead, they were all related to either coherent or ambiguous discussions and arguments typically spread out all over an interview. This gives the material a complex and multifaceted character, which I have tried hard to handle during the entire process. Nonetheless, this initial cross-reading technique soon made the interviews look like chaotic, but beautifully colored Christmas trees, and I realized that it was necessary to change tactics before it all would become too difficult to handle.

My solution to this problem was to work with one interview at the time. And, in addition to adding comments and color markings to each text, I also began to put a parti-

cular theme and every related comment down on an A3 paper together with a matching page number before marking it in the same color as in the text. If and when I then found something that connected to that particular theme later on in the same interview I added a short comment next to the corresponding theme on the A3 paper, together with the new page number. When I had worked my way through one interview in this way, which usually meant filling an A3 paper, I took another interview and a new A3 paper and started all over. Through this slow, but meticulous mind-mapping method, each A3 paper became a summary of its corresponding interview through all the themes, interrelated comments and page numbers it contained (see Appendix III, which unfortunately is printed in black and white). In this way, I created not only a thematic overview of each interview, but also a compression of the total material that facilitated further comparisons between all interviews. In fact, this worked out so well that I used the same approach in my analysis of all the interviews in the study.

In 2005, when I had finished interviewing, transcribing, and going through all 24 interviews in the way described above, I began the arduous work of making a global comparative analysis of the entire material. This basically meant putting it all back together again, but this time in accordance to a thematization I had teased out through my mind-mapping technique. Hence, I began to look for patterns among the themes and comments I had scribbled down on each mind-map. Because these themes and comments carried page numbers referring to where they had been found I was here able to, once again, go through the interviews for proofreading my earlier interpretations. Thanks to these page numbers I was also able to sort out the quotations that I wanted to use. In this process, I decided to collapse a few early themes into each other, as well as adding one or two new to the already existing ones.

This intense work resulted in almost 150 full text pages, with a few thematic headlines and numerous citations and comments. During periods in 2005 and 2006, I repeatedly read, reread, wrote, rewrote, structured and restructured these pages in order to work out the themes and patterns I had derived from the material. I found this part of the analysis particularly frustrating, even if my description of it appears coherent and simple. My anguish surfaced from a persistent feeling of disorientation, and 'not being able to see the forest for all the trees'. At times, I really lost track of what I was doing and what I believed to have found. Nonetheless, chapter 8, 9 and 10 below is how I finally decided to summarize and structure this part of the analysis.

Parallel to the above-described process, I also developed texts in which the intention was to formulate more concrete ideas and aspects regarding the empirical material as such, my interpretations of the same and the theoretical framing of my analysis (cf. Hvenmark 2002, 2003; Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004). Although many of my early ideas were discarded along with how the rest of the work developed, some survived and made it to the final theoretical framework that comprise chapter 3, 4 and 5 above.

In sum, this study has evolved from a continuous interplay between theoretical texts and ideas on one hand and my interpretations of the empirical material on the other. In addition, this oscillating process has all along also been enriched with constructive input from being frequently presented and discussed on research seminars, and conferences as well as in numerous teaching and lecturing situations involving both stu-

dents and representatives from civil society organizations. Thus, it is probably correct to characterize the work process related to this study in terms of an interpretation process, in which empirical material and theory has been alternated and continuously interpreted in the light of each other (cf. Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000).

6.3.2 Reflections on the Scope of the Analysis

This study focuses on the meaning of individual membership. I have predominantly been informed through the explicit perceptions of the people I have interviewed. This means that I have interpreted these persons' perception of membership and its meaning. This brings with it the situation that I am destined to trust and rely on the specific discourses and narrations these interviewees put forth, instead of on my own direct observation of the social practice they refer to.

At an early stage I considered doing participatory observations, since my initial approach implies that the perceptions I study constitute only one part of reality, and since I therefore could not state any discrepancies between these perceptions and the praxis they refer to. It could, for example, have been interesting to take part in organizational settings and situations where the interviewees also participated. Yet, I soon decided to abandon these ideas, since I found it difficult to pinpoint in which specific situations, processes, or critical incidents the 'making' of membership could be expected to be more observable than in others. Hence, I would have had to participate everywhere all the time in order to find out about this. It would also mean bringing in a new aspect of what I had set out to study. That would not necessarily have been a bad thing, but I could not see the added value. Nor could I rationalize it from the argument that studying a phenomenon from different angles would imply coming closer to *the truth*. Because, from my onto- and epistemological perspective this would just imply ending up with *different* but *equally true* truths (cf. chapter 2).

I would also like to emphasize that the results of this study, above all, are related to a specific group of informants, a specific organizational setting, and a specific societal context. This means that the perceptions of individual membership tentatively would be different if the concepts and models developed here would be applied to other groups of respondents within the present organizations (e.g. rank and file members or paid staff), other membership-based and democratically governed organizations (e.g. Save the Children Sweden or the Swedish National Pensioners' Organization), other membership-based organizations (e.g. Greenpeace or customer clubs), or other societal contexts.

6.3.3 Ethical Considerations

In this chapter I have, among other things, briefly discussed the interviewees' assumed preferential right of interpretation. As researcher I am also ascribed a somewhat similar power, since I am in charge of creating questions, choosing method, formulating a theoretical framework, and doing interpretations. I also control the order and content of the text I write. This kind of power entails responsibility and discretion. The Swe-

dish Research Council has formulated specific ethical principles and guidelines for social science research (Vetenskapsrådet 2002). There are two basic principles they recommend scholars to follow. The first one concerns a demand for good science, and the second the protection of informants.

To protect the right of the interviewees in this study I informed them, both well ahead and just before the interviews, about the study's purpose, design, their role, and how I was going to use the empirical material. I was also explicit about the fact that I was not going to use their personal names, but the official position in the organization they represented. Although this meant they could be identified, no one objected to this. Nor did anyone object to the use of tape-recorder during the interviews, as already noted. The transcriptions on my computer have no personal names and I have stored the tapes in a safety-deposit box. Furthermore, I have presented and asked each interviewee to approve the direct citations that I use from his/her interview. The few objections in this respect concerned clarifications, humming, and correction of inappropriate language. However, I did not present them with my interpretations of the empirical material before publication.

For me, social science concerns the analysis of social phenomena and conditions from certain theoretical perspectives. Even if some may find it offensive or even rude, this may involve, just like it does in this study, the description, interpretation, and problematization of people's perception. However, in the present analysis I am not interested or concerned with evaluating what the interviewees say as being either right or wrong, good or bad. Having said that, my hope is that no one will be offended by my interpretations and discussions, but instead feel inspired to engage in further reflections on the topic of individual membership.

7. Nine 'Marinated' Federations

In this chapter I provide more detailed empirical descriptions of the nine federative organizations included in this study. The intention is not to give the 'complete picture', but to display a general idea of things like origin, operations, structures and finances. Accordingly, each description involves a chronological narration of how the organization in question has evolved, followed by a few words on current objectives, main activities, structure and data on affiliated members, financial status, etc. This will hopefully enrich the readers' familiarity with the organizational contexts engaged with in this study.

7.1 The Swedish Union of Tenants [*Hyresgästföreningen*]

An important part of the radical societal changes that took place in Sweden towards the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century was an intense trend of urbanization. This meant that large parts of the population, in a relatively short period of time, abandoned the countryside in favor of larger cities and industrialized areas in order to find new and supposedly improved ways of supporting themselves (cf. Micheletti 1995). However, this meant that large quantities of people not only changed one location for another, but also that they shifted their way of life. Unfortunately though, these changes were not always for the better. The misery and poverty that became a reality for many in the then evolving working class seem to have given rise to a lot of discontent, frustration, and anger. One area that particularly seemed to arouse dissatisfaction and tension concerned housing and living conditions (ibid.).

Although isolated measures had been taken, there was a general and acute shortage of good housing up until the 1950s in Sweden, especially in expanding urban areas or in close connection to industrialized sites (Nyström 1997, Union of Tenants 2004). In these areas, the housing alternatives in general for many people in the lower social strata of society were restricted to small and expensive flats, often found in bad conditions (Nordström 1938/1984; Näslund 1993). This situation was a breeding-ground, and later on also a stable platform, for what soon would become known as the tenants' movement in Sweden (Ivarsson and Tengling 1988; Eriksson 1993).

The first known local tenants' association in Sweden was formed in October 1899 in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden. Due to lack of commitment among its founding members, though, this short-lived endeavor was closed down already in December the same year (Ivarsson and Tengling 1988). Numerous similar initiatives commenced and terminated between 1902 and 1914 in Gothenburg, Stockholm, and in a few other large cities. It was not until 1915 that one of the more stable tenants' associations was formed. It was established in the city of Nynäshamn and after 92 years of

existence it is still active (www.hyresgasterna.se). Two years later, larger tenants' associations were formed in both Gothenburg and Stockholm respectively. This happened in close relation to and/or in direct cooperation with organizations from the then vivid workers' movement, such as trade unions and the Swedish Social Democratic Party (Ivarsson and Tengling 1993). The same year a law was passed that assured tenants a security of tenure and a protection against rent usury (ibid.). However, this law was abolished in 1923 and in relation to this eight local tenants' associations decided to join forces and establish a national association, *Hyresgästernas Riksförbund* [The National Association of Tenants]. At the start, eight local associations, affiliating about 8.000 individual members, partook in this event (ibid.). Ten years later, the national body organized 33 local associations and almost 40.000 individual members, and some thirty years later those numbers had increased to more than 350.000 individual members, about 220 local associations, and eleven district organizations (Eriksson 1993).

The first rent negotiation procedures with private landlords were initiated in the early 1930s. In the 1950s these continuous negotiation rounds would also include municipal non-profit housing companies (Union of Tenants 2004). In 1936, the National Association of Tenants opened a juridical advice bureau for its members. This service function would in 1963 have grown to such an extent that it then handled as many as 30.000 commissions every year (Ivarsson and Tengling 1993). 1936 is also the year when the first invitation arrives asking the association to participate in an offical government commission. This signals that the organization is not only officially recognized and accepted, but also that it may function as a reliable body [*remissinstans*] to which a proposed government measure could be submitted for consideration (Union of Tenants 2004).

During the 1940s and 1950s, there is a focus on above all three areas: influencing legislation, enhancing the construction of new and modern flats and houses, and providing service for its affiliated individual members. The 1950s also implied a large-scale implementation of study circles as an important internal tool for educating individual members. These activities peaked in the early 1980s with around 12.000 active study circles/year spread out all over the country (Ivarsson and Tengling 1993).

The 1960s are marked by the launch of the so-called *Miljonprogrammet* [the One Million Program], a governmental attempt to get rid of the shortage of good and affordable housing. This initiative, which was partly a result of the National Association of Tenants' lobby work, was officially formulated and financed by the Swedish State. Around 1975, this enormous project would imply that only five percent of the Swedish population still lived in confined quarters (Ivarsson and Tengling 1993).

In the 1970s, a somewhat contradictory era began, since the organization generally grew stronger economically and administratively while its internal life became infested with severe political disputes and temporary divisions (cf. Eriksson 1993; Lindholm 1998). Even if a considerable amount of individual members left the organization in those days, these clashes and conflicts seemed to pave the way for a much more permissible internal climate in the years that followed (Lindholm 1998).

In 1980, the National Association of Tenants becomes officially entitled to negotiate the rent not only for its own affiliated individual members, but for all tenants in Sweden (Palm 1993). Today there are close to 1,6 million rental dwellings in Sweden, and

about 90 percent of all housing rents are established through these negotiations with both municipal housing companies and private landlords. To finance these negotiation procedures less than half a percentage is drawn from every tenants' rent, equals to the so-called *hyressättningsavgiften* [rent establishing charge]. Currently, this charge generates somewhere around 160 million Swedish crowns (SEK) to The Union of Tenants annually (Union of Tenants 2007; www.hyresgasterna.se).

In the aftermath of the financial crisis that Sweden experienced during the first years of the 1990s, there was a forced rent increase of about 40 percent. The right-wing government that won the general elections in 1991 initiated a reform work that implied a change in the basic policies and foundations that for decades had marked the situation for rental dwellings in Sweden. State subsidies and regulations were to give way to market solutions and commercially driven interests (Union of Tenants 2004). Similar efforts to change the regulation in this area continued on and off depending on the political color of the following residing governments, and the National Association of Tenants was forced to start reconsidering its overall strategies and activates. In 1998, the organization turned 75 and a few years into the new millennium the name is changed to the Union of Tenants [*Hyresgästföreningen*].

7.1.2 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

Today, the Union of Tenants depicts itself as a member organization whose guiding vision is that everyone living in Sweden has a right to good housing at an affordable and fair cost. Apart from fulfilling this idea, the main goals are also to improve tenants' housing and living conditions; to enhance the affiliated members' influence and participation in decision-making processes that concern their housing; to guarantee them a security of tenure; and to provide a sense of community. Some of the guiding values that are supposed to permeate the contemporary work of the organization depart from a general belief that people want to commit themselves to be collectively responsible for their own situation (www.hyresgasterna.se).

On the road to fulfilling their vision and objectives, it is also stated that the Union of Tenants seeks alliances and cooperation with other organized interests, such as the Swedish Trade Union Federation (LO), the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees (TCO), the Workers' Educational Association (ABF), and the Swedish National Pensioners' Organization (PRO). The Union of Tenants is also part of the International Union of Tenants (IUT), whose secretariat it also hosts. The IUT is today represented in forty countries and has a consultative status with the United Nations Economical and Social Council (www.iut.nu).

As mentioned above, a fundamental aspect of the Union of Tenants in Sweden is that it first and foremost focuses on the interest of its affiliated individual members, which probably helps explaining their contemporary and official credo: *"Our size is your strength"*. On their webpage it is declared that the participation and commitment among their rank and file members is a particularly prioritized area. On the same page it is also stated that the organization has no formal ties to any political party and that it strives to remain a *"/…/ strong folkrörelse that influence the development of society and that*

constantly enforces the position of the individual tenant" (www.hyresgasterna.se, my translation).

The organization's core activity today can be summarized as follows: to represent all tenants in annual rent negotiations in relation to the municipal housing stock. The result of these negotiations then becomes, by law, a target and a 'roof' for the rents set in the privately owned rental stock. They also try to rouse public opinion and lobby against political policy makers in their attempt to ensure the right to good housing at affordable rents. A third prioritized area focuses on service to and support of their members. Or, as it is put in an official folder, downloadable from the webpage (ibid.):

> /…/ we have an organization with experience and expertise to consult on everything to do with your housing needs. Our large membership also means we can offer excellent membership benefits, for instance, home insurance (my translation).

This support and service function may also include things like informing their members of tenants' rights and obligations as well as providing legal counseling and representation for tenants in dispute with their landlords (ibid.).

7.1.3 Current Structures and Numbers

In 2006, the Union of Tenants affiliated 534.085 individual members. 39 percent, or some 208.000 of those, were younger than 40 years of age. About 2,5 percent (roughly 13.000) occupied a position as elected representative throughout the entire federative structure (Union of Tenants 2007). Although the entire organization is nowadays constituted as a single juridical person, the practical work comes about through an organization comprising four levels, and many different local and regional units.

First, located in Stockholm, with some 40 employees, is a national secretariat from where the overall coordination of all activities within the organization largely departs. The secretariat is organized around the following areas: housing policy, legal issues, rent negotiations environment, information and communication, international affairs, administration and finances. It also has the formal responsibility for the entire organization's 850 employees (www.hyresgasterna.se).

The next level of the Union of Tenants includes ten regional organizations. Their main responsibility is to coordinate activities taking place in the geographical area that each of them cover (ibid.).

At a municipal level in the Union of Tenants there are 187 associations, whose main task it is to negotiate rents with both municipal housing companies and private landlords (ibid.). At estate level, then, there are about 3.000 local associations. Their activities and field of operation usually cover one housing estate or block. The individual members that belong to such an association live in the actual estate, and are the ones that elect the board of their association. One important issue for this board is to, through different activities, spread knowledge regarding the particular objectives and necessities of the association they are set to rule. These activities are primarily intended for the recruitment of new members. However, their task is also to develop leisure, cultural, and social activities within the actual estate. Through agreements with the land-

lord, the local tenant associations can also influence maintenance, shaping of playgrounds, replacement of interior fixtures, etc. in the neighboring area (ibid.).

Both the local estate and municipal level have a board and an annual meeting as their highest decision-making organ. At the national level, the highest decision-making organ is the national assembly that annually gathers representatives from the other levels. In between these assemblies, the national board is the highest decision-making organ, whose number one priority is to ensure that the resolutions that pass the national assembly are executed (www.hyresgasterna.se).

In 2006, revenues for the Union of Tenants just passed SEK 741 million while the surplus came close to SEK 33 million. Total assets amounted to nearly SEK 824 million. In parallel to the above-described federative structure, the Union of Tenants is also partial or full owner of eight for-profit companies. The revenues within this group reached almost SEK 795 million and a surplus of SEK 37 million. Total assets for the group were about SEK 848 million (Union of Tenants 2007).

7.2 The International Organization of Good Templars in Sweden [*IOGT-NTO*]

Compared to today's levels, the consumption of alcohol was extraordinarily high in Sweden during the 19th century. It has been estimated that Swedes in 1820, on average, drank more than twenty liters of alcohol per year (Bruun 1975), which can be compared to the contemporary average of about ten liters per person a year (cf. Gustafsson and Trolldal 2004; Trolldal *et al.* 2005). This widespread drinking, and the social problems it caused, shocked and stirred up many people's minds. As a result, the numerous small and large private distilleries that existed in the 19th century were soon paralleled by organized efforts to restrain and counteract the abuse of alcohol. Even if the earliest initiatives dates back as far as 1819 (Svensson 1979), it seems as if the 1830s was the decade when the embryonic temperance movement really kicked off in Sweden (Jansson 1985). One of the more notable organizations then was the Swedish Temperance Society [*Svenska nykterhetssällskapet*], which was founded in 1837 under the patronage of the Swedish monarch. Some ten years later, this first flagship of the Swedish temperance movement had grown rapidly to about 420 local associations with more than 100.000 affiliated members. But, by the 1870s its days of glory were over and the Swedish Temperance Society was just a tiny fraction of what it once had been (Johansson 1980). New advocates for sobriety had entered the scene, and time had come for the second phase of the temperance movement in Sweden.

The first of several temperance lodges of the Order of Good Templars was founded in the small town of Utica on the east coast of USA in 1851. However, due to almost immediate internal conflicts in this quite early organizational manifestation of the temperance movement, a group of people broke away in 1852 and formed the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT, today *International Organization* of Good Templars, my emphasis). This 'independent' alternative – which since its start has demanded a temperance pledge of a total abstinence from its members – spread rapidly throughout North America and beyond (Lindgren 2001).

In 1868, the first European IOGT lodge was established in Birmingham, England. The first Nordic establishment appeared in Norway nine years later. Sweden got its first lodge in 1879, when *nr. 1 Klippan* was established in Gothenburg (Svensson 1979). In just a few years time, the IOGT would have become the dominating organization in the Swedish temperance movement with an almost complete national representation (Johansson 1980). In 1890 the IOGT alone affiliated more than 75.000 members, and in 1910, these numbers reached an all time high level of more than 160.000 (Lindgren 2001).

The arrival of the IOGT in Sweden demarcated a rupture between the old and the new versions of the Swedish temperance movement. This is to a large extent related to the organization's cultural origin, with certain values and organizational characteristics deriving from the US fraternal order system in general, and the Free Masons in particular. This meant that particular rituals, ceremony regalia and decorations together with certain values and perspectives, such as a North American optimism, idealism, and religiousness, helped forming a specific organizational culture (cf. Thörnberg 1943; Larsen-Ledet 1951).

However, large parts of the history of the temperance movement and its particular organizations, both in Sweden and internationally, are marked by open and repeated conflicts and rebellions. This led to numerous organizational offspring and mergers as well as the creation of completely new temperance organizations. For example, a serious conflict emerged in the American IOGT already in the 1860s. The issue then concerned whether or not colored people should be allowed to enter the organization. Although this dispute was probably an issue that mostly mattered to the North American branches, it rapidly spread and affected most other national IOGT chapters as well (cf. Johansson 1980, Lindgren 2001).

In 1888, a major conflict erupted in the Swedish IOGT, which led to a fundamental split of the organization. Even if this dispute had bearings on the earlier international conflict concerning the affiliation of Afro-Americans, it was in reality more related to religious elements within the IOGT (Svensson 1979). The different positions in this matter was so grave that one group finally broke away and created the National Order of Good Templars [*Nationalgodtemplarorden*, NGTO], which emphasized a Christian character (Svensson 1979; Thörnberg 1943).

Religion was also the reason behind another major separation from IOGT in 1896, which led to the establishment of the Temperance Order of Verdandi [*Nykterhetsorden Verdandi*], a religiously neutral organization with an explicit orientation towards the politically more radical workers movement and its organizations (Lindgren 2001).

In 1884, the Order of Templars [*Templarorden*, TO], an offspring of the American IOGT that paralleled its temperance activities with providing health insurances and self-help institutions, also found its way to Sweden (Svensson 1979; Thörnberg 1943). In 1922, NGTO and TO merged into one organization – the National Order of Templars [*Nationaltemplarorden*, NTO]. In 1951, an attempt to unite the organizations IOGT and NTO failed, supposedly due to a widespread unwillingness among members of the national board of the NTO (Svensson 1979). However, in 1967 both organizations agreed on extending their cooperation in certain fields, and the final merger took place three years later (ibid.). Even if both these organizations were almost a century old by

1970, their unification marks the formal birth of the contemporary IOGT-NTO, which since then has been the commonly used acronym and name for what today is the leading temperance organization in Sweden.

Throughout the history of the temperance organizations that later on merged into the IOGT-NTO, important activity fields were youth activities, adult education, and the political struggle towards a sober society. Younger people were targeted through different scout activities within both the IOGT and the NTO all through the 20th century. A general culture emphasizing internal meetings and gatherings in the lodges at the local level has been coupled with further activities such as study circles (ibid.). From the early 1920s to the early 1960s, for example, the total number of study circles arranged annually by the IOGT and the NTO increased from around 2.000 to about 5.000 (Lindgren 2001). For many decades, the issue of a total ban on alcohol was one of the more important issues for most organizations in the Swedish temperance movement. This meant that several of them, with the IOGT at the forefront, have dedicated substantial efforts and resources to agitate for a total ban as well as to influence politicians and policy-makers in this direction. In 1922, however, there was a referendum, in which 51 percent of the Swedish population voted against such a measure. During the decades that followed upon this defeat, most Swedish temperance organizations abandoned the idea of a total ban in favor of a more varied and diverse activity portfolio. Apart from the already mentioned focus on adult education, youth and political reform work, this general reorientation has also included a focus on initiating political and information campaigns as well as more culturally oriented activities (Johansson 1980).

7.2.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

The IOGT-NTO's long-term vision is: *"/…/ a society, a world, where people can live their lives free from the obstacle of alcohol and other drugs"* (www.iogt.se). The overall principle that supposedly guides the activities in which the organization is engaged departs from the assumption that everyone has the same right to freedom, personal development and happiness in life. The general intention of the IOGT-NTO is that its work should foster and achieve international solidarity based on democratic grounds. From the overall perspective that alcohol, narcotics, and other similar intoxicants constitutes a burden for the individual as well as for society, the IOGT-NTO officially strives to hold back the use of these substances. The latter is also the reason for why the individual membership offered includes the demand of total abstinence from alcohol and other intoxicants (ibid.).

In order to achieve this, the IOGT-NTO officially states an engagement in building a worldwide *folkrörelse* that incorporates men and women regardless of race, nationality, religion, social position, or political opinion. It also means that they are committed to adult educational and associational activities with a general aim to stimulate their affiliates to study and become engaged in societal issues. The operations also include efforts to accomplish personal teetotalism; to inform about the effects of using drugs; to rehabilitate those who have been damaged from abuse of alcohol or narcotics; and to

influence politicians, policy makers, and the general public in order to reduce the consumption of intoxicants (ibid.). To realize all this, internal priority in the IOGT-NTO is given to the following three activity fields: advocacy for a restrictive alcohol and drug policy, prevention of alcohol and drug problems, and social work. The official activities performed within the frames of these three activity fields are, in most cases, facilitated and coordinated, if necessary, by the national secretariat in Stockholm.

7.2.2 Current Structures and Numbers

The original order-like form and character of the Swedish temperance organizations in the 19th century gave way to more openness as well as democratic values and procedures during the first decades of the 20th century (cf. Johansson, 1980). Thus, most temperance organizations became more and more aligned with the *folkrörelse* culture and tradition that was lined out in chapter 4 in those days.

In the overall description on the IOGT-NTO webpage today (www.iogt.se) it is stated that the legal structure departs from the more than 46.000 members that were affiliated with the organization in 2007.[5] Each of these members is formally tied to one of the around 1.000 local clubs or associations dispersed all over Sweden. Every local club arranges an annual meeting at which all of its members are entitled to vote to elect the board, and to adopt or reject whatever financial and activity oriented plan that might be suggested.

The local clubs are interconnected through 23 district organizations whose jurisdictions cover most of Sweden. In their turn, the district organizations arrange annual meetings, to which the local clubs within the geographical area that each district covers send a number of appointed representatives. These meetings elect a district board, and the main responsibility of that particular board is to ensure that the ideas and measures adopted at the congress, the highest authority in the entire IOGT-NTO, are carried out (ibid.).

The bi-annual congress, at which only appointed and elected delegates from the districts are allowed to participate, elects a national board for the organization and adopts an action plan, strategy and policy programs, as well as financial information and plans. The national board acts as the highest authority of the IOGT-NTO between the congresses (ibid.).

This structural core of the IOGT-NTO, in which about 200 employees are included, is also tightly linked with the following three national temperance associations: the Junior Association [*Juniorförbundet*], the Youth Temperance Association [*Ungdomens Nykterhetsförbund*] and the Temperance Scout Association [*Nykterhetsrörelsens Scoutförbund*] (ibid.).

Internationally there are IOGT organizations represented in more than 60 countries all over the globe. The IOGT-NTO in Sweden is engaged in several foreign aid programs that are managed through a foundation called the International Institute of the IOGT-NTO Movement. The founders of this foundation are the four Swedish tem-

[5] When the interviews were conducted for this study, the amount of affiliated individual members was less than 35.000.

perance organizations mentioned above (ibid., see also Einarsson, S. 2007, 2008 for more on the contemporary structure of the so-called IOGT-NTO family).

The IOGT-NTO is also sole owner, or co-owner, of two larger study centers, two companies selling lottery tickets, a publishing company, a small stocks and bonds company, a rehabilitation center, a news agency for drug-related information, and a company that administrates the more than 450 different real estates owned by the IOGT-NTO (IOGT-NTO 2007). A few years into the new millennium, the IOGT-NTO created a proper bank specializing in bonds and insurances (Lindgren 2001).

In the financial account for 2005-2006 it is stated that the IOGT-NTO ran at a loss of almost SEK 66 million. However, thanks to the annual contributions from its for-profit companies, mainly the lottery tickets business, there was a total surplus of SEK 17 million. Total assets in 2006 were over SEK 496 millon (IOGT-NTO 2007).

7.3 The Swedish Red Cross [*Röda Korset*]

The origin of the Red Cross typically starts with the story of how the private Swiss banker Henry Dunant witnessed the human suffering and misery at the battlefield of Solferino in 1859 (Dunant 1862/1986). Dunant's experiences in Solferino gave rise to the idea of creating an international organization that would protect and take care of people who were wounded in war. During the years that followed, Dunant acted as the driving force behind an initiative that evolved into an international conference held in Geneva in 1863, in which people from 14 governments were represented. A direct result of this conference was the establishment of the International Red Cross Committee. Already the year after, another, similar, conference was held. This time, the result was the creation of the first of the so-called Geneva Convention, which later on would constitute the base for our contemporary international law on humanitarian rights (cf. Hutchinson 1996; Moorehead 1999). Another outcome of this second conference was the decision to establish a national Red Cross organization in every country. This led to the creation of a Red Cross society in Sweden in 1865, and eventually the 184 other national Red Cross/ Crescent societies that exist today (www.redcross.se).

In the original charters of the Swedish Association for Voluntary Aid of Sick and Wounded in Battle [*Föreningen för frivillig vård av sårade och sjuka i fält*], which in 1886 changed its name to the Swedish Red Cross Association, it is stated that the primary objective is to ensure medical treatment of soldiers that either are ill or have been wounded in battle (Cronenberg 1985). In order to carry out such an assignment, it was also stated that the organization should facilitate the education of nurses and make sure that all necessary material was always at hand. It was also stated that the organization should engage in establishing local premises all over the country, which in reality did not start happening until 1893, when the first local associations were established in the southern parts of Sweden (Söderberg 1965).

Several decades after its genesis, there were very few Swedes who had affiliated with the organization, even if there was an internal rhetoric arguing the opposite (Cronenberg 1985). In 1865, there were 3.470 registered individual members. Thirty-five years later they were only half as many. In 1915, though, the amount had increased

to almost 35.000, distributed over 224 local associations (ibid.). Between 1920 and 1965, the amount of rank and file members rose from 60.000 to 600.000 (Söderberg 1965).

This increase in local associations and affiliated members might be a result of an internal effort around 1900 to change the organization from being regarded as an exclusive club for the aristocracy, and members of the Swedish royal family, to become more of a "*folkrörelse*" (Cronenberg 1985), oriented towards common Swedes. Two events that probably facilitated this expansion was the 1915 combined reorganization and merger of a number of parallel but autonomous associations that up until then had co-operated under the name of the Red Cross, and the reorganization that took place in 1925. These two events mark a transitional period in the organization's development (Hultkrantz 1945), since they seem to have paved the way for a more popular anchorage and a broader social program. However, the increase in number of members is probably also related to times of war, such as World War I, II, and the Korean War in the 1950s (Söderberg 1965).

Over the years, the Swedish Red Cross has been involved in many more activities than what was stated in its first regulations. On its official webpage, the organization today calls itself a social pioneer because of its active identification of social and humanitarian needs in a number of areas in society (www.redcross.se). The Swedish Red Cross appears to have played an important role in several social fields during its more than 140 years in Sweden (Söderberg 1965). However, many of its activities have been taken over by state or municipal authorities following the development and expansion of the Swedish welfare state (for an overall description of this development in Sweden see e.g. chapter 3 and 6 in Lundström and Wijkström 1997). Here are a few examples of activities initiated outside the frame of the first regulations: the first organized training of nurses (1860s), a proper institution for child delivery (1920s), school dental service (1920s), holiday camps for children (1930s), public baths and saunas (1940s), transportation service for old and disabled persons (1960s), and treatment of tortured and traumatized refugees and HIV/aids patients (1980s) (www.redcross.se).

7.3.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

The current mission of the Swedish Red Cross and other national Red Cross societies in the world is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity, which is done regardless of race, religion, or political belief. The work carried out to achieve this mission has its base in the following principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality (www.redcross.se).

The Red Cross in Sweden is today active both nationally and internationally. In Sweden, the organizations activities involve four main areas: social security, assistance to asylum seekers and refugees, disaster response and preparedness, and local international cooperation. More concretely, the Swedish Red Cross runs six centers that work with restoring both the physical and mental health of those who are suffering from war traumas and torture. It is also involved in the work of organizing and maintaining a national preparedness in case of war or major catastrophes. Through the help

of many thousands of volunteers, the organization is also engaged in extensive social work that includes support for elderly people and refugees, medical treatment of illegal immigrants, and an emergency telephone service. It also sustains 289 premises called *Kupan* [the Hive] all over Sweden, where members and others can meet, socialize, shop second-hand clothes and things, and receive information about the Red Cross. Since the 1880s, the Swedish Red Cross has also continuously arranged courses in first aid (ibid.).

The international work which the Swedish Red Cross is involved in is above all focused on helping sister organizations in other countries in cases of armed conflicts or natural disasters. Much of this foreign aid work is channeled through either the IFRC (International Federation of the Red Cross) or the ICRC (International Red Cross Committee). The Swedish organization also supports long-term infrastructural work in other countries. It also prepares and trains Swedish delegates in management, health, water and sanitation, organizational, resource development, and finance before they go to work for the Red Cross internationally (ibid., see also Wijkström and Hvenmark 2002 for more on symbols, ideology, structures, and cooperation within the IFRC and the ICRC).

7.3.2 Current Structures and Numbers

The contemporary structure of the Swedish Red Cross consists of a national web of more than 1.313 local associations. These associations are internally called *rödakorskretsar* [approx. red cross branches], and their day-to-day activities are supposed to depart from an identified local need. They receive support from around 100 employed Red Cross advisers or consultants [*rödakorskonsulenter*], distributed over ten geographical regions. Each region has its own office that controls and coordinates the overall work. The national supervision and co-ordination departs from what is called *centralstyrelsen* [the board at the national level] and the national headquarters, both of which are located in Stockholm. The highest decision-making authority in the Swedish Red Cross is *Riksstämman* [the National Assembly]. Every three years, this assembly gathers appointed delegates and representatives from the local levels to elect the national board, to adopt reports and accounts, and to decide upon future strategic and financial matters. The current chairman of the Swedish Red Cross is also vice chairman of the International Red Cross Federation (Swedish Red Cross 2007; www.redcross.se).

At the end of 2006, the Swedish Red Cross had over 271.000 members. This was 8.500 less than the year before (Swedish Red Cross 2007), and only half as many as the all-time high some fifty years earlier (Micheletti 1995). The work of the Red Cross in Sweden is heavily dependent on volunteers, who in most cases are also members. During 2006, there were approximately 40.000 people who volunteered on a more or less regular basis for the organization, while the number of employees corresponded to 408 full-time posts (Swedish Red Cross 2007).

Revenues in 2006 were some SEK 559 million, with a deficit of SEK 240 million. Total assets in 2006 amounted to almost SEK 1,4 billion. In addition to a youth organization, which is a separate legal person, the Swedish Red Cross owns a few for-

profit companies. These companies are not accounted for in the annual report from 2006, since they are said to be of insignificant economical value (ibid.).

7.4 The Swedish Football Association [*Svenska Fotbollförbundet*]

One of the most played, watched, and talked about sports on the planet – modern football (aka soccer) – started in England in the early 1860s when the English Football Association was formed, and the game was given proper rules that separated it from rugby (www.thefa.com). It arrived to Sweden with British and Scottish workers who came to find work in the expanding Swedish economy during the later half of the 19th century.

However, the sport was not an immediate success. It would in fact take many decades before it grew in popularity. This slow start has partly been explained with reference to the prevailing conservative values among the 19th century Swedish bourgeoisie regarding the human body, which implied profound skepticism and contempt towards games that involved body contact and severe physical strain (Yttergren 2004). In addition, the first organizational environment that evolved around Swedish football was both unstructured, and, for many years, deeply divided (ibid.).

The first traces of any Swedish sports organization that included football dates back to the mid, and late 1870s (Ågren 2004). Several larger Swedish elite clubs were founded in the 1880s and 1890s. Among them *Örgryte Idrottssällskap* [Örgryte Sport Society], which also can be said to be the first 'real' football association, since it began to play football according to rules that by then had been used in England and Denmark for decades (Yttergren 2004).

A few associations with ambitions to regionally cover and coordinate all sorts of sport activities, football included, were also brought to life in those days. One of the first was the Swedish Sports Association, which was formed in 1895 and was active in the western parts of Sweden. Another one was the Sports Association in Stockholm, which among other things arranged football tournaments in the eastern parts of Sweden. Later on, there was also the Swedish Ball Game Association (ibid.). This nourished a situation filled with rivalry, disorder, and frustration, because suddenly, there were several organizations that, simultaneously, claimed the right to 'administer' football activities within certain areas. Nevertheless, a national organization that could coordinate sports in general and football in particular soon emerged (ibid.).

So, in 1903, the national sports organization that today is known as the Swedish Sports Confederation [*Riksidrottsförbundet*] was created (cf. Norberg 2004). The year after, 77 of the 87 football associations that had affiliated with the Swedish Sports Confederation gathered for a meeting where it was decided that one common national association for football should be formed (Ågren 2004; see also Yttergren 2004 for more details). This brought an end to the somewhat chaotic early days of organized football in Sweden.

Despite a lot of initial efforts of this new Swedish Football Association, the sport continued to receive critique and have a bad reputation, and it would not become generally accepted in Sweden until the 1920s and 1930s. Then its critics had changed

from conservative forces among the bourgeoisie to *"/…/ representatives from all folk-rörelser, which then had a strong influence on how Swedish society continued to develop"* (Andersson 2004:77, my translation). This new critique arrived, for example, from temperance organizations that condemned the drinking culture that was associated with football at the time. There was also a general dislike among church representatives because of football matches' frequent interference with Sunday Mass (ibid.).

However, much of this seems to have changed during the 1920s and 1930s, when both the political establishment and the general public gradually began to embrace football to such an extent that it instead became a concern for large parts of the population. This increased interest was probably a result of things like changed working conditions that allowed for more spare time; increased state subsidies and efforts to build sports grounds; commercial interests that backed the sport; the introduction of both illegal and legal football pools; and a growing interest, especially among men, in certain football teams (see Andersson 2004; Norberg 2004 for more details). By the 1940s it can even be described as a national sport, which, just like the rest of the Swedish sports movement, was associated with ideas of democracy, social integration, and moral fostering of citizens (Ericsson 2004). Moreover, football was already then well on its way to commercialization, professionalization, and big businesses.

All the money that started to enter the sport through an ever increasing influx of spectators between the 1920s and 1960s opened up for discussions among the members of the Football Association regarding the rule of only admitting amateurs to play. The issue was not resolved until the mid 1960s, when professionals were finally allowed. Still, most Swedish top football players did not become professional or semi-professional until the 1990s (Peterson 2004).

Just like in many other European countries, the ever-increasing crowds that had been visiting football games since the 1920s, started to decrease in number towards the late 1960s. Television, which had initially been blamed for this downturn, soon became the solution to the problem, mostly because of the deals that organized football was able to sign with media companies, and other commercial actors. In 2006, the Swedish Football Association closed a deal that will render organized football in Sweden more than SEK 1,3 billion between 2006-2010 (Swedish Football Association 2007). On par with these lucrative deals, many Swedish football associations have since the 1990s earned good money on the transfer of players and, lately, also on the again rising numbers of spectators (Ahlström 2004).

Influenced by English debates in particular, the 1990s held an internal debate in the Swedish Football Association concerning whether or not commercial interests would be allowed to invest in the activities of its non-commercial and democratically controlled member associations. In 1999, this resulted in a policy that allowed clubs to put their license to play at the *disposal* of a commercial company (n.b. not transfer, release or convey), which could be listed on the stock exchange. Many thought this would set a general corporatization in motion within Swedish football. Thus far, however, only a few larger clubs have ventured in this direction, although the interest among clubs seems to be increasing (ibid.).

It is probably correct to say that the history of organized football in Sweden mostly has been about male players and teams participating in national or international tour-

naments. While the male national team played its first match in 1908, its female counterpart had to wait until 1973 (www.svenskfotboll.se), since women's football was not introduced in the Swedish Football Association until 1970 (www.uefa.com). Today there are around 40,000 registered female players over 15 years of age making women's football a significant force in Swedish sport.

Yet, football would never have grown into Sweden's largest sport if it was not for the ever-increasing number of ordinary people beginning to play themselves. This is partly visible in the rising number of local clubs that have joined the Swedish Football Association throughout its history. In 1904, it affiliated 77 local associations; in 1919, about 320; and twenty years later, that number had increased to almost 2.100 (Andersson 2004). Today, the Swedish Football Association has more than 3.200 local associations (www.svenskfotboll.se). A dominating group among today's one million individual members is the youth, which the Swedish Football Association ignored to organize until as late as 1948 (Bengtsson 2004). Current statistics show that every second Swedish boy, and every fifth girl between the ages of 7 and 14, plays football in an affiliated club (www.uefa.com).

7.4.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

"One association in every village, football for all" (my translation) is the organization's overall motto. Its main goal is to promote, administer, and control Swedish football while representing it internationally. Furthermore, included in the overall goal is also work for a drug free sport (www.svenskfotboll.se).

Some of its more concrete activities include maintaining football as the largest sport in Sweden; offering a stimulating and healthy sport to everyone who wants to participate, disregarding nationality, age, sex, physical, or mental preconditions; participating actively in national and international football organizations; keeping together local, recreational football with its professional and elite counterpart In Sweden; providing for both male/female national teams capable of competing internationally; supporting local member associations; increasing the total amount of footballers in Sweden via new events and competitions, but also increasing the general support for Swedish football and the amount of spectators and viewers (ibid.).

In a country where football for reasons of climate only can be played outdoors from April to November, indoor venues are particularly important if clubs and the national teams are to have a chance of competing at the highest international level. Therefore, to increase investments in indoor halls and artificial pitches has been a prioritized area in recent years (Havik 2004).

7.4.2 Current Structures and Numbers

On the Swedish Football Association's webpage it is stated that the overall motto of the organization reflects the democratic constitution of Swedish football. What this means more exactly, though, is not really accounted for. The webpage also states that

the entire organization, in 2006, comprised of one national secretariat located in Stockholm, 24 district organizations, 3.266 local associations, and about one million rank and file members. These individual members are entitled to vote in the local associations, which, through elected representatives, have the right to vote at annual meetings arranged in their respective district. The district organizations, together with the elite clubs, then send representatives to the annual general meeting on national level, which also is the highest-decision making body of the entire national federation (www.svenskfotboll.se).

The Swedish Football Association has also been affiliated with the International Federation of Football (FIFA) since it was constituted in 1904 (Yttergren 2004), and with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) since its constitution in 1954 (www.uefa.com). Today, the association is also partial or full owner of two TV-production companies, one publishing company and three holding corporations for real estate properties (Swedish Football Association 2007). In 2006, the Swedish Football Association had 136 employees, revenues of more than SEK 427 million, and a surplus of SEK 11,5 million. With subsidiaries included, the entire group had 143 employees, revenues of SEK 455 million, and a surplus of almost SEK 5,2 million (ibid.).

7.5 The Swedish Co-operative Union [*Kooperativa Förbundet*]

Consumer cooperatives started to appear in Sweden in the 1840s. These early initiatives were generally not only geographically isolated and scattered, but also quite short-lived (this historical review, if not otherwise noted, departs from Giertz and Strömberg 1999). For example, a food crisis and an economical downturn that hit Sweden in the late 1860s implied a real drive to seek and to start consumer cooperatives. Thus, between 1867 and 1869, almost 180 new cooperative consumer associations were established. However, when things improved a few years later, most of them began to vanish.

The first national association for consumer cooperatives was established in the UK in 1869. This initiative had its institutional base in the Rochdale principles, which derived from the formation of the local British cooperative initiative *The Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society* in 1844. With few amendments, these principles have since then often been used as a base for many other cooperative organizations (cf. Craig et al. 1995).

The law on economical associations, which is the most used legal form for consumer and producer cooperatives in Sweden (cf. Hemström 2000b), were first approved in 1895. In 1899, the first national cooperative conference was held in Sweden, and the most notable result of this conference was the decision to form the Swedish Co-operative Union. The main objective was to support and coordinate Sweden's many contemporary local cooperative associations, and to ensure their individual members genuine goods at an affordable price. Despite the many hundred local consumer cooperatives that existed at the time, only 30 of them, which in total had around 7.300 individual members, decided to join this national organization initially.

The first years were tough for this new organization, which more than once was close to bankruptcy. In 1904, it still only had 57 affiliated local associations, despite the

fact that more than 600 existed in Sweden at the time. However, a few years later things had changed. The financial situation improved substantially towards 1907, due to the successful introduction of both a proper wholesale trade and a supply chain for goods, which began delivering to the affiliated local associations. In 1910, the Swedish Co-operative Union affiliated well over 400 local associations.

In order to access a number of new groups of basic goods, such as margarine, sugar, cacao, soft soap, rubber, and light bulbs, the Swedish Co-operative Union fought a number of battles against various cartels during the first two decades of the 20th century. To reinforce its finances, it established a proper savings association for its members in 1908, which quickly became popular. In the 1990s, this savings association controlled over SEK 2 billion (Swedish Co-operative Union 2007).

1917 saw a reorganization, which introduced district organizations and an administrative committee whose members were partly appointed by the districts and partly by the annual congress. This committee was then in charge of appointing a board of executives. This change meant that the organization, in one stroke, went from an internal governance system that had rested on the idea and procedures of direct democracy to a system with principles and processes based on representative democracy. In the decades that followed, this change would also pave the way for an introduction of more rational market and business oriented strategies and activities on a national level.

In the 1920s, the Swedish Co-operative Union began to establish itself as owner of large industries and factories. Apart from having interests in a number of businesses where huge quantities of groceries and goods were refined before distribution to the cooperative stores around the country, it also became the full owner of a margarine factory in 1921. This was then quickly followed by the purchase of an industrial mill in 1922, a shoe factory in 1925, a rubber factory in 1926, a superphosphate industry in 1929, a porcelain factory and a travel company in 1937, a constructing and transport enterprise in 1947, and an oil company in 1987. These are just a few examples of the huge industrial and financial conglomerate that was created around the Swedish Co-operative Union during the 20th century.

In parallel to this industrial focus and to some ground-breaking efforts within the Swedish retail trade, such as the introduction of the self-service store in the 1940s, the supermarket in the 1960s, and the launch of a more environmental friendly and ecological approach within the entire retailing trade in the 1990s, the Swedish Co-operative Union has also been active in many other areas. One is adult education and vocational training, which really took off after the acquisition of a larger training centre in the early 1920s. Another area is architecture, in which the organization was active by the establishing of a complete architect's office in 1929. A third area is public health, including consumer guidance, and the publishing of a number of cookery books.

However, the 1950s seems to have brought a major reorientation after a serious questioning of the internal governance system. This dispute had its base in demands that the internal democracy had to be weighed and evaluated against economic efficiency. Hwang (1995:220), who has studied the Swedish Co-operative Union's development during the post-war era, describes what this conflict led to: *"Up until then, first priority tended to be given to the democratic rights of the members, but after this time, the demands of economic efficiency became completely dominant /…/.* This shift in how to view

and relate to the own organization and its purpose seems to have been so pronounced that this period can be resembled to a definite watershed for how the organization would develop. In her study, Hwang (1995) concludes that earlier managers' and leaders' concern for a vivid internal democracy was, during the 1950s, replaced with a clear ambition of turning the organization into a large and profitable corporation. This is one of her conclusions in this respect: *"When it comes to those who had led the [organization] toward greater economic efficiency since the middle of the 1950s, it might be said that they had regarded democracy primarily as something of an obstacle to economic efficiency"* (ibid:221). Moreover, during the decades that followed, this would lead to drastically rationalized operations and successive reductions of the former decentralized structure, which was built on the participation of many smaller units and individual members. As a result, the number of affiliated associations went from around 680 in 1954, to just over 130 in 1990, at the same time as crucial activities of these local associations – deciding what lines of goods to offer, the building-up and disposal of capital, recruiting and training of staff, the running of meat-packing plants and bakeries – were gradually taken over by the head office in Stockholm (ibid.). These rationalization efforts, with an apparent and explicit desire among the highest executive levels in the organization to achieve economic gains from centralized large-scale operations, continued not only in the 1990s (cf. Böök 1995), but also beyond. Interesting to note though, is that while all this have happened within the Swedish Co-operative Union, its number of individual members have never been higher than what it is today.

7.5.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

In 1995, the Swedish Co-operative Union adopted the International Cooperative Alliance's [ICA] definition of a cooperative organization, which states that a cooperative is:*"/…/ an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise"* (www.ica.coop). Along with this definition comes a set of basic values for cooperative action, which the Swedish Co-operative Union also has adopted – self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity, together with a belief in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others (Swedish Co-operative Union 2001). And, ICA also states the following seven guiding principles for cooperative work, which the Swedish Co-operative Union also implements: 1) voluntary and open membership, 2) democratic member control, 3) economic member participation, 4) autonomy and independence, 5) education, training and information, 6) cooperation among coops, and 7) concern for community.

When this was written in 2007, the Swedish Co-operative Union had two principal and officially stated roles. The first was to be a union for the consumer co-operative societies, and, secondly, to be an active shareholder of the full owned corporation *Coop Norden* and its subsidiaries (Swedish Co-operative Union 2007). From this followed an overall mission: to offer a profitable and competitive consumer co-operative retail trade that is supposed to render economical benefits for the affiliated members, and an

opportunity to purchase quality products with an ecological, socially sustainable, health-oriented profile in attractive shops (ibid.).

7.5.2 Current Structures and Numbers

The Co-operative Union and its affiliated associations are, in accordance with the Swedish associational law, legally defined as economical associations.[6] In 2006, the organization included just over three million individual members, 54 member associations dispersed over ten national regions, and a head office in Stockholm. It also had almost 1.350 employees (Swedish Co-operative Union 2007).

Out of the 54 associations, 49 are so-called retail societies, which means that they run everything from one to several retail shops at a local/regional level. Their operations usually include building opinion and education with an emphasis on retail issues. These 49 associations account for about 40 percent of the total amount of members. The other five associations, which affiliate the other 60 percent (≈1.900.000) of the individual members, are called member interest societies.

The activities of these five latter associations are mostly focused on membership and consumer issues, since they do not own their own shops. Membership issues imply the operation of so-called shop, regional, and retail councils whose aim it is to channel and coordinate the individual members' influence over stores and hypermarkets (ibid.). The local shop councils conduct dialogues with rank and file members as well monitor the commercial operations of the actual shop. The regional councils are consultative bodies interacting with the general management of the Co-operative Union. The retail councils discuss matters that affect business operations in their geographical area of activity. They also provide the central administration of the Co-operative Union with knowledge of local conditions (ibid.).

Just as in the other organizations in this study, the fundamental governance principle for the Swedish Co-operative Union is that every member has one vote. Internal governance is exerted through representative democracy that starts at each affiliated association's general meeting, the highest decision-making body on the local level. This meeting elects a board, auditors, and an election committee. At these meetings, individual members are also supposed to assess and consider the past year's operations and any submitted motions. Smaller associations tend to invite all members to this general meeting. Larger ones often arrange local pre-meetings where representatives for the general meeting are elected (ibid.).

The 54 associations are divided upon ten different regions. Every year the associations in a region appoint representatives to a regional meeting. The principles for appointing these representatives are based on the number of individual members, and the purpose of this regional meeting is to elect representatives for the overall annual general meeting of the Swedish Co-operative Union (ibid.).

This overall general meeting, which comprises 101 representatives, must inform about the Co-operative Union's operations and finances as well as about its future

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[6] The other eight organizations included in this study are legally defined as *ideella* associations [*ideella föreningar*] (for more details see chapter 4 and Hemström 2000b,)

plans and consumer co-operation in general. It also decides on membership fees, adopts income statements and balance sheets, passes a resolution on discharge from liability of the national board; elects members of the national board, and decides their remunerations (ibid.).

After a financial crisis in the beginning of the 1990s, the majority of the Swedish Co-operative Union's industrial assets were sold at the same time as the retailing trade was reorganized (Carlsson 2004). Up until 2007, the management and operation of the retail trade went through a common enterprise, *Coop Norden*, in which the Swedish Co-operative Union is the majority owner together with its sister-organizations in Norway and Denmark. But, on January the 1st 2008, the Swedish Co-operative Union once again resumed a direct operative responsibility for this retail trade in Sweden.

In 2006, revenues for the Co-operative Union alone reached SEK 21 billion with a deficit of SEK 2 million. Combined revenues for the Co-operative Union and its subsidiaries were almost SEK 24,5 billion with a surplus of SEK 573 million. Total assets for the group this year was close to SEK 15 billion (Swedish Co-operative Union 2007).

7.6 The Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired [Synskadades Riksförbund]

The origin of organized efforts to look after the interest of visually impaired or blind people in Sweden falls back on above all two issues; education, and possibilities for making a living (cf. Olsson 1988). Early attempts to, for example, educate blind children in a more formalized way can be traced back to the first decade of the 19th century. But, it was not until after the law of compulsory elementary school for *all* children was passed in 1842 that things really were set in motion (Hägermalm 1989). The reason for this was that this law clarified that many who then started to attend school had specific needs that the school system could not meet. In 1880, a government commission stated that the Swedish educational system ought to be adjusted so that blind children between seven and eighteen could attend too. This gave rise to an establishment of junior and elementary schools, as well as vocational education, for non-seeing pupils on several locations in Sweden (ibid.).

Although more and more visually impaired people received education, it was still difficult for many to find a job (Olsson 1988). This is also what seems to have triggered the formation of the Association for the Blind [*De Blindas Förening*] in 1889. At the general assembly in 1975, one decided to liquidate the Association for the Blind and form today's Association of the Visually Impaired (Hägermalm 1989). However, the primary objective behind the initial organization concerned blind people's right to make a living through work, the creation of a proper health insurance fund, and the establishment of a newspaper for its affiliated individual members (Lindkvist 1993). The initiative to form this association derived from a group of visually impaired wicker-workers [*korgmakare*], who labored under poor conditions in a small workshop in Stockholm (Olsson 1989). Thus, one of the first measures, once the organization had been brought to life, was to arrange for larger and better premises for its members to practice and make a living out of different handicrafts. At this time, male members were initially

engaged in wickerwork and brush making, while the few women who had also joined the organization worked with knitting and weaving (Hägermalm 1989).

Since it took nine years before it was launched, it appears to have been difficult at first to raise enough resources for a health insurance fund for the members of the organization. Yet, it seems to have made useful contributions to members' welfare more or less instantly. Almost three decades later, the Association for the Blind made important financial contribution to its constituency with a total amount of over SEK 220.000 annually. This money derived both from the health insurance fund and from other internal sources (Olsson 1988). However, this financial support became more and more redundant as the Swedish welfare state developed from the 1940s and onwards, and in the 1970s, the health insurance fund had lost most of its former importance (Hägermalm 1989).

In 1902, the general assembly elected a new and charismatic chairman who was well educated and came from an affluent family. His prime idea was to concentrate the activities of the association, and to find commercial solutions to many of the problems that visually impaired faced at the time (ibid.). Thus, the same year a for-profit corporation was set up in the name of the association, with the direct idea to commercialize the affiliated members' craftwork. Many decades later, this would evolve into the so-called Iris Group [*Irisgruppen*], which comprises the different businesses that the Association of the Visually Impaired is involved in today (see www.iris.se for more details).

Even if the Association for the Blind claimed a national coverage already from the start, in reality, most of its activities were focused predominantly on the somewhat limited situation in Stockholm. But, even there it failed in covering the interest of all those who were blind. Accordingly, it did not take long before parallel organizations were formed in many other places around Sweden (Olsson 1988). In the 1920s, many of these different local and regional initiatives even began to cooperate and coordinate themselves, and, in 1926, twelve of these regional organizations joined forces through the formation of the National Association for the Blind [*De Blindas Riksförbund*] (Hägermalm 1989). The co-existence of two independent organizations for blind persons, which both claimed a national coverage, subsisted until 1936 when they merged. The heated process that preceded this merger was facilitated by the fact that many held a membership in both organizations (Olsson 1988). One major change of this fusion was that the former privileged position of blind people living in Stockholm was broken, in favor of an increased focus on the work and position of local initiatives and associations (Lindkvist 1993).

In the early 1940s, the new and joint organization, which continued to be called the Association for the Blind, involved only 23 local associations, by which it barely could claim national coverage (ibid.). However, the 1950s and 1960s implied a specifically expansive period with numerous new local associations, and towards the end of this period the 23 local associations had become more than 100 dispersed ones (Olsson 1989). This expansion, and the intensified local presence it implied, meant that the organization also managed to increase its amount of individual members. Between 1950 and 1970, it went from less than 2.000 to more than 5.000, and in 1990, it had increased to almost 17.000 (Lindkvist 1993).

From the start, the Association for the Blind was clearly associated with charity activities in the sense that affluent and seeing people were supposed to take care of and contribute to the well-being of blind people. In its early regulations it was even prescribed that the Swedish king should appoint two of the ten board members, and until the 1950s frequent fund-raising campaigns took place, through which the Swedish bourgeoisie and higher society were supposed to contribute to the cause of the blind (Hägermalm 1989). Even if these efforts were questioned internally during the first half of the 20th century, it was not until the more radical era of the 1960s and 1970s that the organization broke completely with this tradition (ibid.).

Although the initial questions of education, and how to make a living as visually impaired still permeates much of the activities and policy work of the organization, it has from the 1970s and up until now also become more involved in improving the possibilities for leisure and recreational activities, as well as their access to cultural institutions and arrangements in society (Hägermalm 1989).

The formal requirements for individual membership have been a controversial topic over the years. Up until the 1960s, the organization's regulative texts prescribed that members should be between 16 and 60 years of age, and blind. Seeing people could then also join, but only as supporting members without any real internal rights (Lindkvist 1993). However, the 1960s brought with it a rapid influx of new members who tended to be both older and not always completely blind. This brought to the fore the question of who should be allowed to enter the organization as member with full rights, which, in its turn, brought about heated internal discussions. The result of this was an abolishment of the upper age requirement. Yet, the lower age requirement was not changed until a reorganization in 1977 (ibid., see also chapter 10 below).

In relation to this reorganization, it was also decided that prospective members should either be blind or have such a poor vision that they could not live a normal life without support. Furthermore, it was also decided that the structure of the organization should comprise local and district associations as well as a coordinating national body (Hägermalm 1989). The national level was also given a partly new form and direction, which meant that it should support the local and district levels while also focusing on lobbying. The decision implied that some of the service activities aimed at the members, who up until then had been managed and controlled at the national level, were transferred to a group of corporations that were set up for this purpose (Lindkvist 1993). This was also when the organization got its contemporary name, the Association of the Visually Impaired [*Synskadades Riksförbund*].

7.6.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

The Association of the Visually Impaired, which maintains a social and non-political profile, is today the main organization of the blind and partially sighted in Sweden. The overall aim is to: *"/…/ achieve a society based on equality and solidarity where the visually impaired can participate on the same terms as everybody else"* (www.srfriks.org, my translation). This objective departs from the assumption that every human has an equal value regardless of sex, age, nationality, handicap, education, social position, or other

personal qualities and preconditions. Even if seeing people are allowed to affiliate as supporting members, the official position of the organization is that no one chooses to be visually impaired. It is, therefore, important that its members unite through their visual impairedness (www.srfriks.org).

The contemporary work of the organization rests upon two main areas: safeguarding interests and managing joint activities. Activities related to the former are based on the view that all of us are responsible for creating and sustaining a society where everyone is equal. The national coverage of the Association of the Visually Impaired is believed to ensure that the Swedish government, its municipal authorities and corporate interests follow official guidelines and principles that points in the direction of such a society (ibid.). Priority is therefore given to activities such as guarding against discrimination of people with impairments, rehabilitation and compensatory training of people who have recently become visually impaired, vocational training and changing attitudes to give unemployed visually impaired people a fair chance, giving visually impaired people access to new information technology, and maintaining a general welfare system that applies to all citizens (ibid.).

Joint activities imply that the commitment of the organization's members is seen as the main contributor to success, since it is deemed that it is only the visually impaired themselves who are supposed to know what needs to be done in order to improve their situation (ibid.). This gives a focus on organizational activities such as internal meetings, discussions and social happenings in local branches, training to help people who have recently become visually impaired to overcome their insecurity, leadership training, arranging meetings where experiences can be exchanged between adults and visually impaired children and their parents, and individual counseling about social rights and services (ibid.). Taken together, this seems to give the organization a dual character of being both an interest and a service organization, whose work involves everything from lobbying against state authorities, politicians and other organized interests, to developing techniques and services aimed at improving the social situation for visually impaired.

7.6.2 Current Structures and Numbers

The organization has maintained its pronounced three level structure since it was introduced in the middle of the 1970s. By the end of 2006, the organization organized a total of 16.410 individual members, divided upon almost 180 local associations. 4.232 of the total amount of members were so-called supporting members (Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired 2007). The coordination and control of the local level runs through 24 districts organizations and one national secretariat.

The majority of the services that the Association of the Visually Impaired offer to its rank and file members are managed and produced by a group of fully owned subsidiaries, the so-called *Irisgruppen* [the Iris group]. This group is controlled by the holding company *Iris AB*, which in its turn is controlled by *Synskadades Stiftelse* [The Foundation of the Visually Impaired], established in 1954 (www.iris.se). The idea of Iris AB is to invest in and manage corporations that combine commercial and societal interests,

and it includes seven fully owned subsidiaries – engaged in everything from commercializing handicraft to training guide-dogs via staffing, media solutions for visually impaired to a conference venue – and two jointly owned companies that are engaged in selling lottery tickets and one jointly owned publishing firm that both sells cassette books and runs a book club for cassette books (ibid.). In parallel, the Association of the Visually Impaired also owns a traveling agency and runs a museum (www.srfriks.org) while also being one of the World Blind Union's 158 affiliated member organizations (see www.umc.once.es).

The highest decision-making body in the Association of the Visually Impaired is the congress held every second year, and to which the 24 district organizations are allowed to send 75 representatives. Closely connected to the Association of the Visually Impaired there is also the youth organization, *Unga Synskadade* [Young Visually Impaired], who are allowed to send five representatives to the congress (www.ungasyn.se). A national board, which control and ensure the work of the national secretariat, is also elected at these congresses (www.srfriks.org). The highest decision-making body at the district level is the yearly held representative assembly. The local associations in one district are allowed to send a total of 25 representatives to this assembly, at which a district board is elected. Apart from, for example, being obliged to report to the national secretariat, it is incumbent upon the district organization to facilitate the work that take place at the local level (ibid.). The more than 160 local associations arrange an annual meeting, a board and several consecutive member meetings throughout the year. Affiliated members who have a so-called supportive membership are not entitled to vote at these meetings, but are allowed to take a place in the board (ibid.). In 2006 the Association of the Visually Impaired employed 66 persons, had revenues of almost SEK 85 million, and reached a surplus of just less than SEK 1 million. Total assets that year amounted to SEK 36 million (Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired 2007).

7.7 The Swedish Social Democratic Party [*Socialdemokraterna*]

The more industrialized Sweden became towards the end of the 19th century, the larger its working-class became too. Estimates show that the amount of employed workers increased from about 80.000 at the beginning of the 1860s, to around 330.000 some forty years later (cf. Bäckström 1963) in a population of about five million. This new and fast growing social class was the primary breeding ground for the emergent labor movement and its various organizations, including the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

In most descriptions of Sweden's transition from being a predominantly agrarian country in the 19th century, to being an advanced and industrialized nation state about a century later it seems obligatory, at least at some stage, to include the Swedish social democracy and its organizations in the discussion (cf. chapter 3 above). The imprints that especially the Social Democratic Party is supposed to have made on the maturing Swedish welfare state are often depicted both as remarkably important and as a prerequisite. But, from the assumed tight interconnectedness between the two it is in fact tempting to argue, in contrast to most other historical writings, that the Social Democ-

ratic Party, after just a few decades, became more of a project of the evolving modern Swedish society than the other way around (Berggren and Trägårdh 2006).

It was formed in 1889, but was far from the only effort in Sweden to organize workers and their interests during the later half of the 19th century (cf. Nordström 1938). For example, numerous workplaces around the country saw concrete initiatives through which the formation of local unions and political organizations were attempted. Most of these efforts were, however, short-lived and often fiercely resisted by employers and state authorities (ibid.).

The decades that preceded the formation of the party were apparently also filled with ambulating political agitators who traveled all over the country in order to inform and gather workers around socialist ideas aimed at challenging the current societal order. The general message of these change promoters, who often found inspiration abroad, was a democratic and socialistic society in which workers should be allowed to unite and organize themselves in order to look after and improve their own situation (ibid.). One of the more renowned of these activists was Hjalmar Branting, who would grow into one of the Socialist Democratic Party's future iconized front figures. His idolized position did not only derive from the fact that he was one of the forerunners in the party, but more so maybe because he would also be the party's first internally elected chairman, the first socialist to take a seat in the Swedish Parliament, and also the leading man behind the first Swedish government in which socialists participated (Aspling 1988).

The organizational platform for those who actively partook in the formation of the Social Democratic Party was often local trade union groups and associations. This opens up for the argument that the drive and energy to form a socialist party at the time primarily derived from the Swedish labor union movement, which always has had a more or less intimate, strong, and almost symbiotic relationship with the Social Democratic Party (cf. Elvander 1980). Even so, the party itself would later on be the strongest advocate for and driving force behind the unification of great many labor movement's organizations through the establishment of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation [*Landsorganisationen, LO*] in 1898 (ibid., Aspling 1980).

Present at the constituting congress of the Social Democratic Party in 1889 were 50 representatives from 69 already established local associations, representing 14 different locations around Sweden. Several different organizational structures were tested during the first two decades. In 1911, though, the congress decided to adopt an internal structure, which largely has been maintained since then (Nordström, H. G. 1938).

Even if the amount of workers increased rapidly during the last decades of the 19th century (Bäckström 1963), very few chose to affiliate with the party during its first years. In 1889, it had about 3.000 individual members, a number that in 1894 had only risen to about 7.500 (Nordström, H. G. 1938). It was not until a couple of years into the new century that these numbers soared, most probably due to the introduction of a collective affiliation of all members who belonged to the trade unions within the LO. Already in 1912, for example, it has been estimated that about 80 percent (or 45.000) of the party's rank and file members also had a membership in one of these trade unions (Elvander 1980). So, since the introduction in the early 1900 and until it was abolished in the late 1980s, this principle of a collective affiliation of trade union members has

most certainly been the backbone of the Social Democratic Party's remarkable increase of members. In 1920, the party counted around 150.000 members, five decades later that number had risen to more than a million (ibid.). Still, the collective affiliation does not provide a full answer to this increase. For example, among the almost 600.000 members who belonged to the party after World War II, there were some 120.000 who had joined outside the collective affiliation. In the mid 1970s, that number had increased to 260.000 (ibid.).

The beginning of the 20th century marks the end of the formative era for the Social Democratic Party. From then on and until the end of World War I, it started to grow not only in size, but also in political significance (Olofsson 1995).

After a major disagreement in 1917, however, large parts of a more radical left wing decided to leave and form a new party. In a few years time, this evolved into the Communist Party of Sweden, which many decades later transformed into what is now known as *Vänsterpartiet* [The Left Party of Sweden]. 1917 was also the year when the Social Democratic Party's loyal but self-governing and still existing youth organization [*SSU*] was founded (cf. Aspling 1988).

One of the main political issues between 1900 and the 1920s concerned a general democratization of the Swedish parliament. This arduous process, which received most of its support from social democrats and liberals, came to an end when universal suffrage was introduced in 1921 (Olofsson 1995). At the same time, the Social Democratic Party enters a new and different phase, in which it becomes the dominant party and political force in Sweden. During the first half of the 1920s the party participated in three different minority Governments together with the Liberals (cf. Elvander 1980). 1932, however, is seen as an important turning point in Swedish political history, since this is when the Social Democratic Party alone wins the general elections for the first time in what would become a long row. In fact, it would remain government party until 1976, when the general elections were lost to a right wing coalition for the first time. Nevertheless, in 1982, the social democrats were back in office again and there they remained until 1991 when another right wing coalition took over. In 1994, the social democrats renewed their government position once more until a third right wing coalition won the general elections in 2006.

During the years and decades that followed upon the successful elections in 1932, the concrete work and focus of the Social Democratic Party was gradually given a new direction. The 1930s and 1940s can partly be seen as a preparatory phase for the huge and groundbreaking reformation that Sweden would go through during the post war era. Even if the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s brought important changes within areas such as culture and education, these decades are best known for the extensive implementation of numerous social reforms aimed at realizing the social democratic vision of the so-called *folkhemmet* [the people's home], also known as "the Swedish model" with its specific mixture of a large public sector, high taxes, economic growth, and a business life inspired by a socially concerned capitalism (chapter 3 above; see also e.g. Olofsson 1995; Trägårdh 2007b). Among many things, these reforms implied the introduction of maternity and child welfare; universal unemployment, pension, and health insurances; national dental service; generous child benefit and study allowance systems; care allowance for the disabled; radical laws concerning right of participating in

decision-making at the workplace [*MBL*], and on employment security and restriction of working hours (cf. Aspling 1988).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Swedish politics was continuously engaged with the issue of unemployment, which also tinted the work and focus of the Social Democratic Party in those years (ibid.). When the social democrats returned to power in 1994, they initiated a series of measures aimed at counteracting the aftermath of the financial crisis that hit Sweden in the early 1990s. This seems to have led to what nowadays often is described as stagnation, or even a partial dismantling of the Swedish *folkhem*. In 2005, the congress explicitly decided that the party should strive to maintain its role and character as a *folkrörelse* party (Swedish Social Democratic Party 2005).

7.7.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

The vision of the Social Democratic Party departs from an interpretation of four interlinked core values – freedom for the many; equality as the equal right to determine one's own conditions in life; solidarity in the sense that all people have a mutual dependency on each other for their own individual welfare, and that society is at its best when we all have a common interest in contributing to each others' well being; and democracy as a collective process, which requires freedom, equality and solidarity, through which citizens together decide on matters of common concern (Carlsson and Lindgren 1998). This amounts to the following proclamation: *"The social democracy wants to form a society based on democratic ideals and all humans' equal value. The goal of social democracy is free and equal human beings in a solidary society"* (Swedish Social Democratic Party 2004, my translation).

The main activities of the party largely depend on whether or not it is in office or not. To put it simply, when in office the primary focus is to run the country, with everything that that includes. In opposition, the main activities include, for example, conducting everyday parliamentary work while criticizing the one who governs. At times, being opposition could also imply a stronger focus on matters of the own organization, together with building a general opinion for one's politics.

7.7.2 Current Structures and Numbers

In the mid 1980s, the party affiliated about 1,2 million members. When the collective affiliation was abolished in 1991 that number decreased to less than 300.000 (Peterson 2005). In 2006, the amount of members had decreased to around 125.000, which equals the levels during the 1920s.

According to an introductory folder of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (issued in 2003), the highest decision-making body is the party's national congress, which meets every four years. Present at the congress are 350 delegates, who are nominated and elected at the district level. The congress itself elects the national board, the party chair, the secretary general, the executive committee, and decides about statutes and overall programs and strategies. Individual members and lower party organizations have the right to send motions directly to the congress. Between congresses, the

national board, with its 33 members, is the party's highest decision-making body. The headquarters, which also is the secretariat of the board, is located in Stockholm.

The district level includes 26 party districts, which are responsible for regional policies and the nomination of candidates for parliamentary elections and county councils. The district organization coordinates organizational, educational, and information activities within its sphere of responsibility. It also plans the election work in its area and provides support for the local party organizations. Each district has an office with at least one full-time officer and staff.

The local level includes two types of organizations: the municipal party organization and the so-called labor commune. Although it has an executive board, its most important decisions are made by a general members' meeting or, in larger municipalities, by a meeting of representatives. Most labor communes have an office with a full-time staff. The basic organization in the party is the 2.500 local associations or branches, which tend to cover a limited geographical part of a municipality. While most branches exist in work places, a few are organized around specific themes and groups, such as immigrants and pensioners.

Internationally, the party cooperates closely with sister organizations in other countries through the Socialist International (www.socialdemokraterna.se). It is also full or partial owner of three real estate companies, one media business, a conference venue, a think tank, and a holding company for several organizations that arrange and sell lottery tickets. Revenues in 2006 were just over SEK 165 million, the profit was SEK 0,4 million, and total assets were SEK 243 million. Together with subsidiaries, the result reached a surplus of SEK 3,8 million. Total assets for the group were SEK 367 million. The annual report 2006 states that the national secretariat had 67 employees, but lacks information regarding the whole party (Swedish Social Democratic Party 2007).

7.8 The Swedish Teachers' Union [*Lärarförbundet*]

The historical background of today's Teachers' Union seems to comprise three phases marked by both harmony and unification, and splits and mergers.

Before 1842, when a law was passed that prescribed every Swedish child the opportunity to attend school, Sweden had about 1.000 elementary schools and 300 to 400 ambulating teachers. In the following decades, there would soon be another 6.000 schools, close to 700.000 children of school age and somewhere between 7.000 and 8.000 teachers (Lirén 1986).

On par with the increased numbers of teachers, there was also an increased interest to organize. The first known and often mentioned effort dates back to a meeting in 1838, between five elementary-school teachers in the small village of Vekerum in the southern parts of Sweden. According to common history writing nothing happened beyond this first meeting, probably because these five men, after applying for new positions elsewhere in Sweden, soon were scattered (Fredriksson and Johansson 1993). Yet, they seem to have brought with them this idea and interest of organizing teachers, because soon small local teachers' associations existed in several other places (ibid.). Estimates show that more than one hundred independent local teachers' organizations existed towards

the end of the 1870s (Fredriksson and Johansson 1993). The booming of these organizations seems to also have awakened the interest to join forces even more. Common meetings were even arranged between teachers' organizations from other Scandinavian countries during the decade that preceded the formation of the original version of the today's Teachers' Union, the Swedish Association for Elementary-school Teachers [*Sveriges Allmänna Folkskollärareförening*, *SAF*] in 1880 (ibid.).

SAF was originally open to more teacher categories than those who only taught theoretical subjects in elementary school. This meant that both junior schoolteachers and those who taught practical subjects were also allowed to affiliate (Lirén 1986). The original agenda of the organization aimed at improving both the teachers' own situation in terms of salary and further education, and at promoting all children's ability to attend school on equal terms. It also fought for pedagogical improvements and that the elementary school should be extended, compulsory and more unified. This was not achieved until 1962, when the reform of a nine-year compulsory school was introduced. Early on, the organization began to issue books and magazines (www.lararforbundet.se).

In 1900, Sweden had some 15.000 elementary-school teachers. About half of them were affiliated with SAF, which made this the largest union for employed professionals at the time. Due to its size, it would also become a key player in the long process that would lead to the formation of the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees [*TCO*] in 1944 (Andersson 2001, see also www.tco.se).

When the elementary school teachers united in 1880, their organization was the only sizeable one in Sweden. However, just a few years later, several other categories of teachers joined forces and created their own organizations. Assistant and senior masters in secondary grammar school formed their proper organization in 1884. Today, this association is today active under the name of National Union of Teachers in Sweden [*Lärarnas Riksförbund*]. 1884 also saw the birth of the drawing teachers' association, which was followed by the music teachers' in 1903, the domestic science teachers' in 1906, the handicraft teachers' in 1916 and the pre-school teachers' in 1918. Yet, these organizations were in reality more complementary of than rivals to SAF (Lirén 1986).

Internal turmoil and split emerged in SAF a few years into the 20th century. It all started with the female elementary school teachers, who thought SAF had not acted with enough strength and clarity in their favor and against the government decision to maintain an official wage difference between male and female teachers. The frustration of these women grew, and in 1906, they broke with SAF and formed their own organization, which, although it was formally tied to SAF, only looked after the interest of its female members.

In 1918, the female junior schoolteachers did the same. In parallel, there was also a rising dissatisfaction among the younger members of SAF with the way in which trade union issues had been handled. In 1920, the SAF's male elementary schoolteachers also sought a similar solution as their female colleagues (ibid.). Hence, during the four decades from its genesis, SAF transformed from a union with a seemingly united corpus of members to a deeply divided organization with internal and rivaling groups and organizations. This most likely weakened the position of the teachers (cf. Fredriksson and Johansson 1993). During the 1920s and 1930s debates were held and several investigations launched in order to find a solution to this internal split.

However, the internal rivalry was apparently too fierce because nothing happened until 1945, when SAF was restructured into an umbrella organization for its three member organizations (ibid.).

The late 1940s, when nine different groups of specialist teachers came together in one organization, *Svenska Facklärarförbundet*, marks the start of the third development phase of the Swedish trade unions for teachers. With this fusion in 1948, Sweden had three larger teachers' unions (Lirén 1986, 1989).

Still, it would take several years before it was possible to discuss a unification of the different organizations within SAF. SAF's internal split came to an end in two steps, in 1963 and 1967. The apparent reason behind this reconciliation seems to have been closely connected to an important reform of the Swedish school system in the 1960s and a few but important changes regarding the trade union rights in the late 1950s. Taken together, this seems to have called for a more united approach among all Swedish teachers (Fredriksson and Johansson 1993). In relation to the two-step unification process, the name was also changed to *Sveriges Lärarförbund* [The Teachers' Union in Sweden], which in 1967 affiliated some 40.000 teachers through 29 county branches and 202 local associations and a secretariat in Stockholm (ibid.). Towards the end of the 1970s, discussions were also initiated about a merger with the specialist teachers' organization. After a first attempt in 1982, the final decision to merge was taken in 1988, and in 1991, the two became the Teachers' Union (ibid.). Since then, several discussions have been conducted regarding a fusion between today's two present trade unions for teachers, the Teachers' Union and the National Union of Teachers in Sweden [*Lärarnas Riksförbund*], but a way forward in this area still awaits disclosure.

7.8.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

On its webpage, the Teachers' Union depicts itself as a professional union and defender of its members' trade union interests while providing them with services in all aspects of their work. The aim of the organization is formulated as an ambition:

> /…/ to be in the forefront of educational development in Sweden. With members in all categories of school, we have a broad perspective of education and can work towards promoting lifelong learning, from preschool, through statutory education and on to universities and adult education. The Teachers' Union strives to ensure that teachers' viewpoints are heard on issues relating to their work and to enhance their professional status. At the same time our aim is to achieve salaries corresponding to the heavy demands made on teachers in education and the responsibility this represents. We organize an extensive range of comprehensive activities geared towards creating public opinion favorable to our political goals. This we hope to achieve by statements on government and parliamentary sponsored investigation and participation in reference groups during government elaboration of issues as well as through our presidium's contact with politicians at government level (Swedish Teachers' Union 2006).

In practical terms, this means that parts of the work of the organization target areas and issues such as Swedish teacher education; research *by* and *for* teachers; making the teaching profession an attractive career choice; wage negotiations; work environment

in schools and securing their autonomy; combating prejudice and inequalities in schools; and securing more funding for the entire Swedish school system. Every month, the organization also issues several publications to its various cadres of members as well as offers them all kinds of services and benefits (ibid.).

At the local level, branches are responsible for the important task of negotiating and signing collective agreements [*kollektivavtal*] on salaries and employment conditions with local employers. They also monitor developments at workplaces, promote active participation by members, organize training of elected officials and members and strive to develop education at ground-root level, etc. (ibid.). The head office in Stockholm is responsible for coordinating overall activities and it directs central negotiation, investigations, and policy issues. It is also accountable for a comprehensive information service. Since one of the main activities of the Teachers' Union is to form public opinion on relevant matters, many efforts at the head office go into maintaining contact with the media, writing articles on issues under debate, participating in media as well as researching material that makes the headlines (ibid.).

7.8.2 Current Structures and Numbers

In 2006, the Teachers' Union organized around 227.000 members, which included various types of teachers, study advisers, vocational guidance officers, heads of schools, and teacher students (Swedish Teachers' Union 2007). Individual members affiliate with one of the 298 local branches, which equals to one in every Swedish municipality (if nothing else is indicated, the following builds on Swedish Teachers' Union 2006). At yearly branch assemblies, the members have the opportunity to directly express their opinion, make suggestions, participate in voting, and to elect a board.

The final decision-making power in the organization resides with the congress, which meets every third year. Through a middle layer, comprised of eleven regional bodies, individual members elect the 251 delegates who all meet at the congress where the overall orientation of the organization is determined. Individual members and local branches can send motions to the congress, where the national executive board also is elected.

Between congresses, there is a representative assembly that meets once a year. It includes 119 delegates and has an advisory function vis-à-vis the national board. The national board, in its turn, accounts for the organization's activities at central level. This board consists of a presidium, which meets once a month and includes the union's president, two vice-presidents, and 14 delegates representing the rest of the organization.

As the Teachers' Union includes several different categories of teachers, it has specific committees that safeguard the interests of these groups. Hereby, student members and heads of schools are represented with formal organizations within the union.

The international commitment of the Teachers' Union implies affiliations and cooperation with organizations such as the Nordic Teachers' Council, the European Trade Union Committee for Education, and the Education International.

In 2006, the head office had 134 employees, and the eleven regional offices around the country had 103 employees. In 2006, the Teachers' Union had revenues of SEK 443 million, a surplus of SEK 31 million, and total assets of SEK 941 million (Swedish Teachers' Union 2007). The same year, the organization was also full or partial owner of a media company, a holding company and an insurance company, as well as one company in vocational and educational training respectively. The group had revenues that amounted to SEK 479 million, a surplus of almost SEK 30 million, and total assets of SEK 1,1 billion (ibid.).

7.9 The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden [*Svenska Missionskyrkan*]

The Mission Union of Sweden [*Svenska Missionsförbundet*] was formed in 1878. Its roots date back to the 17th and 18th century, when pietistic, and later on also evangelical revivalist movements, began to challenge the hegemonic position of the then dominating Christian churches that dictated a view of society and church as one unity (cf. Walan 1964). In Sweden, just as in many other places in Europe, this resistance to accept the prevailing order often led to harsh restrictions regarding the formation of religious alternatives to the State controlled Church of Sweden (ibid.). Yet, the constitution of 1809 implied an important step towards a more liberal religious worship, mainly due to the introduction of the freedom of the press act, which allowed both foreign and Swedish religious groups to print and distribute their ideas and messages without reprisals from Swedish authorities (ibid.).

Consequently, several religious societies that preached alternative perspectives soon began to establish themselves in Sweden. Several of the first groups came from England or the US. Two of the larger and more well-known were the Methodists and the Baptists that arrived in the 1840s and 1850s (ibid.). The overall objective of most of these alternative religious groups was focused chiefly on evangelical revivalism through an inner and outer mission. This implied that people's personal salvation was put at the centre of attention in a missionary work that took place either In Sweden or in a foreign country (ibid.).

An important incident that is directly linked to the formation of the Mission Union of Sweden evolved in the 1850s, within the Swedish state church. Rising dissatisfaction slowly emerged against the fast growing foreign influence in general and the Baptist movements in particular (cf. Andreasson 2007). This soon led to counteractions and the formation of the Swedish Evangelical Foundation [*Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelsen, EFS*], which was independent but loyal to the state church. Yet, it did not take long before internal conflicts ripped EFS, apart (ibid.). In 1878, a group of dissatisfied people left EFS and formed the Mission Union of Sweden (cf. Walan 1964).

This establishment was made possible by the fact that the religious laws had been altered in the 1860s and 1870s so that alternative churches then were allowed as long as they accepted a legal form that involved a formal affiliation of members and a structure consisting of local and autonomous associations. That is, there was still no legal room to register as a church with local subordinate parishes (Walan 1964; Andreasson 2002). Thus, it would not take long before the Mission Union of Sweden constituted a

frame for many hundreds of local revivalist communions with an interest in missionary work. And, in contrast to more top-down oriented episcopal churches, such as the former state controlled Church of Sweden, the Mission Union of Sweden involved a strong emphasis on local, self-governed, and autonomous associations already form the start (Andreasson 2007). This development was also mirrored in its first official regulations, where it was stated that the national organization had its base in affiliated local associations supported and coordinated through a number of district organizations. It was also stated that common issues and problems should be dealt with through democratic processes at the yearly assembly, which elected a national board that together with a small staff at the national secretariat represented the organization between the assemblies (ibid.). This structure is largely the same as today, which makes it possible to say that the organization has always strived towards being more of a congregational communion than a unified authoritarian ecclesiastical system (cf. Andreasson 2002; Walan 1964).

Just like nowadays, most of the collective resources in the organization were early on spent on the core – the inner and outer mission. This meant that missionary work quickly was initiated not only among native Laplanders in the northern parts of Sweden, but also in Finland, Russia, the US, North Africa, Congo and in China (cf. Andreasson 2007).

This expansion occurred in other directions as well. No later than a decade after the formation, the organization could account for 50.000 individual members and almost 200 local associations. At the time for the 25th year anniversary in 1903, it affiliated 80.000 members in over 1.000 local associations. Towards the end of the 1920s, some fifty years after its foundation, these numbers had increased to more than 1.200 youth associations with 50.000 members, around 700 junior association with 20.000 members, and almost 1.600 associations/communities with 115.000 adult members. However, the late 1920s also marked the culmination of this five decade long expansion. From then on, the cadre of members and number of associations has been constantly declining (Andreasson 2007).

The era between the two World Wars implied that the work to renew people's religious fervors, mainly through revivalist meetings, was paralleled with an increased focus on educational and social activities (cf. Andreasson 2002). 1951 brought a few important principal changes, since the legislation on religious worship was partly altered this year. One of the more profound changes was that Sweden, as one of the last democracies at the time, hereby introduced freedom of religion. Another change was that the Swedish state church was given legal status as a religious community among others. This also meant that the Mission Union of Sweden together with other free churches, from a legal perspective, was regarded as religious communities (ibid.). Towards the end of the 1950s, this altered legal status gave rise to an internal debate and a suggestion that the name should be changed into something that signaled more of a *"/…/ congregational and confessional church with an evangelical-Lutheran background than an association with a folkrörelse character"* (Andreasson 2007:195, my translation). However, nothing happened in this respect until 2003.

The increased focus on ecumenical work in the 1960s led to internal discussions about a closer cooperation and even fusions with both Swedish and foreign Free Chur-

ches. Despite some rapprochements, this is still a sensitive issue (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden 2007). Thanks to the general economic prosperity in the post war era, the 1950s and 1960s saw the construction of a number of new and modern church buildings (Andreasson 2002).

In the early 1970s, there was an introduction of a common and coherent state subsidy to all Swedish free churches. But, instead of being allocated in accordance to the number of membership in each organization, which was and still is the common distribution mechanism for Swedish state subsidies, it was decided that this subsidy should be spread according to the number of 'served' [*betjänade*] in each organization. This new term, which still is used, includes everyone (children, youths, adults) that partake in the activities of the organization, whether they are formal members or not (ibid.).

The 1990s brought along harsh debates regarding a general policy on homosexuality and the blessing of same-sex marriages [*samkönade äktenskap*] (ibid.). When the new millennium and the planned separation between the Church and State in Sweden were approaching, an extensive overhaul of the regulations was also initiated. In 2000, this resulted in the introduction of a new constitution that, *inter alia*, implied a broader and more universal view open to more ecumenicalism. Furthermore, it allowed children to affiliate as members if their parents approved, and also a partly reformed view on the Bible (ibid.).

7.9.1 Contemporary Objectives and Main Activities

The overall vision of the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden is *"a church – with room for the entire life – that offers liberation and satisfaction through the encounter with Jesus Christ"* (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden 2007). Part of the main objective is, via inner and outer missions, to spread the conviction that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. This missionary work involves evangelization; diaconal work; and aid efforts aimed at both increasing justice and peace in society, as well as improving the environment. How this translates to concrete activities is up to every local congregation to decide.

On a national level, though, it entails the education of pastors, lay welfare workers [*diakoner*] and missionaries, and coordination of the international work (ibid.). This revivalist work of the organization also includes church services with the Word of God, baptism, and communion (ibid.). With Christ as the obvious center for faith, the organizational self-picture also includes the ambition of being an open association that allows for people's different opinions and perceptions as well as different interpretations of the Bible, which is believed to enrich the fellowship (www.missionskyrkan.se). There is also an explicit strive for being independent and free while working for an enhanced ecumenicalism and unity within the entire Christianity (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden 2007).

7.9.2 Current Structures and Numbers

In 2006, the organization affiliated close to 62.000 members, while the people it 'served' amounted to 136.500 (see definition of the notion of served above). The same year, there were also 714 local congregations, distributed over seven districts covering the territory of Sweden. In addition, there was an eight, non-geographically defined district (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden 2007). Every district employs a small staff and is headed by a district director [*distriktsföreståndare*], who is responsible for planning and coordinating the work together with the local congregations within the district. The so-called church conference, which meets annually, is the highest decision-making body. Every local congregation is allowed to send representatives to this conference in accordance with how many individual members they affiliate. In 2006, the conference counted 317 local congregations that were represented by 574 delegates (www.missionskyrkan.se).

The church board, which is elected at the annual church conference, constitutes the highest internal decision-making body between these conferences. The main responsibility of the board is to plan and govern the internal work of the organization, which should follow the overall decisions taken at the annual conferences. To execute the planned activities, the board works together with the mission director [*missionsföreståndare*] and the staff at the national secretariat in Stockholm. In 2006, the organization employed a total of 95 persons, whereas 19 worked abroad (Mission Covenant Church of Sweden 2007).

The organization is either full or partial owner of three publishing firms, a bookstore, and a hotel business. It is also fully or partially responsible for three folk high schools and a university college with a theological profile, five non-profit associations, active in areas such as education and lay welfare service, and several foundations. It is also active in eight (national and international) ecumenical organizations. Through its outer mission and international aid work, the organization is also indirectly or directly represented in about fourteen countries on four continents (ibid.).

Revenues in 2006 for the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden alone amounted to close to SEK 124 million. The surplus for that year ended on SEK 5 million, and its total assets were close to SEK 235 million. Revenues for the group reached almost SEK 129 million, with a surplus of SEK 1,2 million. Total assets for the group were SEK 236 million.

7.10 Concluding Remarks

From the descriptions above one can conclude that the nine Swedish civil society organizations in this study have similar historical backgrounds. This is also one of the reasons for why these organizations have been included in the present study (see chapter 6). This historical background is part of what constitutes the so-called *folkrörelse* tradition (cf. chapter 3). Another parallel resemblance in this respect concerns their distinct formal structures stretching from the individual member and local associations to the national secretariat or head office, via either proper associations or less formal coordination functions at a regional or district level. In close connection to these federative

structures, they are all also partial or full owners of different kinds of for-profit enterprises. All in all, despite some individual differences, it is possible to conclude that these pronounced structures largely concord with the earlier discussion on federations and hybrid organizations that I discussed in chapter 4. However, the descriptions above also reveal a number of differences concerning, for example, size, objectives, and main activities.

The size of these organizations differs in various ways. One concerns the amount of affiliated members, which range from less than 20.000 in the Association of the Visually Impaired to over three million in the Co-operative Union. Most of the organizations, though, could be found in the span between about 100.000 to about one million members. Or, from about one to ten percent of the Swedish population.

Another interesting aspect regarding size concerns the volume of economic activities. While some of the organizations account for annual turnovers between SEK 50 and 100 million, others, like the Swedish Red Cross, have turnovers that reach almost or beyond SEK 1 billion. In relation, it also deserves to be noted that while most of the nine organizations own a handful of for-profit subsidiaries each that contribute economically to the mother association, there are a few, like the Swedish Football Association, which apparently have become much more commercialized over the years. At the far end of this scale we find the Co-operative Union, which has developed an extensive multibillion-business conglomerate during the later half of the 20th century.

Judging from the descriptions above, differences also seem to exist with respect to objectives and towards whom the activities of the organizations are primarily directed. While the Football Association, the Union of Tenants, the Teachers' Union, and the Association of the Visually Impaired have a more or less exclusive focus on the members they affiliate, there are others that pursue different goals and put other groups at the centre of attention.

An illustrative example of the latter is the Swedish Red Cross, where the majority of the resources and concrete work, both in Sweden and elsewhere, goes to helping people outside the organization's own cadre of members. Another example in this direction is the Social Democratic Party. Yet, the Mission Covenant Church, the IOGT-NTO and the Co-operative Union would from this perspective end up somewhere in between these two positions, since their activities mostly seem to be directed both toward members and non-members.

From this it is also possible to construe a continuum, where one extreme indicates a primary focus on advocacy work, and the other a delivery of services to either members and/or non-members (see figure 3 below). Accordingly, the centre point of this scale indicates that objectives and activities involve equally much promotion of members' interests as on delivering services to them. I would place the Social Democratic Party and the Association of the Visually Impaired more towards the advocacy end, since much of the activities in which they are engaged involve the promotion of particular group interests rather than delivering service. Towards the other end I would place the Co-operative Union, the Football Association, the Mission Covenant Church, and the Swedish Red Cross, since I understand their respective work to include more service than advocacy. The other three, the Teachers' Union, the IOGT-NTO and the Union of Tenants, end up somewhere in the middle.

This discussion regarding similarities and differences between the federations in this study serves as background for the analysis in chapter 8 to 11 of how individual membership is perceived.

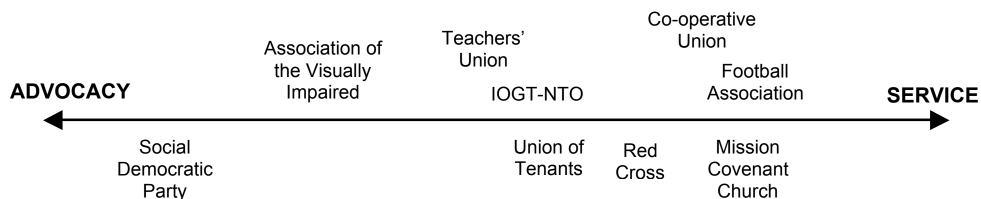

Figure 3. A continuum from advocacy to service. The position of each organization in the figure is merely an approximation.

8. Membership and Organizational Identity

This is the first chapter in which I deal with the meaning of individual membership as perceived by the top-level leaders and officials interviewed for this study. The affiliation of members is discussed as an essential aspect of the existence and identity of the federative organizations. The accounts emphasize the members' rationale for joining an organization, the organization's ability to claim many members, and the legitimacy and the possibilities for resource mobilization that is assumed to follow from a large group of members.

8.1 A Formalized Commitment to an Organizational Core

One of the more general perceptions of membership among the interviewees in this study concerns a member's personal, autonomous, but conscious commitment. Put in another way, people's interest in and deliberate stand and devotion for something they find important and worth being 'committed' to, was generally construed as crucial aspects of a membership. The membership was also frequently discussed in terms of solidarity with and a sense of belonging to a common cause or idea. The way many interviewees approached this matter of commitment and membership also seems to have bearing on the formation of people's identities and life situation.

Take the chairman of the board of the IOGT-NTO as an example: who stressed that he primarily considered individual membership as being related to a strong sense of belonging. This led him to add that a precondition for membership is based in the personal will and the deliberate act of devotedly wanting to belong to something and the desire to be part of something larger than one self. In that way, he concluded that a person's membership implies *"taking a step beyond demonstrating some general sympathies for and a belief in that something is good"* (p 1, interview).

This 'something', to which one belongs and is committed to as a member, is consistently either implicitly or explicitly associated with an organization. That is, no interviewee mentioned anything of the above without also adding 'organization' as a sort of underlying and taken for granted prerequisite. The following examples illustrate how this appeared. The first quote is a smaller fragment of what the ideologist in the Social Democratic Party answered when she was approached with a question of what first came to her mind when she heard the words individual membership.

> /…/ to be affiliated with a political party is, after all, an expression for a certain engagement that either has its origin in factual matters or in more general values and principles. But, it is a question of some sort of personal choice. That something is considered so important that one even considers it necessary to join a certain organization in order to point that out (ideologist, SAP, 1).

While discussing the national secretariat and her duties and responsibilities there, the ideologist in the Teachers' Union revealed her spontaneous reactions towards the individual membership by connecting it to interest and belonging. She expanded on the latter by also adding that because of her former life in the hippie and protest generation of '68', she also considered membership to have a lot to do with solidarity and a firm belief in the particular idea and benefits of a strong collective. Or, that a 'we' always is stronger and can achieve much more than a single 'I'. This is how she put it:

> /…/ if something interests me and I believe it is important, I imagine I would support it or commit myself by joining as member /…/. I could also picture /…/ membership in terms of belonging /…/ **Why is it important to belong?** /…/ since I'm part of the radical 1968 generation this comes natural to me. It has to do with solidarity, and the idea of building a community. /…/ that we are stronger together than on our own, but that the individual is still visible in the collective. That there is an 'I', at the same time as 'we' can protect, enforce [and] help (ideologist, Teachers' Union, 12).

The chairman of the board of the Swedish Red Cross followed a somewhat similar line of reasoning, although he preferred to approach the issue of membership by saying that it mainly involves *"a personal standpoint and a deliberate decision to actually become a member in a particular association"*. And, that the membership, from his perspective, therefore indicates *"a form of commitment on behalf of the individual to contribute ideologically, practically, politically, humanitarianly or in some other way to the continuing success of a specific organizational endeavor"* (p 1, interview).

It is as if these interviewees say that it is through the formal affiliation as members that people have the opportunity to reinforce, intensify, and transform their personal views, ideas, and beliefs into being part of, committed to, and feeling solidarity with larger, extrapersonal causes and deeds. Yet, in order for this to happen there is a claim for an obvious need of a concrete organizational context that can offer the necessary link, which is where membership enters the picture. Following this line of reasoning means that becoming an individual member is equal to aligning one's personal convictions and sympathies with what a particular organization formally stands for and actually does.

Consequently, becoming and remaining a member is here construed as a voluntary and deliberate act involving taking a formalized personal stand in favor of an issue and/or a particular set of norms, values, and activities directly connected to an organization. From this we can also say that the individual membership is perceived as an intermediary link between people's personal convictions and fervors and the particular values, norms, and practices of organizations. However, even if people may need these organizations in order to state and reinforce certain their personal ideas, beliefs, and hopes, it is obvious that these organizations are dependent on their members.

8.1.1 No Membership, No Organization

Practically all interviewees concluded that the affiliation of individual members is an absolute raison d'être for their respective organizations. In fact, I believe that the com-

bined reactions and reflections among many interviewees quite well demonstrate how much importance is attributed to the idea of individual membership within these organizations. In this respect, the intrinsic worth of individual membership seems largely taken for granted.

Below follows two interesting examples, in which the chairman of the board of the Co-operative Union and the Union of Tenants respectively express what appears to be a genuine bafflement and maybe even some annoyance when confronted with the question why their organizations have members in the first place. First out is the representative from the Union of Tenants, who basically claimed that the individual members are the only ones who can motivate the existence of the organization:

> /…/ **Why does your organization affiliate members?** /…/ Why we affiliate members? I don't understand what you mean? I cannot see that we shouldn't! **I understand, but you hinted earlier that it has something to do with organizational justification and existence…** /…/ That is, an organization must have received some sort of message from somewhere saying that 'It is important and motivated that you exist'. 'We need this kind of organization'. Something is wrong if there is no one there to say or think such things. In this sense, you cannot motivate yourself (chairman, Union of Tenants, 14).

Out of a similar puzzlement, the chairman of the Co-operative Union applied a more judicial approach by referring to the legal form of this cooperative when answering the same kind of question.

> /…/ **how come that the Co-operative Union and its associations affiliate members?** /…/ Now I do not understand. Why we have members? Legally we are an economic association /…/ and it is the foundation for any economic association to affiliate members /…/. Otherwise, it would be impossible to be an economic association. That is why your question astonished me. This is so obvious to me. **What does it mean for your organization to affiliate members?** Well, it means a lot (chairman, Co-operative Union, 14).

However, it is generally not enough to only have affiliated members in order to be what these organizations are. One of the more common perceptions regarding membership is also that it is imperative to affiliate as many individuals as possible. Or better put, the unification of many memberships is generally believed to be an absolute requirement for what makes these organizations what they are. Although I will return to and expand on this at a later stage, I have here included a passage where the head of organization in the Social Democratic Party mentions the aspect of being many in relation to be what they want to be – a *folkrörelse* organization:

> /…/ we've taken the decision to have an organization building on many individual memberships. /…/ We want to be a *folkrörelse* party that unites many people. /…/ So, members are the foundation of the Party (head of organization, Social Democratic Party, 1).

When I then asked him to expand upon what membership, from an organizational perspective, further implies he underlined what he had just said about it being the main rationale for the entire organization by stating that it is as indispensable as water for the shipping industry. Without water, there is no need for boats, and without boats

there cannot be a shipping industry. Thus, without membership there is no organization. Or, it would at least be *"/…/ something completely different"* as he said (p 4, interview). What exactly, he did not specify.

Another way of showing how fundamental individual members are within these organizations is to ask what would happen if more members would be leaving than joining. When I approached the ideologist in the Co-operative Union with that question he came up with a rather drastic answer: *"Well, that would slowly impoverish and shrink the organization until it finally died"* (p 19, interview). Even the chairman of the Teachers' Union arrived at a similar assumption when I asked her if she could imagine the organization she represented without members.

> **/…/ is it possible to imagine the Teachers' Union without its members?** No. **It's not possible?** No, then there is nothing. **What would be left then?** Nothing, and it is extremely important to be aware of that. We are nothing [without members]. And /…/ we only have members as long as we can deliver and be something they consider worth spending their money on. As soon as they think otherwise, we don't have any members. **And then there is no organization?** No, then we don't exist. Definitely not (chairman, Teacher's union, 24).

The answer of the chairman of the IOGT-NTO to the question what the organization would be without its members resembled most others' in that he also emphasized this important link between the individual membership, members, and the characteristics as well as the mere existence of the organization. Yet, what makes this answer extra noteworthy is his conclusion that a contemporary importance attributed to the affiliation of individual members derives from and depends on the historical roots of the organization, which he seems to regard as impossible to escape.

> **Is it possible to imagine the IOGT-NTO without its affiliated members?** Then it would be something else. I don't think it is possible to think of the IOGT-NTO and the [temperance] movement, with its history and background, in terms of organizations without members. Then, something completely new would have been created. Because there are a certain history which you cannot escape and a political ambition that builds on the idea of people's commitment and participation. That is, our way of exerting influence in society depends on the fact that a lot of people actually do a lot of work through planning, organizing, and executing activities. /…/ We would be something else if it wasn't for the individual members (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 8).

Membership Adds Distinctiveness

Accordingly, these organizations would either not exist or at least be something 'else' without the members they affiliate. The question is just what they would be? The chairman of the Red Cross came up with a suggestion while discussing what his organization is trying to accomplish both in Sweden and elsewhere. He asserted that all their activities and deeds would fall short if it was not for the participation and commitment of individual members, since they are the ones who also carry out most of the extensive voluntary work that the organization needs.

> No, it is impossible without affiliated members [in Sweden] /…/ Let me put it this way, it won't work with employees alone /…/. Then we would be like a public social welfare organization, which we are not (chairman, Red Cross, 3).

The fact that it generally is members who mostly execute the voluntary work makes the Swedish Red Cross is, if not unique, so at least quite odd compared to other Red Cross societies around the world (cf. chapter 7). The general solution in most other countries seems to be that people either volunteer or affiliate as members.

In relation to a hypothetical discussion of what would happen if there were to be a drastic cut in their member-cadre, also the secretary general in the Red Cross concluded that they would become something *"else"*. But, as an alternative to the social welfare provider his chairman suggested above, he resembled this 'else' to a professional aid corporation that *"just as well could be called The Red Cross Ltd"* instead of the *"folkrörelse organization"* he considered it to be today (p 7, interview).

The chairman of the board of the Union of Tenants came up with a third suggestion of what this 'else' could be. She said that without members, they would be no more than a professional consumer or lobby organization. This she personally not only disliked, but also considered dangerous. Even if she also seemed troubled by the idea, the ideologist in the Teachers' Union touched upon an almost identical conclusion when I asked her if she could imagine her organization without members.

> **Is it possible to imagine the Teachers' Union without affiliated members?** /…/ Well, our purpose is to organize teachers [and] if we wouldn't do that what would we be and do then? A lobby group against the Government? No, no I cannot imagine that. /…/ Even if I could not directly see that happen, it makes me wonder. Still, I cannot visualize what it should be (ideologist, Teachers' union, 19).

While providing his vision of the future, the ideologist in the Football Association arrived at a somewhat parallel ending. With specific references to the issue of internal accountability and to the issue that membership, in his view, is largely about the clarification of by whom and in what way the organization should be governed, he stated:

> It has to be a chairman and a secretary general or a CEO who are responsible and accountable for the lot. But, then you also need the affiliated individual members who could raise demands for accountability. If not, you'll get a joint-stock company (ideologist, Football Association, 25).

However, in direct relation to the argument that if it was not for the individual members the organization could just as well be a corporation, I asked him whether or not he believed that could ever become a widespread reality among Swedish football clubs and associations. Even if he hesitated, he answered yes to that question, and de did so mainly as a consequence of what he believed was happening in the world of football, both in Sweden and elsewhere. Yet, he added that nothing of the kind would happen rapidly in Sweden, since the:

> /…/ culture [in Sweden] differs in this respect. /…/ The culture surrounding the association in the Swedish civil society is completely different compared to most other parts of the world. **It's strong?** For good or bad, it's very strong (ideologist, Football Association, 25).

The link between the membership and the specific way of arranging an organization that is put forth here is particularly interesting since it is made with reference to a strong, inert, and unique Swedish associational culture, which apparently serves conservation rather than change. That fact also enabled this interviewee to assert that individual members not only have been and still are, but that they will also continue to be prescribed a certain status through their specific role as governors and principals of the organization they belong to.

Another interviewee, who argued in a similar manner but with particular reference to a federative structure, was the ideologist in the Social Democratic Party. From an extended description in which she related the membership to such norms, values, formal structures, and procedures that can be characterized as typical for federations (cf. chapter 4), I asked her if she had any idea why this organizational form is so common. Her immediate answer was that if membership is about commitment, solidarity and influence, which she believed, a federation is probably the most 'natural' way of organizing and conducting things. However, after thinking it through a bit she ended up with the following assumption, which is comparable to what her counterpart in the Football Association suggested above.

> Everything is a product of circumstances. So, it is maybe a problem today that we are stuck with associational structures that were created in and for a different society. But, when a structure is in place, it starts to live its proper life and develop a value of its own. It is often difficult to change already established structures. It may even be easier to create something new on the side while abandoning the old rather than trying to change it (ideologist, Social Democratic Party, 2).

One interpretation of what these two last interviewees talked about is that large parts of the contemporary meaning of individual membership seems dependent on both cultural and structural features, and on conditions that have emerged along an organization's historical development. From this it might also be suggested that the individual membership partly, but probably not fully, can be characterized as a path-dependent phenomenon. This, I believe, is an important insight as to why the affiliation of members here seems to be understood and framed from certain perspectives and criteria rather than others. Although it is not explicitly mentioned above, it seems possible to assume that what the interviewees are thinking of here is related to the *folkrörelse* tradition discussed in chapter 3.

To expand this further, I have, in the next section, put the interviewees from the Mission Covenant Church at the centre of attention. The reason for this is twofold. First, I believe they contribute with several interesting and clarifying insights regarding individual membership and the distinctiveness of the type of federations this study includes. Second, their general approach excludes most doubts on whether or not parts of the meaning of individual membership is dependent upon a long gone past.

A Path-Dependent Heritage

Although the representatives from the Mission Covenant Church argued along similar lines as most others interviewees, they also expressed a somewhat more critical view of individual membership. Their views deviated especially in relation to what seems to be a constant awareness of how membership unites the past and the present. This means that what they said and were critical about not only challenge large parts of what seems to be taken for granted regarding membership within these organizational contexts. Their common opinion also creates a strong contrasting effect, through which some of the more crucial aspects of membership become elucidated.

The immediate reaction of the mission director [*missionsföreståndaren*] when I asked for his first thoughts vis-à-vis the individual membership was that, to him, it sounded more *"like association than church"* (p 2, interview). He developed this by saying that, for the moment, many in the organization, including himself, were caught up in a process of altering what he pictured as a strongly taken for granted way of perceiving their community as an association rather than a church. He claimed that this change process involved the radical shift from thinking in terms of 'belonging to' rather than being 'formally affiliated with' a church.

Before returning to this cognitive shift, I will first briefly expand on what these interviewees repeatedly came back to – the difficulty of escaping one's background and that membership, therefore, is largely conditioned and framed by the traditions and historical roots of an organization.

The ideologist pointed this out with references to what he called a *folkrörelse* pattern, which he claimed had been externally forced upon the Mission Covenant Church already in its early days. The result has been that *folkrörelse*, after more than a century, still tend to dominate the idea behind the affiliation of their individual members.

> When we now stand before the new millennium and discuss what our church is, the primary issue does not concern the *folkrörelse*-related affiliation of members, even if we in fact have huge difficulties to distance ourselves from it (ideologist, Mission Covenant Church, 2).

As was mentioned in chapter 3, during the later parts of the 19th century, Sweden not only experienced the formation of what today is referred to as some of the oldest and more well known *folkrörelser*, such as the workers', the temperance, and the Free Church movements, but also the constitution of many other membership-based associations. Among them was the Mission Covenant Church, which until Church and State were separated in 2000 had to be called the Mission *Union* of Sweden [*Missionsförbundet*], since the Swedish constitution only permitted one church – a state church. A reality that left all other religious congregations without much of a choice – in order to exist in Sweden before that date one of the more commonly accepted options was simply to create a membership-based association, formally structured and governed in accordance with democratic principles and practices. Or, to put it differently, it was necessary to create an association that matched what later was to be known as the *folkrörelse* tradition (for more details see chapter 3 and 7). Below it is the mission director who provides his view of this forced adoption of a *folkrörelse* pattern.

> We were not allowed to register a church before 2000. /…/ That is, from 1878 and until 2000 the Mission Union of Sweden was formally registered as an association, since Sweden only allowed one official church to exist during this period. /…/ The Catholic Church, which is older than the Church of Sweden [*Svenska Kyrkan*], was, for example, legally registered as a foundation /…/ while we were an association [*ideell förening*]. /…/ **is this maybe the reason for why you began internally to discuss the issue of being either church or association?** I believe so. /…/ but the older generation, who participated in establishing the Mission Union of Sweden, had no reasons to think or act differently than what they did (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 8).

Although the legal situation in the 19th century prescribed a certain order, I believe the mission director here is probably right when he says that the older generations he refers to had no reason *not* to think of their organizations in terms of an association. This is probably especially true, if one considers that being what generally was understood as a *folkrörelse* while adopting the organizational structures and procedures that are associated with a *folkrörelse*, probably mirrored the particular *zeitgeist* of the time (see chapter 3). Even if some already then might have viewed *folkrörelse* as negative and threatening, I believe most perceived it differently. Because, being associated with this term seems to have legitimized organizational existence and establishment, at the same time as it offered unique opportunities for underprivileged groups to advance their interests in society (cf. Micheletti 1995; Lundström and Svedberg 2003).

Moreover, as was also mentioned in chapter 3, the late 19th and early 20th century was a rather turbulent era, in which radical ideas and protests that challenged parts of the contemporary societal structures and hierarchies could be heard. While conformists in society generally opposed the introduction of a liberty to organize, many of their challengers not only honored this principle as a democratic right, but also regarded it as one of the more important vehicles for societal changes (Lundkvist 1977; Johansson 1980). To create or to formally join and control an organization, became for many poor people and underprivileged groups a symbol of freedom and influence, and a concrete and necessary tool for attaining social and political changes (Micheletti 1995). This was true even in the religious world.

The mission director touched upon this while trying to explain why the combination of church and association was considered less controversial and problematic in those days than what it might be today.

> /…/ most people in the 1880s looked upon the Church of Sweden [*Svenska Kyrkan*] as a Government authority with its bishops and priests as civil servants with a public mandate. In the Mission Union of Sweden one was, instead, especially proud of a strong and well-developed local self-rule. This implied, for example, that it was possible to locally construe one's own church, call one's own reverend, construe a proper local organization and control one's own economy. /…/ It was quite clear from the beginning that the Mission Union of Sweden should be a federative organization where members were directly affiliated with their local associations and indirectly with the national level. This federative model has followed us ever since (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 5).

Yet, there is not much that time leaves untouched – not even organizational structures. Apart from the genesis of the organization and the rupture between Church and State in Sweden in 2000, the interviewees also brought up three other concrete histo-

rical events that they believed were important for the ongoing internal change process of perceiving this congregational community as a church to which one belongs rather than an association with which one is an affiliated member (see chapter seven).

Although mentioned only in passing, the first of these three events are the legal changes concerning the freedom of religion [*religionsfrihetslagstiftningen*], realized in the 1950s, which implied that Swedish citizens from then on were allowed to formally resign from the state church. The second event is the introduction of the concept *served* [*betjänade*], which was invented in the early 1970s when the public subsidy system to congregations in Sweden was changed. In an effort to harmonize it and to make this system as fair as possible, it was decided that subsidies should not be distributed in proportion to an organization's number of members. This was mainly because the membership that was offered was considered as being non-representative, since its meaning tended to differ from one church to another. For example, while the Catholic Church uses a family membership through which every family member becomes counted as a member, the Jewish and the Muslim congregations in Sweden do not relate to their followers in terms of members at all. Because of these and similar differences, it was decided that all congregations should use the people that are *served* by their activities as a proxy for how much subsidies each of them should be entitled to. Here it is the mission director who describes the criteria for how to use this concept.

> /…/ certain criteria were established for how to measure this category of served [*betjänade*] /…/ That is, everyone who, during a certain period of time, visits and participates in the activities of our congregations and youth associations. This category even covers those you earlier called non-member volunteers who, in one way or the other, may come in contact with a congregation or the activities of an association. This means that you could be part of sewing circle or a therapy group without formally being an affiliated member (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 3).

He added that on the whole and in retrospect, the introduction of this concept largely had been positive for the Mission Covenant Church. It had provoked and thereby also helped them to think beyond any conventional ideas regarding membership, *"so that the church nowadays is viewed as much larger than the amount of its formal members, which is a fresh start in thinking of ourselves in terms of a church rather than only as an association"* (p 3, interview).

Nevertheless, since a member and a served not necessarily coincide in one person, the mission director also identified a serious problem. While the amount members constantly decreases and the amount of served increases, it is only the members that are granted access to internal formal decision-making arenas and procedures. The members are therefore also the only ones who formally can shoulder an overall responsibility for economic or other important issues. He said that this situation, at times, had created serious tensions between these two groupings.

The third event is the elaboration and introduction of the new constitution that concurred with the earlier mentioned separation of Church and State in 2000. However, at the same time as both the ideologist and his colleagues spoke of this new constitution as a partial failure, especially in relation to its formulation of a theological outlook on membership, they enthusiastically admitted that it, together with the concept *served*

and the still vivid *folkrörelse* culture and practice, had triggered a more far-reaching and still continuing internal reflexive process. They even assumed that this entire process could be framed as having activated the idea of a paradigmatic shift, in which the idea of individual membership occupies a central role.

Leaving aside the talk of a paradigmatic shift, it is interesting to note how the mission director discussed the same process while identifying the historical baggage he thought they had to get rid of, but so far, could not do without.

> Yes, we have worked with our constitution several times over the years. I was in charge of the latest effort /…/ when the individual membership constituted one of the greater issues /…/. During that work one could notice how much of the old and former associational ideas regarding membership that still exist in our organization. /…/ But, a new way of thinking seems to arise with the younger generation, even if the forms we continuously use to affiliate people with our church still has a function and a role to play. That is, the organization does not work without a democratic frame and structure where the membership entitles people to vote, to choose their leaders, boards and so on. With respect to this, we have also gone from a strong tradition of high presence during meetings and yearly assemblies towards a situation where fewer and fewer seem to think it is important to participate. That is, the entire glow from the 1880s regarding how to think and act as an association is about to go out. Yet, we don't have a better model for how to run and rule our church in the future, and that is worrying (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 2).

In sum, the representatives from the Mission Covenant Church seem to perceive the membership as a thing of the past, and even an outdated form for how to affiliate people with this congregational context. One could also say that it, in their view, has become an anachronism that is incompatible with what they want their church to be today and in the future. The only problem they have, though, is that it is difficult to get rid of something that for more than a century has been a central and dominating aspect of how their organization has been coordinated and governed.

8.1.2 Membership as a Federative Brick: but Who Counts as a Member?

The last section above demonstrates just how taken for granted and fundamental the notion of individual membership appears to be within these organizations. From the interviewees' viewpoint, the affiliation of members appears to be one of the more, if not the single most valuable building block and important aspect adding uniqueness and content to the kind of federative *folkrörelse* organizations they represent. Remove it and the organization in question ceases to exist. Considering this, it is not difficult to understand why the process of changing the idea and practice associated with membership within the Mission Covenant Church, as discussed above, has met some serious opposition. It is certainly not an easy task to reform or even replace something that has become so well integrated and institutionalized within the organizational contexts included in this study as the membership. However, as will be demonstrated at a later stage, transformation in this respect is not impossible.

Earlier on I retold how the ideologist in the Social Democratic Party described what she considered an obvious connection between the membership and the type of fede-

rative structures that characterize the nine organizations in this study. This was what she said more exactly in this respect:

> A formal membership implies that there is an equally formal organization in the background, where meetings are held regularly, members elect their leaders, and where everyone gets called to meetings and receives the same amount of information. There is a certain structure surrounding the individual membership /…/ that I believe is quite similar from organization to organization in that the structure departs from a local level, which aggregates to a regional and a central level (ideologist, Social Democratic Party, 2).

Even if the ideologist and many others stated that the individual membership not only is surrounded by, but also requires some sort of organizational structure in order to make sense, it is interesting to note that the statutes of the organizations in this study seldom are equally transparent or comprehensively formulated. For example, although both membership and members is mentioned almost 80 times in the bylaws of the Social Democratic Party, they are, for some reason, omitted in the description of the internal structure. This is, for example, what *§2 "Organization"* stipulates:

> The Social Democratic associations and local clubs are the fundamental organizations of the party. The associations unite to form local branches, known as Labor Communes, the primary local organizations of the party. The local branches unite to form districts, which are the regional main organizations of the party and which build the party.

In fact, members and/or their formal affiliation are scarcely mentioned when dealing with explicit descriptions of the internal organizational structures. However, §3 *"Organization"* in the regulations of the Association of the Visually Impaired offers one rare example in this respect. There one can read:

> The Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired is a three level organization with a national association, districts, and local associations. Other associations of visually impaired are allowed to join the national level of the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired. Individual members entitled to vote are formally affiliated with a local association. In areas without local associations, it is possible to affiliate individual members with a district organization (my translation).

Who the member is and/or where the membership connects to the formal structures is, if dealt with, generally mentioned separately in the organizations' bylaws, and often under headlines such as 'membership' or 'members'. One of the more explicit examples in this respect can be found in *§3 "Membership"* in the regulations of the IOGT-NTO:

> The one who has signed the present member pledge [*medlemsförbindelse*] and are registered in the central member directory is affiliated member with the IOGT-NTO. Member may belong to a local association or district or central level directly. Local membership can be obtained in several associations. However, membership on a central level [*förbundsmedlemskap*] is only tied to one association /…/ (my translation).

Returning to the interviews and the earlier stated importance that they tend to bestow upon the formal affiliation of individual members, it is still not always clear whom the member actually is. In some cases, this seems to depend on where one looks, who is asked, and when. That is, there are members and there are members. However, what seems to be the typical view among most interviewees is well represented by the following example provided by the chairman of the IOGT-NTO. The quote starts with his answer to the question of whom he sees as member:

> Well, it is of course those who /…/ pay [a fee]. **You mean physical persons?** Yes, the persons. In IOGT-NTO, I see the members, the physical persons as members. They are the organization *per definition* (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 7, emphasis in original).

Even if most interviewees would probably support this view, there were those who were either more vague or even expressed a contradictory opinion. Take, for example, the following quote:

> /…/ earlier it was 20 associations that were members in the federation [*förbundet*], but now it is the individual members who are the members (chairman, Union of Tenants, 13).

The chairman of the Union of Tenants landed in these somewhat cryptic lines from a previous discussion of an internal change process that had involved a partial rewriting of their bylaws and some structural rearrangements that had affected the internal take on the notion of individual membership and its structural tie in with the overall organizational structure.

Moreover, it was above all representatives from the Football Association, the Co-Operative Union and the Mission Covenant Church who directly opposed the typical view in which the individual *per se* is considered member. At the same time, however, neither of them really expressed a clear-cut view as to whom they pictured in this role. Below follows a few sentences from the interview with the chairman of the Football Association, who, I believe, managed to capture the essence of this both oppositional and vague opinion.

> /…/ **from your position, how do you view the individual members?** Well, the associations are our members. If I talk of members from the perspective of the Swedish Football Association it is necessary to differentiate between members and members. Concerning how to view individual members one could say that there has never existed any, because the Football Association has never had any contact with or relation to any individual members. However, if we talk about the members at the local level one could say that we have about one million individual members (chairman Football Association, 7, emphasis added).

From this, where it is stated that it is necessary to make a distinction between a member and a member, it is intriguing to see how the interviewee in this quite typical example appears to be dismantling the federative structure in order to, in a way, play its different components against each other. That is, while talking of the Football Association and it's members he seems to restrict his scope so that he only sees the relation between what I understand as the common unit and the more than 3.200 affiliated local associations. This establishes a sort of outer boundary of this federation 'behind'

the local associations but 'in front' of the individual members, which indicates an inclusion of local associations and a simultaneous exclusion of individual members. Establishing and maintaining this kind of organizational demarcation make it feasible to claim that no relation exists between the federative whole and the members at the local level. However, already in the next sentence, he adds ambiguity to this frontier by asserting that "*we*" – which cannot be anything else but the entire Football Association – have about one million affiliated individual members.

Accordingly, an expanded interpretation of this might imply the creation of a rather ambiguous dichotomous centre-periphery divide between those who are viewed as clearly belonging to the inside and those who are allowed to balance on the outer margins of the organization. This basically means elaborating upon how and where one chooses to draw the organizational boundary-line, and where one thereby positions the individual member vis-à-vis the larger structural matrix of the organization (cf. Stryjan 1989; Ahrne 1994).

Moreover, the quotation above where the chairman of the Football Association first 'pushed' the individual member towards or even beyond the outer limits of the organization and then, in the next sentence, 'pulled' him/her back inwardly towards a imagined centre, illustrates what I would like to call a push-and-pull strategy. This rather indistinct approach towards individual membership was, as stated above, mainly pronounced among the interviewees representing the Football Association, the Cooperative Union, and the Mission Covenant Church.

8.2 The More the Merrier. Yet, How Many are Many?

From the seemingly widely shared perception among the interviewees that organizational distinctiveness and existence largely stem from the formal affiliation of individual members, the need for and drive to continuously attract even more members appear to be an assumption equally taken for granted among most of them.

This is well illustrated in the following example. When the national director in the IOGT-NTO described how they kept allocating a lot of manpower and economic resources to recruit more members, I asked if he considered it important to be many members. With reference to the resources they spend on recruiting and administrating members, his immediate answer was that *"numbers are important"* (p 14, interview).

'Many' and 'more' are generally put forth as two very significant aspects of membership. Why? Maybe because size, measured in the mere amount of membership, seems to be understood as a signal of everything from organizational potency, legitimacy and success to failure, inertia and decline. Which of these it is depends on the inclination of the curve.

Some interviewees even considered the number of memberships to be an obvious and undisputable proxy for such things as citizens' societal commitment, people's possibilities to influence their personal situations, and even governance on a societal level. To approach the affiliation of individual members in this way is common even outside the group of interviewees in this study. It tend to appear, for example, both in public polices and debates as well as in scholarly texts both in Sweden and elsewhere (see

chapter 1). My intention is not to challenge these approaches. Instead, I would like to argue that this numerical focus and open desire for 'more' in most cases seems to have become so taken for granted that it tends to equal a widely appreciated truism. It is as if few believe other things matter, which is an important aspect to keep in mind in relation to discussions on individual membership.

With reference to her 30 years as member of the Social Democratic Party, I asked their ideologist if she could account for any changed internal attitudes towards the individual membership. Her answer was that the strong contemporary urge to constantly find and affiliate more individual members was not new. People seemed to have pondered upon this issue throughout the entire history of this political party. When I asked her to expand on this she said:

> It's rather natural. The feeling is that the more who affiliates the stronger are the values and ideas you believe in yourself. /…/ An expression for this is when those who affiliate also want to continue to work for these ideas. But, it's funny that you ask because personally I think it is obvious that one wants many members (ideologist, Social Democratic Party, 7).

Just how taken for granted this view is became even clearer when she recalled an anecdote from a recent visit to the headquarters of a Russian political party. During a seminar, the Russian hosts explained that they were about to join forces with another Russian party. And from their point of view, one of the best things with this merger was that it would facilitate a drastic reduction of their total amount of affiliated members. A statement that left the entire Swedish delegation completely flabbergasted, because they could *"literally not understand how it could be better with less members"* (p 7, interview). However, the explanation was simple. While it generally is believed to be much easier to impact the general public through the affiliation of many members, which she asserted tends to be the main objective for political organizations in Sweden – their Russian counterparts are generally much more oriented towards influencing and lobbying against public authorities and specific power groupings in society. And then, she said, members are of little help. This explanation as to why political parties in Sweden tend to pay attention to the affiliation of as many members as possible is both plausible and interesting. The only question remaining then is: how many are 'many'?

8.2.1 The Answer is 42

When asked why the IOGT-NTO affiliates members in the first place, their ideologist declared that being firmly rooted in a larger mass of people was an absolute necessity back in the late 19th and early 20th century, when the mere existence and activity of the temperance movement were far from accepted in society (see chapter 7). Even if the IOGT-NTO is both a well-respected and well-integrated organization in Swedish society today, he stated that the amalgamation of many individuals is still considered the most important way to obtain a popular anchorage and support for the work and goals of the organization. However, when I asked how many 'many' are, he said that their primary goal was to increase the 35.000 members they affiliated at the time for the interview, and become as many as 42.000 in the near future. Everything in order to

> /…/ be able to view ourselves as a large organization that we could call *folkrörelse* /…/. Even if we don't think that there is a critical limit there [at 42.000] we have just decided to raise the bar to that level since we think it is attainable. I mean, we are well aware that organizations, such as the Red Cross /…/ and many others /…/ are much larger than we (ideologist, IOGT-NTO, 16).

Even if 42.000 are a lot of people, it is probably impossible to argue that it equals 'many' in any absolute terms. Just as the ideologist indicated above, there are organizations that are much bigger. There are also those that are much smaller. However, whether or not a certain number is recognized as 'many' seems to be brought to its head if an organization's member corpus is shrinking, and the cadre of members becomes viewed as too small. Although the loss of individual members seems to have been n undesired reality for most of the organizations in this study at some point in history, this seems to be experienced as a cruel reality for at least seven of them today. As far as I know it is only the Co-operative Union and the IOGT-NTO among the organizations in this study that currently have been able to show any substantial influx of new members.

If we make a halt here, and reflect upon the number of members in the organizations in the study, it is interesting to note that, for example, the Association of the Visually Impaired cannot claim even half of the number of memberships that the ideologist from the IOGT-NTO considered to be many. At the same time, the 42.000 members IOGT-NTO aspired for is still just short of a third of the about 150.000 formally affiliated members in the Social Democratic Party. And, 42.000 are about thirteen times less compared to the official number of memberships in the Union of Tenants. Not to mention the proportions between the about 16.000 members in the Association of the Visually Impaired, and the almost 3.000.000 members that the Co-operative Union officially claims to affiliate. So, how many are 'many'? Is it 16.000, 42.000, 150.000, 500.000, or 3 000.000?

Here is an excerpt from the interview with the head of organization in the Social Democratic Party, who reflected upon how their amount of individual members can be considered as many and therefore important for their ambition of being a *folkrörelse* organization. This is so even if their member-cadre has gone down from 800.000 in the late 1980s, to less than 150.000 today.

> I don't think we will voluntarily abandon the idea of being a *folkrörelse* party with a strong base in many members and their membership. But, there is of course a certain threshold of discomfort here as well. When is one a *folkrörelse* party? With 800.000 members – definitely! With 260.000 members in a country with the size of Sweden – absolutely. With 150.000 members – more than double the size of the second largest political party in terms of members – yes. Yet, should we become fewer than that we will start resembling the Liberal Party [*Folkpartiet*, a Swedish political party with comparable few formal members]. Anyhow, we are aiming at clinging on to the idea of being a *folkrörelse* (head of organization, Social Democratic Party, 18).

Despite the fact that most organizational representatives would be concerned with diminishing numbers of memberships, I believe that most of them still would do as the interviewee above – claim their respective numbers to be nothing less than many.

Consequently, there is no absolute answer to the question of how many 'many' are within these organizations. Instead, this appears to be a subjective way of using size, in terms of affiliated members, for various purposes and situations. So, in order to move away from the probably indecipherable question of how many 'many' are, my intention below is instead to further penetrate and qualify why the number of memberships is perceived as being so important.

8.3 Why Size Matters

The number of members described as 'many' and the drive to register 'more' was frequently associated in the interviews with things like strength, success, and legitimacy. This happened regardless of how many members an organization represented. Following this, the body of members within one organization was generally also construed as a sort of pool, from which both tangible and intangible resources emanated or could be extracted.

However, along the lines of earlier presented interpretations of individual membership as *the* crucial hallmark of the organizations in this study, many interviewees did, as we have already seen examples of, establish a more or less clear link between the affiliation of 'many' members and the highly cherished and typical idea of *folkrörelse*. For example, the national director of the IOGT-NTO asserted that an internal discussion of the future of this organization had, among other things, led them to the following decision (the "*many people*" he uses is a paraphrase for many members):

> [W]e said that 'we believe that we must make a real effort in the future to be a *folkrörelse*'. We even tried to define it /…/: a *folkrörelse* is many people; it exists everywhere, [and is] locally rooted (national director, IOGT-NTO, 9).

If to be 'many' is desirable because it turns an organization into a *folkrörelse*, a related aspect that also received considerable attention in the interviews was that the affiliation of many could also be viewed as an indicator of how an organization is doing. That is, the more the 'many' are, the better the organizational performance is thought to be, and vice versa.

When I asked the chairman of the Association of the Visually Impaired why he considered it to be important for the organization to have many members, he said that it confirmed *"that the organization is doing good and well for far more than just a few people"* (p 6, interview). Similarly, the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party said that whenever he interacts with representatives from other organizations, he tries to find out how many individual members they have and whether the number is going up or down. The reason for doing so, he said, was because it tells him *"something of how that particular organization is doing. An increasing amount of members is a sign of a vigorous and growing organization. It may not always be correct, but it is a fairly good indication that it in fact is doing good"* (p 2, interview).

In parallel to indicating organizational well or ill being, the number of members was also perceived as being equivalent to strength or weakness. Or, as the ideologist in the Social Democratic Party put it: *"The more you are, the stronger you become"* (p 12,

interview). The Union of Tenants has turned this idea into an official credo, or as they say, a member pay-off: *"Our size is your strength!"* (www.hyresgastforeningen.se, my translation).

Another revealing example of why and how 'many' could matter comes from the interview with the chairman of the Red Cross. He stated that it would be nothing less than a failure if their members would *"vote with their feet"* and their contemporary number would drop from around 300.000 to as low as 100.000 or less. This is chiefly because there is something wrong with a *"member-based organization"* that looses its members, as he said. Being able to attract and retain new members *"is a sort of receipt that we have been successful in spreading our ideas and ideology"*. This, he guessed, was also why a large body of affiliated members had always been considered a *"crucial part of the success of our organization and an indictor of its position in society.* ***What do you mean?*** *Large organization, large impact. Many members, more important*" (p 6-7, interview).

8.3.1 Creating Legitimacy and a Mandated Space for Action

It was also strongly manifested in the interviews that the affiliation of 'many' members gives importance, credibility, and authenticity not only to the existence of an organization, but also to what is said and done in its name more concretely. In short, a larger group of individual members is believed to amplify an organization's collective voice. This was basically how the ideologist in the Teachers' Union explained why their more than 200.000 individual members make a difference:

> /…/ if we are strong then the voice of the Teachers' Union is extremely strong. Not the least by being many (ideologist, Teachers' Union, 19).

Following this line of argument, some even seemed to view the affiliation of many members as a sort of door opener or battering ram that helps create influence and grants access to different contexts and arenas. The Red Cross chairman, for example, stated that he considered their body of about 300.000 members valuable, if not indispensable, because they are *"an awfully huge crowd if you can have them walk in alignment on a certain issue. /…/ Such a huge group of people may create an enormous influence"* (p 11, interview).

But, who is to be influenced? While contemplating the around one million members that belong to the affiliated clubs and associations of the Football Association, their secretary general asserted that part of their societal importance stem from the size of this group. And, the bigger they are in this respect the more important and influential they become in society, which, he said, may spawn more football activities through the organization's possibilities to *"influence decision-makers"* (p 26, interview).

The chairman of the Union of Tenants argued in a similar manner when she speculated on how their more than 500.000 individual members make a difference:

> /…/ our organization builds very much on the fact that we are many, even if that is not enough to threat anyone. However, it is obviously a strength and an asset to be many rather than claiming that we should be some 25.000 in the Union of Tenants. The more members we affiliate the easier it is to believe that we actually represent the tenants. /…/ For in-

> stance, when our local organization in Falun [a smaller Swedish town] approaches the local council or the housing firm owned by the municipality and say that 'we are angry now' it really matters if we are few or many behind such a statement. /…/ [so] size really matters (chairman, Union of Tenants, 22).

One way to further interpret this is to say that whatever ideas or claims that might be raised in the name of an organization gains both weight and authority if they are believed to have emanated from 'many' affiliated individual members. More concretely, 'many' or *"a relatively good popular foundation"*, as the chairman of the IOGT-NTO put it (p 7, interview), is in this respect regarded as both generator, guarantor, and guardian of legitimacy.

Moreover, I also think these examples clearly indicate what appears to be a commonly and strongly held belief among most interviewees – in order for an organization to be noticed and listened to it is necessary to affiliate and organize as many individual members as possible. This seems to imply that an organization that is experiencing increased numbers or that already affiliates 'many' members has the potential to be regarded as important and potent. Accordingly, the opposite development must then mean lack of respect because of a believed organizational decline, weakness or even failure, which may be is why the interviewees seemed to also host a sort of suppressed fear for a shrinking corpus of individual members.

Accordingly, an organization's corpus of members seems to constitute a source from where both legitimacy and power to influence may emanate. Yet, the amount of credibility and influence that might emanate from this group seems to have a lot to do with its size. That is, the more that is included in the 'many', the greater potential for legitimacy and power there is. However, these examples do not really clarify whose voice it is that becomes amplified. Neither do they specify exactly for whom legitimacy is created nor who is mandated to act upon the influence these 'many' gives rise to.

Sanctioning the Position of Leaders and their Actions

From the previous section, it appears as if the legitimacy and power to influence that stems from a large internal constituency of members, can produce positive external effects for an organization. However, the number of members may also cause effects internally.

One interviewee who emphasized both these directions simultaneously was the secretary general in the Red Cross. With reference to an ongoing internal debate regarding whether the size of the organization, in terms of members, matters or not, he concluded that *"it makes a huge difference if people know that we represent 340.000 members rather than 40.000 members"*. To this he then added that in the case of the Swedish Red Cross, this is important for above all two reasons. The first has to do with the external world of the organization, pointing especially in the direction of *"authorities or whoever you wish to influence"*. The second, he asserted, has more to do with the organization's internal reality, since one of their goals is to try to change *"the attitudes of the regular Swede, and it is relatively easier to influence your own members than trying to reach out to the general public"* (p 6, interview).

In this part of the interview, he was not very explicit regarding who is supposed to exert influence. However, he returned to this topic a little later in describing an encounter he had had with the under-secretary of State at the Ministry of migration in Sweden. This anecdote reveals how leaders and officials may enjoy the legitimacy and mandated space for action that evolves from having 'many' members associated with the organization.

> /…/ we met with the under-secretary of State at the Minister of migration's office to discuss the situation of children seeking asylum in Sweden. If we in that moment couldn't account for many affiliated members and a national coverage it wouldn't have been possible to sit down and safely discuss what we can and cannot offer in this respect (secretary general, Red Cross, 19).

Below follows two other examples that deal with the same issue, but from a somewhat different angle and with a certain twist. The first case concerns the chairman of the IOGT-NTO who, despite the conclusion that he did *"not want to reduce individual members to tools"* (p 8, interview), concluded that it is crucial to recruit new members because a large member cadre is what internally legitimize not only the existence and activities of him as leader within the organization, but also the existence of the entire organization in the eyes of the general public. This is how he put it:

> **Why is it so important to have members?** /…/ it has a value in itself to be able to claim that the organization includes a huge amount of individuals. It also creates legitimacy in relation to people at a local level. When I meet with politicians it is a strength to be able to say that I represent many thousands of members. /…/ it is of course a strength compared to if I said that I am a leader for a lobby organization called IOGT-NTO /…/ Then our strength and power to influence would be dependent on how much resources we are able to mobilize at every moment /…/, in contrast to now when we have a relatively constant and reliable base with a number of continuous activities at several locations involving a certain number of members who support and help our work (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 7).

However, the situation portrayed above can be described differently if viewed from another position. Below follows a passage from the interview with the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party, in which he refers to a meeting he had just had with one of the chief executives from the IOGT-NTO. He brought up this anecdote as a way to comment on the reality that many Swedish membership-based organizations are facing today – a diminishing amount of individual members.

> **Do many large organizations with a *folkrörelse* background lose members today?** /…/ Yes, take the temperance movement for example. I met one of their executives a couple of weeks ago /…/ and I support most of what he had to say. But, /…/ he couldn't scare or convince me with reference to any large and strong member opinion /…/ because that doesn't exist anymore. Then again, his arguments might be superb and well worth listening to but /…/ he cannot make a big fuzz about representing any great number of people (party-secretary, Social Democratic Party, 24).

When I asked the administrative director in the Teachers' Union whether it matters how many members they have, his answer was a crystal clear yes. Both for economic

reasons and for the representativeness it implies. Still, he added that in order for leaders in membership-based organizations to appear legitimate and possess authority and possibilities to exert influence, it is not the actual numbers that really count. What really makes a difference here, he stated, is the support and anchorage these leaders have among the ones they are supposed to represent. This means that these leaders always have to perform a balancing act along the fine line between seeking support, respect, and maybe even admiration among the members, or run the risk of being questioned, opposed, disregarded, and ignored. Or, as he put it, if someone either in- or outside the organization suspects you for acting just the slightest on your own behalf, there is great risk that you will immediately loose your credibility, and then, it does not matter *"how many affiliated members you represent as leader"*: it will be very difficult to remain in office (p 24, interview).

Strictly speaking, there was only one interviewee who expressed doubts whether 'many' individual members really is relevant to consider in relation to the position and credibility of leaders and the mandated space for action it may create. The chairman of the Red Cross stated that even if it is always better with more members, there are hardly any politicians or officials in other organizations who either care or keep track of how many members an organization actually affiliates. What mattered, he avowed, had instead more to do with an organization's general reputation.

8.3.2 A Pool of Resources

From the section above one could say that the individual membership, together with the idea of 'many' members, is generally regarded a resource in itself. However, most interviewees also seemed to perceive the corpus of members as a pool from where vital means and resources could be extracted and channeled into the organization via the membership.

With reference to the membership fee,[7] the affiliation of members in some cases was construed as one of the more important and efficient ways in which to create necessary monetary means. For the Swedish Red Cross the fee seems to be absolutely essential for the organizations' internal economy. With reference to an earlier strategic goal of affiliating four percent of the Swedish population,[8] their secretary general identified the necessity to include as many members as possible. He asserted that the main reason for this was that these fees are practically indispensable since they constitute *"a highly effective way to find and collect funds"* (p 6, interview), which generally can be spent more freely and independently compared to most other financial means they assemble. Moreover, the emphasis on affiliating as 'many' members as possible in this respect seems to come from an internal policy stipulating that membership fees is what should, as far as possible, finance the entire administrative apparatus of the Swedish Red Cross. The reason for this has, once again, much to do with the organization's ex-

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[7] In the subsequent section, more details are presented regarding different solutions for membership fees among the organizations in this study.

[8] With a population of nine millions, this equals to a little more than 350.000 members.

ternal legitimacy. But, this time it is a legitimacy that resides with the ones donating money to the organization's direct relief and aid work.

> /…/ when we raise money for specific purposes we must be able to guarantee our donors that their money actually end up where we say they should end up /…/ and not in the general administrative budget of the Red Cross /…/ (secretary general, Red Cross, 6).

Nevertheless, from this it seems possible to say that while the recruitment of new members facilitates a strengthening and maybe an expansion of the internal administration, a drop in membership figures could just as well imply redundancy for officials and staff, as well as other administrative cutbacks and reductions.

Despite the huge difference between the membership fee in the Swedish Red Cross and the Teachers' Union (see the subsequent section), the latter had a seemingly parallel arrangement. Although the administrative director in the Teachers' Union claimed they had *"a great fortune"* in stocks and real estate, which generates substantial earnings per year, these revenues are officially earmarked for strikes and other extraordinary events. Instead, he said, it is the membership fees that constitute the very base for their yearly turnover of more than SEK 400 million.

Apart from these two examples, the empirical material also contains another interesting split regarding the importance attributed to the economic means that stem from the members. Even if the members of the nine organizations in this study are obliged to pay a fee or make some sort of economic contribution, that does not mean that this is always viewed as an important part of the individual membership (see next section for more details). In fact, while five[9] of the organizations seem to depend more on membership fees, the other four[10] seem to depend more on other sources of income.

For example, in an earlier passage the chairman of the Football Association asserted a bit ambiguously that although there was about one million members belonging to this federation it had never existed any relation, economical or other, between them and the organization as a whole (p 128). This implies that while the membership fee might be a matter of survival for a local association or club affiliated with the Football Association, it does not matter directly for the overall continued existence of the entire federation. Major earnings are in this case instead derived from economic activities such as lease of office space, merchandise, and lucrative sponsor deals. In 2006, for example, the Football Association closed a deal with commercial television that rendered them revenues of about SEK 1,3 billion over five years (see chapter 7 for more details).

IOGT-NTO is another example where membership fees seem to be ascribed less significance, or at least occupy a subordinated position within the overall financial situation. Even though their chairman claimed they collected around SEK 4 million annually in *"real money"*, as he put it, from the fee their members pay, he also stated that they were directly dependent upon *"other far more important sources of income"* (p 19, interview). He said that instead of the state subsidies they also receive, which he

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[9] The Teachers' Union, the Red Cross, the Association of the Visually Impaired, the Union of Tenants, and the Mission Covenant Church.

[10] The Cooperative Union, the IOGT-NTO, the Social Democratic Party, and the Football Association.

deemed small and almost negligible, it is their *"business activities"*, as he called it, that constitute their major source of income. Although asked, he refrained from being explicit regarding what these for-profit activities were comprised of. What he said was that even if they own several different companies, the most *"successful concept"* by far was the different lotteries they, for decades, had been running on what he described as an industrial level. However, at the same time he carefully pointed out that there is a clear distinction between IOGT-NTO that only owns these and other similar business activities and how they are daily managed and executed. He portrayed this distinction as being sound and well balanced; IOGT-NTO's primary interest in commercial activities is for them to *"generate money"* so that he and other IOGT-NTO representatives can focus upon the *"production of ideology"* (p 19, interview, see also chapter 7).

The Social Democratic Party seems to have if not a similar so at least a parallel solution. Departing from his earlier statement regarding the internal consensus about being a *folkrörelse* founded on the affiliation of 'many' members, their head of organization added that member fees by no means are decisive for the overall funding of the organization. Or, as he put it: *"The membership fees are part of our incomes, but they have, over time, become a smaller and smaller part of our total revenue"* (p 1, interview). Even if this political party also earns a lot of money on lotteries, large parts of their contemporary incomes stem from the financial support all Swedish political parties with a certain size receives from the Swedish State (see chapter 7).

As was displayed in chapter 7, the Co-operative Union has also an extended ownership that includes real estate and other for-profit activities generating financial resources. Yet, even if this particular organization is not primarily dependent upon the fees their members pay upon entrance, it is definitely dependent on their frequent consumption in their stores.

Different Constructions of a Fee

In relation to a discussion on whether the membership fee is important or not, it is also interesting to examine how the organizations construe this 'charge at the door' (the following is derived from the webpage and/or the bylaws of each organization in the year 2007).

The Red Cross, for example, has a flat yearly fee of SEK 150 for all members. The IOGT-NTO charges equally much, but only after the first year. The Teachers' Union applies another principle leading to different fees for different categories of members. Instead of charging a fixed figure, they have chosen to link the membership fee to the salary of each member, which means that you pay more the more you earn. For example, a teacher earning less than SEK 6.000 a month has a monthly fee of SEK 35. The fee rises to a maximum of SEK 240 per month if you earn SEK 24.000 per month or more.

However, even if the amount and the specific construction of membership fees may vary between different organizations, this does not necessarily imply that a fee is always uniform within one and the same federative context. For example, while one of the 63 local member associations in the Co-operative Union charges a single payment

of SEK 50 for each member upon entrance, the other 62 associations charge twice that amount. However, because of the applied cooperative logic in this organization, the amount you pay when becoming a member is retrievable if and when you decide to cancel your membership.

Moreover, the amount each member pays to the Association of the Visually Impaired varies between SEK 150 and SEK 250 per year depending on where one lives. This could also be further illustrated with the Union of Tenants, where the members are asked to pay between SEK 60 and SEK 80 every month (equals SEK 720 and 960 annually), also depending on where you live. The same goes for the Swedish Football Association, where it also is up to each of their more than 3.300 member clubs and associations to decide how much their individual members should pay respectively. This means that fees can vary quite substantially between different local contexts. For example, while it costs SEK 300 per year to be a member in *Malmö FF* (one of the leading clubs in southern Sweden), the same type of membership costs SEK 400 per year in *AIK* (one of the bigger clubs in Stockholm), and SEK 550 per year in *IFK Kalmar* (a smaller club on the Swedish south east coast). Table 1 below provides a short overview of the size of the fees in each of the nine organizations for a standard individual membership.

Table 1. Fees for a ‘standard’ individual membership. Numbers indicate SEK/year

Red Cross	150.
IOGT-NTO	First year free, then 150 annually.
Union of Tenants’	Local variations between 720 and 960.
Social Democratic Party	Local variations.
Visually Impaired Association	Local variations.
Football Association	Local variations.
Teachers’ Union	Wage related. Between 420-2880, Students 50.
Co-operative Union	Single payment of 100. In one association 50. Fee is returned if member exits. Members also contribute to the organization through their consumption.
Mission Covenant Church	No official fee, but a norm that members ought to contribute through collection and other whip-rounds.

It seems the degree of an organization’s centralization is crucial for the question of why its members may have to pay different fees for their affiliation. That is, the more decentralized the organization is, the more diversity in terms of fees it seems to have. So, while the flat fee in the Red Cross derives from decisions taken by their general assembly, the same matter is in an organization such as the Social Democratic Party or the Football Association dealt with at much lower levels. Here follows an excerpt from the bylaws of the Social Democratic Party. Under the heading *Basic Regulations for Social Democratic Associations and Clubs* (Swedish Social Democrats 2001:§3, Member-

ship and fees) it is stipulated not only who is supposed to decide the fee internally and when, but also what is formally expected of the ones wanting to become members.

> **Section 1** Membership in the association/the club is granted every person that acknowledging the general principles of the social democratic program and party regulations.
> **Section 2** When entering the association/the club, the fee is paid for the year under which the entrance takes place.
> **Section 3** By paying the fee one is member of the Party. /…/
> **Section 4** The member fee paid for the next year is stipulated during the association's/the club's general meeting before the end of November [each year]. (my translation)

A deviant case in terms of membership fee is the Mission Covenant Church, since they do not apply a stipulated fee. Instead of an official fee they have *kollekten* [the collection], which might be resembled to an internally accepted norm insisting on every one's frequent economic contribution to the organization. It is thus possible that many of their individual members contribute monetarily more frequently than in most other organizations. Here is what their director said about this:

> /…/ there is no membership fee and no tariff that one has to follow every month. It is instead up to each one's personal judgment and voluntariness /…/ [to give] within the frame of what each one can afford. Yet, there is no formal control whether you give or not (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 13).

A Channel for Information, Ideological Messages, and Voluntary Work

As a parallel to the economic resources that enter the organizations through the membership, many interviewees also spoke of individual members' affiliation as important for the channeling of voluntary labor and crucial information *into* the organization while, for example, ideological messages could be sent *out* via the members.

All nine organizations in this study have more or less need for volunteers in their daily operations. The voluntary work needed includes everything from easier and more temporary activities to more prestigious and permanent assignments, such as presiding in boards and other elected representatives positions. Or, as the chairman of the Mission Covenant Church put it: *"all activities on the local level are dependent on a lot of voluntary work. You might employ a pastor, but all others* [are volunteers]*"* (p 11, interview). Unfortunately, he added, it is nowadays difficult to find those members or others who also are prepared commit themselves to actually carry out all the voluntary work that is required. The need exceeds the demand, which he claimed had led to a situation where it primarily are those who fully *"can control their own time"* (ibid.) that end up doing most of the more extensive and permanent voluntary work. The effect of this, he said, is that most volunteers tend to be older, and often even retired, people.

Moreover, the idea that it is the members who should primarily do voluntary work is saliently echoed in the present material. One might even say that it was displayed as a self-evident understanding or assumption among the interviewees that members participate concretely in the internal life and work of an organization. For example, both the ideologist and the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party argued in

this way. The ideologist did so by explaining an assumed difference between 'only' being a voter in general elections and being an affiliated member:

> To affiliate as individual member is a much clearer standpoint than to 'only' cast your vote for a political party in the general elections. To vote for a political party implies supporting certain politics, but to affiliate as a member includes some kind of preparedness to also commit yourself and actually do some practical work for that politics. You just don't vote for something, you also want to influence and take part in whatever it is that you are supporting (ideologist, Social Democratic Party, 2).

The party-secretary concluded that one way of motivating people to become members is to give them an honest opportunity to actually *"participate in debates, raise critical issues and to control and examine our party"* (p 12, interview). Such opportunity, he believed, could lead them to realize that: *"Wow, this is a party that wants more than just my fee and my support. They also want my commitment and engagement"* (ibid.). When the head of organization in the Social Democratic Party discussed the meaning and content of membership, he applied a much more distinct organizational perspective, which I will elaborate much more on in chapter 10:

> /…/ we want to be a political party affecting the daily life of people /…/ that constantly stands up against injustices. /…/ To achieve this we affiliate many committed individuals /…/ and the best way to organize them is the membership. One could of course envision alternatives /…/ such as having a much more loosely coupled organization where people are engaged as sympathizers, donors, or what have you instead of members /…/. Yet, the membership is unique since it also entails the possibility to exert influence. I think we should be a party welcoming everyone who wants to participate and discuss, but when we make decisions we should only involve members. That is, you may come and participate as a non-member in different activities and meetings where you can put forth your opinion and so forth. But, it should be the membership that decides who can and who cannot participate in the process leading to decisions concerning the party and its politics (head of organization, Social Democratic Party, 7).

Another leader, who also discussed this from a more distinct organizational point of view, was the secretary general in the Football Association. He asserted that the great number of individual members they affiliate is significant for several reasons. Among other things, they matter because they strengthen the position of the organization when it comes to advocating and working for more football in society. Another reason he put forth was that since they mainly are an *"activity based organization"* (p 25, interview), there is also great internal need for people who can commit themselves and participate in the activities of the organization. Why? Because the more members there are, the more players and volunteers there will be, which, in its turn, enables more football activities. This is how he put it:

> /…/ the more members, the more people could also be expected to take an active part in our activities as players, trainers, organizers or as something else. And, the more active leaders and organizers, the more people could be engaged in playing football. So, it [the individual membership] is directly related to increased activity (secretary general, Football Association, 25).

Accordingly, in addition to what has been stated earlier, that is, that organizations benefit from the membership for financial reasons, and from the commitment and involvement offered by members, it appears relevant to say that membership can be perceived as a channel through which both tangible and intangible resources may flow from the members into the organization they belong to.

This idea of membership as a channel is further illuminated in a passage from the interview with the chairman of the Red Cross. In answer to the question of how the individual membership is viewed internally, he said he believed that it had always been associated with organizational strength. This was mainly because it constituted a way in which to disseminate *"the message regarding humanitarian work and our ideology"* as well as *"a base for the economy"*, since it *"is through there money has been collected"* (p 6, interview).

That is, while money enters the organization through the membership, ideological messages exit. This is why I find this example particularly interesting, since it so clearly illustrates how membership can be understood as simultaneously channeling means both in to and out of the organization.

Adding to the idea of individual membership as a channel for both tangible and intangible means, some even claimed that vital information was channeled from the corpus of members into the organization. The interviewee who maybe most specifically spoke of how necessary it is that there is a flow of information from the cadre of members inward into the organization was the chairman of the Visually Impaired Association. Why he particularly laid such an emphasis on this might be related to the exposed and noteworthy situation most visually impaired people probably experience. What he said was that one of the more important aspects and reasons for why this organization had originated in the first place was that it could secure a flow of information between individuals and groups of visually impaired. Consequently, he said, one of the largest challenges back at the end of the 19th century as well as today, is to secure a flow of information between individual members, but also between them and the organization. In addition, he also said that the only way to decide what should be put forth and practically executed in the name of the organization is for it to be a direct consequence of how the members experience their situation in society. This is also why he claimed that it is important for the organization to constantly keep track of its rank and file members, since:

> /…/ they [the members] contribute with large amounts of information and knowledge that are important for the organization to capture and process into necessary demands for future societal changes /…/ (chairman, Visually Impaired Association, 6).

8.4 Concluding Remarks

My overall impression is that the interviewees felt very much at ease talking about the topic of membership. Their descriptions of individual membership were to some extent also quite similar and overlapping. It was as if they followed a well-institutionalized script when it came to the earlier mentioned *folkrörelse* tradition (see chapter 3). However, this does not mean that the material lacks interesting differences. On the

contrary, one such deviation that confirms the 'normal' case can be found regarding the Mission Covenant Church, where some interviewees added nuances and critical reflections to an otherwise rather uniform picture. It is also possible to observe substantial differences in the balance between the economic importance of the members and other dimensions.

8.4.1 Individual Membership – a Core Piece in the Organizational Puzzle

Most interviewees stressed that individual membership includes people's private interests, beliefs, and devotions. However, they also stated that these interests and commitments cannot be more than just personal if they are not deliberately fused with and continuously aligned with the specific interests, commitments, and causes that are pursued through an organization. This link between the private and the collective was said to emerge when someone decides to formally support a specific organization by becoming an official member. Several interviewees also claimed that such a decision departs from a deeper personal feeling of solidarity towards the ideas pursued and actions undertaken within particular organizations.

This means that the affiliation of members constitutes an intersection between people's private beliefs in specific ideas and goals that are also pursued by organizations. Accordingly, the membership can be portrayed as representing an alignment between people's convictions and the ideas and efforts of specific organizations. This line of thought suggests that the formal affiliation of members ideally establishes a more or less tight relationship between personal beliefs and commitment on the one hand, and the aggregated interests and practices of larger organized social collectives on the other. This and similar perceptions entertain the idea that membership represents a specific relation that thrives on the alignment of individual beliefs and needs *and* the ideas, goals and activities of organizations.

This perceived link between personal commitment, membership, and organization echoes Kanter (1972). She argues that the essence of any collective endeavor departs from its affiliated individuals and their commitment, since it establishes a connection between personal convictions and interests, on one hand and the aggregated interest of the social collective to which they belong on the other hand. Or, as she puts it: *"Commitment /…/ refers to the willingness of people to do what will help maintain the group because it provides what they need"* (ibid:66). From this argument of a mutual dependency between collective endeavors and their members, it seems obvious that the survival of a membership-based organization also requires that the relation between the two is maintained and sound. Thus, it seems difficult to imagine organizations being separated from the committed members they affiliate. One could also, as Ahrne (1994:5), express it this way:

> To belong to an organization means to have a place to go, to have certain rights as well as commitments. Affiliation implies an obligation to come back. To be able or allowed to come back, the affiliates of an organization have to be recognized or they have to prove their affiliation. If you are not recognized you will not be let in. This is basic human experience with important and far-reaching consequences, although it is often neglected because it is taken for granted.

As discussed in chapter 5, Kanter's approach to commitment is also a point of departure for Stryjan's (1989, 1994) discussion on how the affiliation of members constitutes a fundamental element that needs constant renewal in order to secure organizational stability and survival over time. That is, without a constant enactment of individual membership, which contains people's commitment and urge to contribute, every association will, sooner or later, stand before a potential deterioration and disappearance. This statement rests on the interpretation of Kanter's idea of personal commitment as *"/…/ a shorthand notation for a complex of attitudes and competencies that are required to ensure an organization's perpetuation over time"* (Stryjan 1989:44).

So far, I believe that to view the individual membership as an intersection between personal opinions, needs, and devotions on one hand and organizational preferences and conditions on the other, helps to explain why so many interviewees in the present study tended to perceive people's commitment as such a crucial aspect of membership. In fact, most interviewees seemed to emphasize this in one way or the other, even if it was more pronounced in relation to questions regarding if they could imagine their respective organization without any members, or what the organization in question would be without them. In response, some simply concluded that it was impossible to visualize their organization without members. Others argued that their organizations necessarily would be or become something *"else"* if it was not for their members. A few even tried to explain this 'else' by saying that it would imply being a profit-driven corporation, a lobby organization, or a state-owned social welfare provider.

In continuation, one might argue that individual membership apparently adds crucial organizational 'flavor' or distinctiveness [*särart*] as well as a specific surplus value [*mervärde*]. That is, due to the membership, these organizations are what they are, and to integrate individuals into larger social collectives by formally affiliating them as members is what partly decides how the kind of organizations included in this study are understood, endorsed, and enacted. Consequently, if membership suddenly disappears, that would entail entering a sort of organizational oblivion. Or, that a radical shift would emerge when things like organizational identity, structure, and activities are altered (for more on the distinctiveness and surplus value of civil society organizations see Wijkström and af Malmborg 2005; Hultén and Wijkström 2006).

Just as most interviewees found it difficult to imagine a reality without members, there were few who mentioned scenarios in which this 'else' actually could materialize. However, an exception surfaced in the interviews with representatives from the Football Association, who claimed that the individual membership sooner or later might be abandoned. Yet, they did not portray this in terms of a conceivable development in a near future. The reason for that was what they identified as a strong, conservative, and internationally unique associational tradition or culture, that for a long time would continue to influence how Swedes think about and choose to organize their civil society activities.

8.4.2 *Folkrörelse* as a Distinctive Feature

Instead of asking what the organizations in this study would be without their members one can wonder what they are as a result *of* the membership? Approached from this angle, many interviewees seemed to share a similar understanding, which typically included a connection between the idea of *folkrörelse* and the conceptualization of their respective organizations. It appears almost impossible to even think of these organizations without relating them to *folkrörelse*. One might even say that some interviewees' entire cognitive horizon was completely 'marinated' with the typical and much-cherished idea of *folkrörelse* (see chapter 3), and all the more so when membership explicitly entered the discussion. Thus, since their organizations formally affiliate individual members, the interviewees also construed them as *folkrörelser* (Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004).

However, just as individual membership was commonly put forth as one of the more crucial attributes of their organizations, the interviewees also tended to maintain that it was absolutely essential to have 'many' members in order to be a *folkrörelse*. 'Many' and 'more' members were therefore generally considered better, despite the obvious fact that 'many' in this respect is a highly ambiguous measure (cf. SOU 1987:33).

Size in those terms was generally seen as a token of an organization's achievements, but also of well-being, strength, authority, and credibility as well as a way of amplifying an organization's external voice. The establishment of a mandated space for action for the leaders of an organization by authorizing their structural positions and concrete actions both internally and externally was also proposed. Thus, one could also say that the total number of affiliated individual members within an organization was perceived as providing both leaders and organizations with legitimacy and power.

This way of thinking is also recurrent in some scholarly approaches to membership-based organizations. Stryjan (1989) argues that even if organizational size in terms of the number of affiliated individual members is always relative, the principle is still that below a certain size, any organization would simply pass unnoticed: *"/…/ size seems to be a basic precondition for achieving any degree of power or political weight"* (ibid:138). This, he continues, implies that constant growth in this area is a necessary step on the way to power (ibid.).

Another example is the Swedish political scientists Bäck and Möller (2003), who state, in relation to their analysis of the Swedish party system, that the number of rank and file members constitutes *the* measurement for how to determine the size of a party organization. With clear parallels to the discussions in chapter 3 about the idea of *folkrörelse* in Sweden, these authors also add that the legitimacy of any so-called *folkrörelse* party in Sweden *"/…/ largely departs from the fact that they build on the affiliation of many rank and file members, who supposedly contribute to the activities of their organization through voluntary efforts"* (ibid:108).

Moreover, if an organization's legitimacy and character, its leaders' credibility and authority, and its funding and daily operations, depend on individual members, that may also explain why so much importance is attributed to maintaining or increasing the number of members in their organizations. This also makes it understandable why the interviewees also emphasized the affiliation of 'many' members.

Keeping in mind the idea that the individual membership may provide an organization with a certain identity, character, and legitimacy, I would like to return to the perspective put forth by interviewees from the Mission Covenant Church concerning the formal affiliation of members and being a church, an association, and a *folkrörelse* all at once (p 123). Both the ideologist and the director of the Mission Covenant Church found the individual membership problematic. They concluded that it had more to do with being a *folkrörelse* and an association than being a church. This connotation, they claimed, was a direct result of the historical past of their organization. That is, in the late 19th century, when the Mission Covenant Church was first established in Sweden, the Swedish constitution only admitted a state-controlled church. All other congergations were then, until Church and State was separated in Sweden in 2000, forced to adopt the legal form of either a foundation or a membership-based association.

This meant that the Mission Covenant Church, from the beginning, had to take on board what these interviewees now described as an associational and a federative way of coordinating and structuring their church. Another very concrete result of this past decision was that the individual membership, from that moment on, constituted the main way in which people could affiliate with this organization. Moreover, as described earlier, the later part of the 19th century was the era of large collective action endeavors, when *folkrörelser* started to challenge the social, political and economic conditions that then prevailed within the Swedish society (see chapter 3 and 7). Since the Mission Covenant Church was one of the more active and progressive change agents within the religious field, the organization was probably also more or less bound to become known, identified and treated as nothing less than a *folkrörelse.*

Even if most of these things occurred more than a century ago, that does not mean they are irrelevant today. If we are to believe the interviewees from the Mission Covenant Church, the case is rather the opposite. For example, they addressed and approached the contemporary meaning of individual membership within their organization by referring to what they saw as a taken for granted way of coordinating and structuring their efforts and activities, a way that appears to be infused by the idea of *folkrörelse*. This well-institutionalized way of addressing and enacting their organization in general and the individual membership in particular appear to have caused frustration and inhibited internal initiatives aimed at accomplishing even the smallest of changes. The interviewees asserted that this depended on the difficulty of getting rid of a legacy or tradition, no matter how outdated one may consider it to be.

I believe it is possible to conclude that most interviewees in this study bestow the affiliation of members with a meaning that largely, but not fully, is connected to both the historical past of their respective organization as well as the surrounding civil society tradition. The following passage catches important aspects of what it is that I am thinking of here:

> At any given time, we would be dealing with an organization 'of today', shaped by yesterday's members, populated by today's members, and which ought to be keyed for the shaping of tomorrow's organization and the recruitment of its would-be members (Stryjan 1994:66).

This could also be compared with what might be called 'the history of the present', which opens up for explanations related to the notion of path dependency (cf. Stinchcombe 1968). That is, earlier choices, decisions, and actions in organizations may, over time, transform into taken for granted assumptions and behaviours, which can cause certain lock-in effects. Such effects happen not only in terms of restricted and constrained cognitive horizons, but also concerning more generally shared frames of reference and feasible repertoires of action. To identify something as path dependent calls for explanations of institutional and behavioral persistence and stability rather than change and transformation (Campbell 2006). However, just because something such as individual membership may be partially dependent on earlier occurrences and conditions does not mean that it is predetermined or unchangeable. It only indicates that perceptions and practices we may employ are associated with sets of specific assumptions, norms, and values but also procedures and practices that are rather stable over time. People bring together and arrange these cultural components and structural elements in what is perceived as the only possible combinations.

Just as culturally oriented linkages between membership, *folkrörelse,* and organizational distinctiveness and identity appeared frequently in the empirical material, it was also common to discuss the affiliation of members in relation to formal organizational structures. Individual membership was at times depicted as one of the more, if not the single most valuable organizational building block: remove the membership and these federative constructions would collapse. Yet, even if some interviewees concluded that the federative way of coordinating and structuring these kinds of organizational endeavors was a historical artifact that had been developed in another time and societal context, they still had a proclivity to persist change and dominate the contemporary reality.

8.4.3 Membership as a Boundary-defining Relation

Although form and structure varies between the organizations in this study (see chapter 7), which seems perfectly normal for federated organizations (cf. Davis 1978; McCarthy 2005), they appear to have a common character that largely seems to follow the image of an hourglass and the idea of a hybrid organization outlined in chapter 4. This means that while some organizations only contain two levels – one central or common level and one local ditto, they are all Tran local in accordance with a set up of a local-regional-national arrangement. Another thing that may differ between them is how and where the member enters these structures through his/her affiliation. The member is most often formally affiliated to an association or club at the local level. These local associations are then formally connected with other parallel local contexts through a joint regional organization, which, together with other parallel regional organizations form a formal bridge over to the highest decision-making organ – the general assembly. Internal democratic processes and procedures mainly coordinate this upper part of the hourglass construction. Nevertheless, below its 'waist' there is an executive non-democratic structure that is generally managed by both officials and elected representatives.

In relation to the topic of how a membership establishes a relation between the affiliated and formal organizational structures, there seems to exist a noteworthy difference between the organizations. This regards the question of who is considered to be a member, which in contrast to what one might think, is actually a quite ambiguous topic in the material. While the general perception was that membership is a link between individuals and these federated organizations, some expressed themselves in a much more elusive manner regarding this subject. For example, when the interviewees from the Football Association, the Cooperative Union, and the Mission Covenant Church maintained that their respective federations only affiliate other associations rather than individuals as members this seems to imply that they do not include the individual level in the federative organizations they represented.

I believe that the fact that the individual level is excluded in some cases contributes to a rather ambiguous understanding of membership. First, individuals are 'pushed' towards or even beyond the outer limits of an organization and then, almost simultaneously, 'pulled' inwards in accordance with the earlier discussed push-and-pull strategy (p 129 above). Individual membership can thus be interpreted as a boundary-defining relation (cf. Stryjan 1989; 1994; Ahrne 1990, 1994), creating a dichotomy between those that are recognized as affiliates and those that are not, and a blurred centre-periphery construction. Tentatively, this also implies that the position of individual members vis-à-vis an organization's structural matrix tentatively is more plastic and open-ended than fixed and predetermined.

8.4.4 A Supply Channel and a Resource Pool

The interviewees also described individual members and their shared commitment as a pool of more or less attractive and extractable resources. Along this instrumental and resource dependent view of individual membership (cf. Perrow 1970; McCarthy and Zald 1977), there were interviewees who explicitly gave the affiliation itself a role of being a vital medium through which important resources and means could be mobilized and channeled into the organization, at the same time as, for example, official ideas and messages could be transmitted to the outside world via a cadre of members.

One of the resources that many, but not all, found crucial was the membership fee. All but one organization in this study, have some sort of stipulated membership fee. The exception was the Mission Covenant Church, whose adherents instead are expected, but not formally required, to contribute monetarily through the collection at each service.

Yet, all the interviewees did not attribute the same amount of importance to the membership fee. While some of the organizations, like the Football Association and the Social Democratic Party, rely more on other sources of income there are others whose mere survival is believed to depend on these fees. The Red Cross, for example, is here said to apply a principle through which the founding of the internal administration is exclusively dependent upon the collected membership fees. Accordingly, while the charge for a membership seems to be of minor financial importance in some cases, it is

deemed crucial in others. And, the amount that is charged varies more or less extensively both between organizations as well as within one and the same organization.

Voluntary work was yet another resource most interviewees connected to membership. It was made clear more or less explicitly that it is not enough for members to just pay the fee and lean back to read the official magazine a few times each year – they should also contribute to the daily operations and well-being of their organizations in a much more 'active' way. In many Western civil society contexts it seems as if volunteers and members are two different things (cf. Cameron 1999), or that it is possible to commit oneself to do some voluntary work for an organization, without necessarily registering as a formal member. Despite recent observations, (cf. Svedberg et al. 2006), this is not the general case in Sweden, where the earlier discussed *folkrörelse* tradition (see chapter 3) prescribes that one first affiliates as member with an organization before engaging in any of its voluntary activities (cf. Stryjan and Wijkström 1996; Lundström and Svedberg 2003).

Moreover, some interviewees resembled the individual membership to a channel through which actors and representatives within the organization are provided with necessary and relevant information so that they can formulate and make sure the organization pursues the 'correct' problems and goals in the most effective way. In relation to the issue of channeling information, some also said that membership is a perfect channel through which ideas and opinions can be transmitted both from the organization to the general public and vice versa via its cadre of affiliated members.

To summarize the empirical material and my analysis so far, it is not possible to claim any universal meaning of individual membership. Instead, it ought to be regarded as an above all contextually dependent relationship between individuals and organizations. Although I will expand further on this in chapter 11, this implies that the conceptual baseline for membership that was presented in chapter 5 largely receives its content from subjective beliefs, which, in their turn, are both enabled and constrained by the particular historical background, and also by contemporary and dominant structural and cultural conditions of organizations.

9. Member Roles

In this chapter I will continue to discuss the interviewees' perceptions of individual membership. I will first account for the interviewees' view of members as either active or passive. This is followed by a discussion on how this classification gives rise to further and more specific member roles.

9.1 Active or Passive

Well in line with a dimension that is almost generically attributed to individual membership in Sweden and Scandinavia (cf. Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Wijkström and Lundström 2002), the majority of the interviewees in this study tended to, in one way or the other, categorize members as being either active or passive.

What this generally means is that paying a requested membership fee in an organization and then supporting its ideas and deeds at a distance is not enough to be understood as having an active behaviour. Activity implies, instead, a more actual and substantial attendance, or that one physically *does* something for the well-being and improvement of the organization. More concretely, this entails regularly doing some sort of voluntary work for the organization one belongs to. This includes, for example, aspiring for positions as elected representative, and as elected maybe chair a board or a committee, or letting oneself be appointed treasurer in a local association. Activity can also include attending and participating as voting member during internal meetings and assemblies, raising one's voice in rallies and demonstrations or during internal seminars, in debates or in written motions. As a volunteer one might also end up planning and preparing formal meetings or other social and festive gatherings, act as coach in a local football club, take part in different fund-raising or member recruitment campaigns, or in some other way frequently participate in the daily activities and work of the organization one belongs to.

Passive membership, on the other hand, often seems associated with those who choose to support an organization 'only' in paying a stipulated membership fee and receiving the possible member benefits or advantages together with a magazine or a newsletter issued by the organization in question.

This rather black and white divide between active and passive members was approached above all from two angles in the interviews. While some loomed in on the topic from talking about individual members' degree of commitment and participation, others ended up discussing it from how they pictured the status of their own personal member affiliations with different organizations. The latter case meant, apart from paying the fee and mentally supporting the organizations in question, that they rarely

had time for any deeper involvement and therefore regarded themselves as 'passive members'.

For example, after a longer exposition on his view of individual membership, the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party, the *"associational junkie"* (p 2, interview) as he jokingly described himself, concluded that he was currently active in associations to a far lesser extent than he had ever been before. He blamed the busy life he was living for the necessity of prioritizing the Party and marginalizing his commitment to the other fifteen organizations he was affiliated to. The Secretary general in the Red Cross did also put forth a similar argument by stating:

> I've been very active [in different associations]. I have been a choir member and made several other things as well. But, with my current position one should be glad if there is enough time to relax a bit at home, which of course excludes all other commitments and engagements (secretary general, Red Cross, 1).

A similar, but yet different example comes from the interview with the chairman of the board of the Association of the Visually Impaired. He claimed that although his affiliation with a certain political party had always meant a lot to him, his commitment to and participation within it had *"never been particularly active"* (p 3, interview). Still, he described this affiliation as *"/… / a sort of indication that I still support the same ideas and perspectives on society* [as the Party represents]. *This is an important manifestation to make. Even if I haven't been that active lately I still want to manifest my position and perspectives in this respect"* (ibid.).

Another example is the administrative director in the Teacher's Union who used his personal affiliations in different organizations to explain his spontaneous view of individual membership. More concretely, he categorized his personal affiliations with two different local handball clubs as being very passive in one case and very active in the other. While the passivity in the first case was characterized by only paying the yearly fee, the activity in the latter, he said, came from practicing handball regularly.

In continuation I asked him whether it was prevalent in the Teacher's Union to relate to their members in a similar manner. His answer was simply: *"No, we don't"* (p 2, interview). However, the idea of members being either active or passive appeared in some of his further arguments. For example, as an answer to the question whether the Teacher's Union could exist without its members he said that he could not in his wildest dreams imagine a trade union based on such premises. The reason for that, he continued, was that this kind of organization needs a broad idea-based commitment and interest *"that make people active"* (p 13, ibid.). And, when talking about some changes that they at the time for the interview were trying to accomplish internally, he said: *"/…/ this type of organization, i.e. a member-based organization, and its activities are largely dependent upon economic contributions from its members, their loyalty and activity"* (p 16, interview). Furthermore, when discussing the relation between their member cadre and external political issues, he concluded: *"I believe that they* [the members] *are concerned about the membership, even if they are not always active in it"* (p 22, interview). So, while asserting that the members in the Teacher's Union were not internally defined in accordance to the dichotomy active/passive he himself kept returning to this way of

defining members based on an idea of the degree of their commitment and involvement. Or, as I would like to put it, positioning the individual member in either an active or a passive role.

From these accounts where members are being perceived as either active or passive, I believe that the national director in the IOGT-NTO pinpointed an important aspect of how this can be understood further. He concluded that, the dichotomy of active and passive members is more informal than formal in his organization. That is, even if members internally might be referred to as being either active or passive it is not possible to find any policy documents, by-laws or other official texts issued by the organization where this is stated. He reached this conclusion from speaking of an internal change process that he said had generated a broad internal agreement that there should not exist different classifications of people's commitment and level of participation within their organization:

> In relation to this change process, we also said that we should only have one type of membership. We shouldn't offer any graded categories of membership. You are recognized as member whether you prefer to visit the local association's premises seven days a week or just want to pay the fee. **You don't add any other values to this?** No, we don't. Well, we tend to use it [active/passive], but we don't mean that members are either active or passive. We decided that we shouldn't use categories such as supporters or sympathizers. Still, we use it any way, but there are no formalities related to that use. /…/ I mean, if someone send us /…/ money implies a support for us, but you cannot read in any document or regulations that we affiliate several thousand supporters (national director, IOGT-NTO, 10).

9.1.1 Passivity as a Persistent Problem and an Endless Wish for More Action

Another common take on the dichotomy activity/passivity was apparently to perceive the 'passive' member role as problematic. This was, for example, discernable in the interviews with the ideologists from the Co-operative Union and the Social Democratic Party. They both brought attention to the fact that whatever an 'active' or a 'passive' member might comprise, neither the categorization nor the concern for the latter group seems new, at least not within the frames of their respective organizations.

In an earlier passage, the latter of these two interviewees identified a contemporary internal discourse regarding individual membership as being very much focused on issues like: *"Why are there so few who want to be active? How are we going to get more people to our meetings? How are we going to get more people to become elected representatives?"* From this she concluded that it is easy to believe that everything was so much better before, while in fact *"everything in this respect that feels like a problem was something that people in the organization pondered about already 50 years ago"* (p 7, interview).

The ideologists from the Cooperative Union reached a similar conclusion by stating that any possible disinterest and inactivity among their members seem far from new. From reading old documents and records he claimed he had found evidence for a century old dismay regarding the low level of active members in the organization and an explicit concern for how to enhance the activity level among them. This lead him to state that he believed *"no golden age existed in the beginning of times"* (p 14, interview) when members were more devoted to and participated more freely in the activities of

their organization. Instead, in his opinion this had always been regarded a problematic issue. He also said that their active members, meaning those *"aspiring for more than just discounted grocery shopping"* (ibid.), had never surpassed five or six percent of the total member cadre. Considering the close to three million members the Cooperative Union claims today means that most *"aren't particularly active"* (ibid.), as he put it. However, he also added that even though all the other 95 percent might only be interested in the beneficial and tangible part of the membership they should not be picked out as less important. Rather the opposite. Or, as he put it: *"Even if they only visit our stores once a month, I still consider them /…/ an active and important group for our kind of enterprise"* (p 15, interview).

To expand further on this commonly applied two dimensional split of membership, which places members in either an active or a passive role, it is interesting to note how some interviewees concernedly identified a contemporary activity-reduction among their respective cadres of members. This is, for example, partly mirrored in the following excerpt from the interview with the mission director of the Mission Covenant Church. The passage starts in the middle of a critical reflection upon a diminishing number of members in relation to the running and steering of the organization he represented. He found it problematic that fewer and fewer younger adherents wants to volunteer and actively participate in the internal affairs of their organization. His analysis was that this has to do with the younger generation's post-modern way of living and their failing interest to involve themselves in the associational life. A trend that he and others in the organization found alarming.

> However, the younger generation does not affiliate to the same extent as before. With a future generation that isn't used to participate in the associational life as before there are no guarantees that people who have not 'grown up' in such milieus will remain committed to any association after retirement. This evokes a great deal of worry internally (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 12).

The chairman of the board of the IOGT-NTO also embarked upon the issue of active and passive members via a discussion on whether he believed there is a greater distance between members and their leaders today compared to earlier. With reference to his personal encounters with individual members in the IOGT-NTO, he said that it is as few as five to ten percent of their total number of members that are active. And, of these few percentages, he said, he only met a smaller part. From his perspective, this implies that at least 90-95 percent of the member cadre is perceived as being passive, in the sense that they pay their fees and maybe sporadically come to meetings

> **Is it a problem that only 5-10 percent of your member cadre is active?** It is of course desirable if more are active, but we do not see those who are not active as a problem. Just from paying the fee they also constitute a great asset and resource. I mean, I fully understand if people want to commit themselves to different things in life. Many of our affiliated members are politically engaged. Taking an active stand and committing oneself to temperance issues often implies a strong engagement for other social issues as well, which probably is why many of our rank and file members are also active in political parties, in very prominent positions, and they may put most of their efforts there even if they remain affiliated as members (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 13-14).

Members as Active Participants or Passive Supporters

In comparison with how the chairman of the IOGT-NTO approached the active/passive divide (see above), other interviewees elaborated, from my point of view, on this issue in a less dichotomized manner. It was done mainly by avoiding interpretations of either of these two positions as being more positive than the other or even mutually exclusive. For example, when the ideologist in the Football Association described his vision of the meaning of membership, he avowed that people's formal affiliation as members had a lot to do with categorizing them as either wanting to work 'actively' for the organization or just 'passively' supporting it:

> /…/ I either become member because I want to practice something, that is, receive a service of some sort or be part of something /…/ But, it could also imply paying a fee for a membership in order to support an activity /…/ which might provide me a magazine or a news bulletin that is intended to make me feel involved and as if I participate in the activities of the organization. One form implies that I am active [and] become part of something /…/ [another that] I offer passive support (ideologist, Football Association, 10).

In relation to a discussion of his own membership in one of the Football Association's local clubs, their secretary general came up with an even more refined categorization of active and passive members. Among the one million affiliated individual members and the more than 3.200 local football clubs belonging to the Football Association, he asserted that he could single out three different categories of members, by placing them along a scale ranging from the most to the least active. At the active end he placed, for example, players and coachers and at the other extreme the ones who are proud and show their associational belonging and identity through a membership but who does not necessarily participate in a physical sense. To this he added, that the relation between this latter group and the organization could be more resembled with a *"supportership"* (p 8, interview) than a membership. Furthermore, in between these two extremes he identified a category of members who frequently, but not always, participated in the internal life of the organization by *"visiting annual meetings, participating in internal votations and actively trying to contribute and exert influence internally without being active leaders"* (ibid.).

Others made comparable categorizations, but perhaps not as explicitly expressed as above. Returning to the interview with the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party, and a passage in which I asked him if he made any distinction between their members, he positioned the majority of them as inactive supporters while he viewed the rest as potentially willing to actively participate, take on responsibility, and exert influence internally. Extra noteworthy, is that he considered the latter group as being much more *"troublesome"* because of their commitment and strong will to participate and to actually make a difference within and through the party organization.

> /…/ [we] have two types of membership. One is the supporter member, who joins because he/she wants to support and contribute, but without any expectations or actual demands. /…/ The other category /…/ are those who join, and who actively want to take on responsibility, and they are quote–unquote much more demanding as members. In order to maintain their membership, those members really want to take on full responsibility, feel that they

> are involved and that they can fully justify decisions taken within the Party in front of friends and acquaintances (party-secretary, Social Democratic Party, 3-4).

9.1.2 Further Member Roles

With the active/passive dimension as an implicit baseline, the interviewees also elaborated upon a number of further member roles. For example, with what I interpret as a clear linkage to the earlier presented idea that individual membership functions as a channel for information and as a voice amplifier for ideological messages (see p 136 above), the chairman of the Co-operative Union explained that their many thousand elected representatives constitute a valuable asset and resource in relation to their business activities. They enact the important intermediary role of particularly loyal and devoted envoys or ambassadors who gather and carry with them useful and desirable information in the form of member opinions and judgments. This is how she put it:

> /…/ it is a fantastic resource to have 6.000 [elected representatives]. Mainly because they act as faithful ambassadors who contribute with ideas and judgments invaluable for our business activities, even if they are not 'brought up' in a – how should I put it – business spirit. Yet, they are to be regarded as very useful because it is extremely valuable to get hold of the member opinion they represent (chairman, Co-operative Union, 33).

Moreover, in a similar way as the voluntary work individual members were said to contribute with almost by necessity puts them in the position of representing a labor force internally, it can be assumed that members within organizations where the fee constitutes an important source of revenue may also be given the role of financial contributors and sponsors.

Members as Owners or Principals

The role of having the ultimate say in an organization, that is, putting members on par with an organization's owners or principals, was deliberately brought up in several interviews. In a few cases, especially in some of the earlier interviews, I even tried to explicitly encourage discussions on this topic (for further details see chapter 6).

One person who associated membership with ownership was the chairman of the IOGT-NTO. From saying that he preferred not to reduce individual members to tools that the organization are supposed to use for some specific purposes, he concluded that the members are *"the organization, because they are its owners /…/ It is like a mutual savings bank, where the depositors are the bank. Our* [individual] *members are the IOGT-NTO"* (p 10, interview).

After the chairman of the Union of Tenants stated that the role of their members involves granting the organization a mandate to act in their name, I asked her if it is possible to resemble membership to ownership. Her response was: *"In that sense, yes, the individual members are the owners of the organization* (p 14, interview).

Although not fully comfortable with the term, the head of operation in the Association of the Visually Impaired answered affirmatively to my question whether it is

possible to associate the affiliation of members to an ownership. The reason he put forth was that since it is the individual members who once founded the organization, they should also be regarded as its owners.

When I asked the CEO of the Co-operative Union what spontaneously came to his mind when I said membership he replied that it not only constitutes a *"fundamental pre-condition for both our governance structure and functions"*, but that it also has a lot to do with their *"historical background, and a contemporary, but failing concordance between the original idea behind membership, i.e. activity and participation, and the actual possibilities to exercise internal governance as an active* [member]*"* (p 1, interview). His colleague, the ideologist, also touched upon the topic of governance and individual membership, while discussing it in terms of ownership. When arguing about possible internal member roles, he contrasted it to the governance situation in regular for-profit corporations by saying: *"/…/ governance for us emerges instead in the encounter with the customer."* Because *"when the member enters a store and becomes disappointed we get an owner reaction"* (p 14, interview).

In the previous chapter, I discussed how some interviewees, especially from the Mission Covenant Church, the Football Association, and the Co-operative Union expressed a somewhat ambivalent view on whether it is affiliated individuals or associations that should primarily be understood as members. A comparable ambiguity also surfaced in relation to the present topic. For example, even if the chairman of the Co-operative Union vacillated throughout the interview, it was not until she discussed what they do with their profits that she also concluded that their individual members in fact also are the final owners. The following passage exemplifies how she argued in this respect:

> /…/ as an economic association we don't want profitability for any other reason than to create a value added for our members. /…/ while a surplus in traditional businesses is distributed to [a few] shareholders, we have many owners. Because for us, the customer is owner. /…/ **You mean that individual members count as owners?** Yes (chairman, Co-operative Union, 15).

A parallel example can be found in the interview with the secretary general in the Football Association, who said that even if the notion 'owner' is often used in relation to members, he preferred to put it between quotation marks. The main reason for that, he said, was that since ownership tends to come with economic connotations, much of its original meaning does not make much sense within the type of organization he was representing. In relation to this, though, it deserves to be pointed out that he, just as his colleagues, stressed a view that primarily reserved 'owner' for local associations and clubs, not for individual members. He explained this with reference to the complexities of their internal structure, and by asserting that if the affiliated individuals at a local level would have the ultimate saying in the organization *"the line would become too stretched out in order for the individual members to feel like proper owners of the Football Association"* (p 6, interview).

9.2 What's in it for the Member?

From my viewpoint, the habit of regarding members as being either active or passive, and positioning them as bearers of roles such as supporters, ambassadors, and principals, appears to disclose an underlying assumption that it is the organization that primarily should benefit from its affiliated rank and file members, rather than the other way around.

However, there was also a tendency among the interviewees to associate the membership with specific member roles, which departed from what could be described as self-interest among members to affiliate. An illustration of this is what, for example, came to mind for the national director of the IOGT-NTO when I asked for his spontaneous reaction towards membership. First he said that it implies a formal and personal *"acceptance of the basic ideas and activities of a particular collective /…/*, the *"payment of a fee"*, and *"that you get something in return. Like access to activities and maybe also some material things"* (p 1, interview).

When the ideologist in the Football Association was asked the same thing, he claimed that membership for him meant that people wanted to become part of something, or that they wanted access to something, or that they wanted some kind of service carried out for them (p 10 interview). Considering the character of the Football Association, the latter two things probably include access to facilities where one can either play or watch football or some sort of service offered by the organization in relation to this. When I approached his colleague, the secretary general, with the same question he ended his answer stating that people who apply for a membership generally, but not exclusively, are motivated from a belief that they get:

> /…/ some kind of benefit or something in return. **You mean that this motivation is based in some kind of self-interest?** Yes, exactly. (secretary general, Football Association, 2).

Perceiving individual membership as involving a utilitarian rationale on behalf of the affiliated member implies a rather different and, to some extent, a conflicting approach in comparison to the previous chapter's discussion that membership is associated with more altruistic ideas and values such as commitment, belonging, and a sense of solidarity and community.

Moreover, even if it might be easy to think of these two ways of bestowing membership with meaning as contradictory, if not mutually exclusive, it is interesting to observe how some interviewees apparently saw no problems in combining the two. For example, this is how the chairman of the Teachers' Union combined a utilitarian aspect with a strong collective dimension of being a member.

> **Why does the Teachers' Union have members?** /…/ I believe members in the Teachers' Union thinks that we are of good use to them, even if they always want more. But, they can see the advantages. That is the benefit aspect. Moreover, we are represented on all workplaces and that is where the spirit of community exists. That you belong to something when you come to work. That you are part of a community /…/ (chairman, Teachers' Union, 24).

From stating that membership in general stands for a deliberate act on behalf of the individual, the administrative director of the Union of Tenants added that while some organizations simply render the member an opportunity to channel his/her economic support for the organization in question, others provide an immediate possibility to access and take advantage of different services or benefits offered exclusively to their members. The latter, she asserted, was the case within the Union of Tenants. To this she added that the membership they offer also can be viewed as providing security through being *"a form of insurance"* usable if the member were to experience any problems related to his or her rented housing. To further describe this insurance-like aspect she added that the way they have members is similar to the membership offered by trade unions, where one knows *"/…/ that if I get in trouble* [at work] *I can always go to them* [the union]" (p 1, interview).

9.2.1 It Pays off Being a Member

The membership offered by the organizations in this study typically includes an official magazine, a newsletter or some other form of general information. However, in terms of benefits, most tend to include a lot more. In some cases, it seems more accurate to describe a member affiliation as a veritable bonus package, full of both exclusive material and immaterial privileges, fringe benefits, perks, gifts, and services. After having scanned the official web pages of the nine federations in this study, the Social Democratic Party seems to be one of the organizations adding least member benefits, and the Co-operative Union and the Union of Tenants most.

Yet, even if this varies from one organization to another as well as over time, every membership offered within the frames of the organizations in this study seems to come with what could be described as a sort of basic added value. As stated above, this might include a magazine, a newsletter and maybe even access to otherwise restricted parts of the official homepage of the organization. All nine organizations also offer the internal privilege to exert a democratically based influence, a topic I will explore more thorough in the subsequent chapter.

One norm seems to be that the more member benefits that are offered the more they are also promoted. The spectrum stretches from banging the big drum to keeping a very low profile regarding any possible added values and fringe benefits of a membership. One organization that seems to have taken this quite far is the Union of Tenants. For example, in the brochure *"The Swedish Union of Tenants"*, under the question of why one should become a member (p 8), it is stated:

> As a member of the tenant association, he or she gains access to information from lawyers and other personal advisers as well as through the website. The member benefits from the many offers he/she receives through the membership. Becoming a member has several advantages.

After this declaration follows a list of services offered to members, such as the organization's official magazine, local information on matters concerning one's housing, influence in the members' housing situation, free help and advice on all issues concer-

ning one's housing, free legal assistance in the event of a dispute with one's landlord, access to professionals that can help negotiate one's rent, moderation of rent increases, organizational pressure on decision-makers through mobilization of public opinion, educational courses, study and leisure activities, and last but not least, local offers and discounts from various companies.

What these 'local offers and discounts' include is described in details just a few click away on their webpage (www.hyresgasterna.se). Under the heading *"Member benefits"* it is asserted: *"It pays off being a member. Since we are so many we are able to offer many good and valuable member benefits" (*my translation). Depending on where one lives in Sweden, a membership can include up to almost 30 different discounts and tangible benefits covering everything from price-reductions on books, magazines, and DVDs; insurances and home security; electricity, computers, and telephony; paint and wallpaper; legal assistance and decoration; movie- and theatre tickets; traveling, restaurants, and hotels; car insurances, car rentals, towing, and even price cuts on new cars.

An overall observation here gives at hand that the organizations in which there is a seemingly greater emphasis on specific membership perks and privileges seems to be those that to a larger extent than others have identified and developed commercial opportunities in relation to their core activities. Two illustrative examples of this are the Co-operative Union and the Football Association.

Even if a more utilitarian aspect of and argument for why one should become a member can be found here and there on web pages and in texts issued by the nine organizations in this study, it was primarily representatives from the Co-operative Union that emphasized the issue during the interviews. The CEO asserted that more than 90 percent of their members are members because of the different types of economical and tangible benefits they are offered. The chairman concluded that *"one should probably realize that many who affiliate as members"* do so because they want to access *"member benefits and the other economic benefits that exist"* (p 1, interview). The ideologist argued in a similar manner when he was asked to describe individual membership:

> I believe that the membership to a large extent /…/ [implies] good access to good economic benefits. A well-functioning [membership]card that is linked to /…/ some well-functioning stores and supermarkets and a content that gives /…/ an overview of ones personal economy if the offered benefits are used. /…/ I also buy my electricity that way. /…/ The member sees the card as a part of the membership that gives lots of economic opportunities and benefits (ideologist, Co-operative Union, 25).

Members as Prime Beneficiaries and Customers

From the description above, which departs primarily from how individuals may look upon their membership, I also asked the ideologist in the Co-operative Union to describe the same thing but from an organizational perspective. This caused him to say:

> /…/ [one] is today very conscious about that it [the individual membership] is an existential point of departure for business. We have no raison d'être if we don't improve the membership and continue to single out our members as our best beneficiaries and our best customers (ideologist, Co-operative Union, 25-26).

All nine federations in this study are caught up in some kind of business-related and commercially driven activities. How, and to what degree, varies (for more details see chapter 7). What appears to be a common solution, though, is that each organization owns one or several for-profit enterprises that typically contribute monetarily to the federative sphere by producing services and/or products that then are sold internally to the members of the organization and/or to the general public.

It falls outside the scope of this study to examine whether these and similar commercial activities among the organizations in the study are becoming more common or not. In contemporary research, though, it is frequently asserted that Swedish civil society organizations progressively are becoming both commercialized as well as professionalized (Papakostas 2003; Chartrand 2004; Johansson 2005a). Even if it might be difficult to capture, I believe that these trends and developments could be described in accordance with the idea of 'corporatization' (Brunsson 1991), in the sense that certain parts of the Swedish associational life gradually seems to become tinted by attitudes, idioms, and practices generally associated with the corporate world (cf. Wijkström & Einarsson 2006; Wijkström & Lundström 2002).

In addition it is interesting to note that out of the nine organizations in this study, the Co-operative Union is probably the one in which the idea of identifying members as customers has been advanced the most. In effect, it seems to have become so deeply institutionalized that it simply goes without saying. This was, for example, illustrated above where their ideologist said that their organization's raison d'être basically stems from identifying the individual member as their best beneficiary and their best customer. Along the same lines he also said:

> It is not the members that come and say ' we should now do it this way'. It is instead our way of thinking business that must depart from the idea that it is always the members that should get the best benefit. We can also give benefits to all customers, but if we have something special to offer, it should go to the members. I would say that it boils down to maintain an internal dialogue, which is marked by the organization's particular business logic (ideologist, Co-operative Union, 13).

What he means with 'particular business logic' is probably linked to the fact that this is a federation of cooperative consumer associations, not regular profit-driven retailing stores. But, that might not be the whole story. Because, the particular business logic he refers to here seems to gradually have become tinted and infused with beliefs and behaviours corresponding to what best is described as more regular corporate ideas and commercial activities (cf. Jonnergård *et al.* 1994; Hwang 1995). The following passage – which continues from where the ideologist in the Co-operative Union declared their members as their best beneficiaries and customers – is an evocative example of what I mean here:

> To market towards the members, to use what we call MRM, Member Related Marketing [which he explains equals Customer Related Marketing] means that we derive advantages from the fact that people actually use their [member]card so that we know where they live, when they shop and for how much. /…/ Everybody is probably aware of the advantage of this (ideologist, Co-operative Union, 26).

As mentioned before, among the other interviewees it was in fact only representatives from the Football Association that also got engaged in similar discussions. Yet, in contrast to the apparent straightforwardness and an attitude of taken for grantedness among the representatives from the Co-operative Union, I would say that the representatives from the Football Association were somewhat less straightforward in their approaches toward this topic.

The chairman of the Football Association talked extensively about how football in Sweden during the last two decades or so have become both increasingly professionalized as well as commercialized, and how these tendencies had affected the organization he represented. One of the effects he mentioned was that along with all the money that is currently seeping into the sport from advertisement, sponsor deals, commercial agreements with large TV-networks, and so on, comes also a tendency to shift perspective among members as well as leaders in the organization's internal hierarchy. With these new perspectives comes also a tendency to try out new practices. One such novelty, which he stated was not present or even possible in a Swedish sport context 25 or 30 years ago, is today's intensified interest and urge to organize sport activities in general, and professional football dittos in particular, through for-profit corporations rather than non-commercial associations. The propensity to think and act in a corporate way within the world of sport had, in his view, rapidly won ground internally in the Football Association. He described the current situation by saying that: *"nowadays, companies and associations exist side by side, and they are treated exactly the same"* (interview, p 8). However, he also identified that this trend of 'corporatization' had influenced the individual membership in what he seemed to perceive as a rather negative manner.

> This development has of course /…/ left its marks. In the sense that 35-40 years ago, the member was the one who decided on member meetings. It has also changed the view on members in some clubs. Today, the member does that as well, but it is clear that the importance of the member has been nibbled at along with the increased number of business deals the associations make. Or, one should maybe say that the members' fear of using their right fully according to the rules and regulations of an organization has increased. This stems from the fact that members today are more aware of the fact that if you have a large company supporting their association, and if you would make a decision that goes against the will of that company, there is an increased risk that you lose that company as sponsor and supporter. This has of course come to influence both the member's opportunity of acting democratically, and the way the clubs' go about doing things (chairman, Football Association, 10-11).

Moreover, drawing on his experience from having been with the organization since the 1950s, the ideologist in the Football Association engaged in a similar discussion. He asserted that the entire federation has become increasingly professionalized, not only

in terms of coaches and players, but also in terms of employed officials. In 1956, when he first became engaged with the organization, there were about a dozen full-time officials at the national level. Today, that number has increased to around 110.

The ideologist in the Football Association also identified that on par with this trend of professionalization, there is a growing tendency among their federated clubs and associations to organize their activities in the form of profit-driven companies. He said that their current chairman had authored an article in the annual report from 1997 in which he discussed whether or not profit-driven companies should be allowed in Swedish football. The ideologist stated that this topic was indeed an issue for harsh discussions during the later part of the 1990s, but not anymore because: *"Today, several of our elite associations have parts of their operations linked to corporations"* (follow-up e-mail). Apart from seeing that this would most probably lead to a situation where companies, in an ever-growing tempo, would start taking over single associations, he continued to speculate about how this issue had presumably supported the growth of a customer-like attitudes and behaviours among members in and beyond the world of sports:

> As a member in an association, you were earlier more involved in the course of action. During the past few years, the situation is more that you buy a service through your membership. In most associations one meets fellow members through activities planned and managed by others. One participates, becomes relatively satisfied and leaves. No one expects more of a membership. In most cases, no one even asks if they could be of any help in the internal life of the organization. /…/ An insurance for injuries caused during practice is included in the membership offered by all sport organizations. Thus, individual members buy a service entailing a sport activity, rent for the premises, organizers and insurances. One participates and is content with that. /…/ Most people rarely, if ever, take part in the internal life of the organization, which is handled over to officials and a few enthusiastic board members (ideologist, Football Association, e-mail).

The only interviewee outside the Football Association or the Co-operative Union who specifically also brought up this topic was the chairman of the IOGT-NTO. In addition to a discussion of his view on membership, he strongly opposed a view through which members are arrayed the role of customers. These are his words:

> /…/ well, yes sometimes one says that they [the members] are customers. /…/ It expresses something completely different in my opinion. The members are the organization [with emphasis] (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 10).

9.3 Concluding Remarks

From the empirical accounts presented above and the discussions in the previous chapter, it seems as if people's commitment to and their activity level within the organization they belong to are perceived as two important sides of their membership. To expand on how these two aspects are interconnected, I would briefly like to return to Kanter's (1972) ideas of commitment and Stryjan's (1989, 1994) conceptualization of the membership.

Kanter (1972) writes that in order to commit to a collective endeavor and to sense a personal gain from being one of its formal affiliates, depends largely on the depth of

one's involvement and one's structural position within that context. With inspiration from her continued discussions on this topic, one may conclude that a personal commitment to and involvement in an organization, for example via an membership, equals being committed to a specific set of organizational roles and functions that are marked by different connotations (ibid:70-4).

This linkage between the formal affiliation of members and certain positional and functional arrangements within an organization, is related to Stryjan's outline of one of membership's three fundamental aspects: an established repertoire of action, which members could resort to in order to support and contribute to the well-being and maintenance of their organization (see chapter 5, p 61 above). He asserts, that such a collection of activities is contingent on and codified in explicit rules and decisions, and should be viewed as an agglomeration of enduring actions and precedents. Due to a function of prescribing activities, these repertoires of actions could also be expected to involve a somewhat developed internal distribution of specific member roles and positions.

Echoing both Kanter and Stryjan, a common perception among the interviewees was that the more commitment and hands-on participation there is within a member cadre, the more both the members and their organizations could expect to gain from each other. This perception adds a utilitarian subtext to membership, which partly finds support in the earlier discussed mutual benefit that emerges when the collective ambitions of an organization and its committed individual members meet (see Comments in chapter 8).

9.3.1 Activity is Always Understood as being Better than Passivity

With reference to the idea of collections of specific actions, I would also claim that a typical perception among the interviewees is that individual membership includes a dichotomous set of roles that position rank and file members as either active or passive. This cultivates what I interpret as a fairly one-dimensional and static view of what actions members could resort to, even if a few attempts to go beyond such a picture surfaced in some interviews (see p 155).

Although this active/passive divide seldom seems to be admitted or employed officially within organizations, which some interviewees underlined above, it is still one of the more commonly used ways of categorizing individual members in Sweden among scholars (cf. Peterson *et al.* 1989; Peterson *et al.* 1998; Vogel *et al.* 2003). Yet, what 'active' or 'passive' mean in this respect is often left more or less unspecified and unproblematized (for an exception, see Lundström and Wijkström 1997). It appears sufficient to say that the much-coveted activity among member points in the direction of someone who practically participates in the activities of the organization he/she belongs to. If not, one is most certainly regarded 'passive'. Thus, it is generally not enough that one contributes with a fee and reads magazines and newsletters issued by the organization one belongs to, one has to actually *be there* and *do something* concretely in order to be considered as 'active'.

Despite a few exceptions in this study, such as the interviewees from the Co-operative Union who claimed that their many million 'passive' members constitute their best customers and therefore an obvious reason to continue to exist as organization (p 161 above), the general perception is that active members are desirable members. According to some interviewees, the ratio between passive and active members could be as high as nine to one. However, if as few as one out of ten members are perceived as 'active', this would imply that everyone else *per se* must be viewed as passive supporters, or postal giro or direct mail members as they also are called (cf. Skocpol 1999:494). If these numbers are correct, this means that the vast majority of all members occupy a sort of residual position that is not appreciated.

The supposed lack of activity among members is a source of frustration among both organizational representatives and scholars. However, there were two interviewees who claimed, independently of each other, to have found traces of distress regarding passivity among members throughout the entire history of their respective organizations (p 153). These insights might suggest that what some view as an increased 'passivity' among members (cf. Vogel *et al.* 2003) in fact constitutes a constant, endemic, regularity. In addition, one can also wonder what these organizations would be without this group, and whether or not it is possible or even desirable to convert all the perceived 'passive supporters' to 'active participants'? Just consider the interviewees from the Social Democratic Party, who described the members that want to participate and take responsibility for what happens in their organization as "troublesome" (p 155 above).

9.3.2 Specific Roles

With the 'active participant' and the 'passive supporter' as a point of departure, several of the interviewees also associated other specific roles with parts of individual membership (see figure 4 below for an overview). For example, the need for unpaid voluntary work that was articulated among several interviewees and the fact that volunteers in Sweden in most cases are both searched for and found among members (cf. Stryjan and Wijkström 1996; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Habermann 2001; Lundström and Svedberg 2003), indicates that the members, almost per definition, here comes to be perceived as voluntary workers.

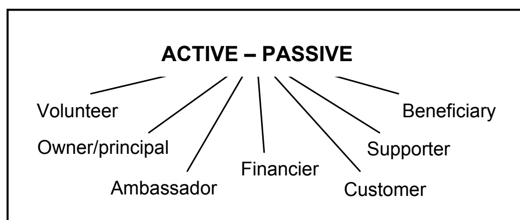

Figure 4. Specific member roles.

Just as members are expected to contribute through voluntary work, the interviewees also seem to place them in a position where they are expected to contribute financially. In those organizations that for some reason are dependent on fees and other economic contributions stemming from the affiliation of rank and file members, this seems to imply a member role that could be described as an economic contributor or financier.

Another aspect that gives rise to a specific function for those who affiliate as members with an organization is closely related to information, ideology and the outlook that individual membership constitutes a means through which intangible and tangible resources can be channeled back and forth between individual members and their organizations. This is the role as a loyal and devoted ambassador, who represents and communicates externally what his/her organization does and advocates, alongside conveying essential information from other fellow members, or the outside world, into the organization (p 156 above).

Another specific member role that surfaced in these interviews was the owner or principal. There were interviewees who stated that they perceive members as owners. All three representatives from the Co-operative Union claimed that no one but the individual member could or should be regarded the ultimate owner of their federation (p 156 above). However, what really matters here is not whether someone is called owner or not. Instead, what I want to highlight is that the interviewees' emphasized the members' crucial position in having the ultimate say in the organizations they belong to, which I categorize as enacting the role of an organization's principal (cf. Abrahamsson 1993a, b).

9.3.3 Personal Perks and Benefits

Furthermore, even if members may experience personal satisfaction or gain from being treated as a loyal ambassador or an active financier, these roles capture, from my viewpoint, more how an organization may benefit from the rank and file members it affiliates then the other way around. The interviewees, however, also discuss the personal benefit or pay-off side of membership. As one interviewee put it, one should expect to get *"something in return"* for affiliating with an organization.

Judging from the present empirical material, it seems as if motives of self-interest generate two further roles as part and parcel of individual membership. One of them is the prime beneficiary. That is, the person that first and foremost receives and benefits from what the organization he/she belongs to actually does. The other and somewhat similar is the customer, who buys and maybe also consumes the goods and/or services produced by the association he/she belongs to. While some interviewees strongly rejected the idea of framing members as customers (p 163), it was especially interviewees from the Football Association and the Co-operative Union, or the organizations where commercial perspectives and activities seem to have been advanced the most, who brought forth and developed these ideas.

10. Membership and Democratic Governance

This is the third chapter dealing with the interviewee's perceptions regarding individual membership. In the following, I mainly discuss members' stipulated right and opportunity to openly and on equal terms govern the organization they belong to.

10.1 Members are Supposed to Exert Influence

In a brochure directed to the members of the Co-operative Union, it is stated: "*/…/ angry voices can often be heard saying that it is impossible to realize changes and exert influence* [internally]. *That is wrong! There are all thinkable possibilities for you to create opinion and achieve changes*" (Co-operative Union, 2005, my translation). As a way to present alternatives for how individual members could put this influence into practice, the following statement appears in the opening of the Co-operative Union's constitution from 2004:

> The members benefit from and influence the organization primarily through their shopping and the choices they make as consumers in co-operative retailing; through their engagement for issues concerning consumption; but also via their influence as owners, and through other added values connected to their membership (my translation).

Even if influence on behalf of individual members is generally mentioned in all kinds of policy and constitutional writings, I would say that the interviewees approached and dealt with this matter from a variety of angels. The secretary general in the Football Association is one salient example. By relating the membership to voluntary action, commitment and self-interest, he also portrayed it as *"an organized belonging through which I can expect to exert influence internally in the organization. It* [the membership] *gives me rights and, to some extent, also obligations"* (p 2, interview).

From a perception where internal influence is construed as an exclusive right for the formal members it is not far to also consider the membership from a gate keeper-angle. That is, as an in- or excluding mechanism distinguishing and separating those who are entitled to make use of an organization's specific means and take part in its internal life from those who are not.[11] This view was also common among the interviewees. Below are two examples that follow this line of thought.

With a not entirely positive attitude, the mission director of the Mission Covenant Church stated that he associates membership with what he preferred to call an *"associational principle"*. This, he argued, implies a sort of demarcation line between those

[11] In this respect individual membership and citizenship is quite alike (cf. Ahrne 1990, 1994).

who can and those who cannot access the formal decision-making arenas and processes within the organization. He exemplified his argumentation by saying:

> For example, in order to make decisions on economy, or to be able to grant discharge to a board, or to elect a chairman, it is necessary with a membership that in a strict legal sense entitles someone the right to make decisions. This is why the member is so important. /…/ [and] we must continue to encourage people to become members as long as we have this order (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 11).

As we could see already in chapter 8, the head of organization in the Social Democratic Party made a similar clarification when he presented his view of membership and the organization he represents:

> One could of course envision alternatives /…/ such as having a much more loosely coupled organization where people are engaged as sympathizers, donors or what have you instead of members /…/. Yet, the membership is unique since it also entails the possibility to exert influence. I think we should be a party welcoming everyone who wants to participate and discuss, but when we make decisions we should only involve the members. That is, you may come and participate as non-member in different activities and in meetings where you may put forth your opinion and so forth. But, it should be the membership that decides who can and who cannot participate in the process leading to decisions concerning the party and its politics (head of organization, Social Democratic Party, 7).

Noteworthy here is how both these respondents, in line with most others, seem to perceive the members as the definite and only possible principals of their respective organizations. At the same time, they also assert that the internal governance structure is entirely dependent upon them. From this perspective, the members exercising democratic influence through their affiliation with an organization ideally implies a point where the idea of self-governance and collective action may come together (cf. Warren 2001). Yet, as will become clear later on, ideas and practice do not always concord in this respect.

10.1.1 Democratic Regimes Require Openness

In the latter of the two last examples above I would also like to draw the reader's attention to the combination of individual membership, internal influence, and the fact that the interviewee also states that the organization he represents should be characterized by a specific openness. Even if he does not expand too much on what this openness means, one could say that being considered accessible and 'open' to each and everyone seems to be a commonly embraced and much honored quality ascribed to many Swedish civil society associations. This particular attribute appears to receive most of its energy and attraction from being connected to other influential epithets, such as *folkrörelse,* democratic principles, and practices (see chapter 3, and e.g. Hvenmark & Wijkström 2004; Stryjan & Wijkström 1996; Wijkström and Lundström 2002).

In the overall regulation of the Co-operative Union from 2004 (§ 3:2) it is declared that every consumer society in this federation must offer an individual membership that is open to everyone. No details or specifications of what this openness might

imply is included. Looking in the regulations of the associations in this federation does not either offer many clues. For example, in the constitutional document of the Consumer Society Stockholm §2, under the heading *The Members of the Association*, it is only declared that this particular society *"is open to each and everyone who wants to support the purpose, activities, and development of the association"* (my translation).

Another comparable example of how openness might be framed can be found in the regulation of the Mission Covenant Church from 2000, where one of the fundamental principles affirm that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the congregations and the Savior of the world, and that: *"God's church is /…/ open to all humans"*. In line with this statement, under the heading *Spirit of Community*, and in the section *Freedom and Openness*, it is further clarified that *"the goal of the church is to defend each individual's freedom to seek clarity in the interpretation of God's words and to maintain every congregation open to different Christian traditions, e.g. regarding the issue of baptism"* (my translation).

A similar, yet different take on this can also be found in the regulating document of the Teachers' Union from 2004, where it is asserted, under the heading *Democracy* in the opening paragraph, that this organization's basic values imply that:

> /…/ [t]he Teachers' Union is characterized by a great openness. Different opinions shall be expressed and received with respect. Dispersion of information and knowledge is continually developed and shall be used in order to offer new possibilities for openness and participation. The Teachers' Union offers each member an arena where their personal voice can be heard and where they can exert influence (my translation).

10.1.2 A Conditioned Openness

Despite affirmations of a required openness, such as the one above, a membership does generally not come without conditions. A commonly applied constraint is a demand for an unreserved acceptance of the guiding values, principles, and activities of the particular organization one wants to become member of. This is, for example, visible in the just-mentioned example from the local Consumer Society in Stockholm. It also appears at the end of the opening paragraph of the Social Democratic Party's regulations from 2001. Here it is stated that the general aim of this party is to associate everyone that acknowledges the guiding principles in their program and regulations. This is also repeated a few sections later in the same document under the heading *Fundamental rules for local social democratic associations and clubs* (p 33):

> Membership in the local association/club is granted every person that acknowledges the general values and principles in the program and regulations of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (my translation).

Nevertheless, these are not the only organizations where individual membership is related to a demand for compliance with a set of fundamental principles and regulations on behalf of the aspiring member. In chapter 2, § 5, in the regulation of the Red Cross from 2006 we can, for example, read that *"The membership implies a standpoint in favor of the purpose and the basic principles of the Swedish Red Cross"* (my translation).

One might wonder why anyone would consider supporting or joining an organization if what it stands for, or actually does, is not appealing? Should it not be obvious for someone wanting to be part of an organization to also agree upon its founding principles and values? Would it not be overly apparent to explicitly point this out? Yet, no matter how evident or banal it may appear, this kind of precondition can at the same time also be interpreted in terms of an officially stated signal of precaution and protection against the intrusion of external ideas, hostile take-overs, or some other threatening changes. In short, to be explicit with what is demanded from those wanting to access an organization's internal life can be an important control mechanism for clarifying who is in and who is out, who belongs and who does not belong as a member in an organization (Ahrne 1990, 1994).

In order to exemplify why it might be relevant to take this kind of safety measures from an organizational perspective I will briefly re-tell what happened in another Swedish civil society organization, the Swedish Tax Payers Association, in 2005. This membership-based and democratically governed organization, whose overall goal is to lower the tax pressure in Sweden, faced an internal threat mounted by a large group of its own members. This particular group of affiliates had parallel affiliations with the Swedish Democrats, another membership-based and democratically governed association, but one that adheres to and promotes a xenophobic agenda. Before being exposed, these 'double' members had, during some time, joined the Tax Payers' Association en masse. They had done so not to support the reduce-tax agenda, but for orchestrating an internal coupe in order to take control over and use the Tax Payers' Association as a platform for their own purposes. This major threat became known internally to the Tax Payers' Association shortly before its general assembly in 2005, which meant that there was enough time for other member groups in the Tax Payers' Association to mobilize and finally also to neutralize this attempt of a hostile take over (cf. Dagens Nyheter, March 31, 2005; www.expo.se).

Nonetheless, and no matter how important or relevant it might be, I believe that the opinions of the persons wanting to affiliate with any of the nine organizations in this study, in principle, is never checked before admittance. The entrance doors to the organizations appear to stand more or less open, probably because it would be too costly and laborious to check every aspiring member before entrance.

This is, for example, how the chairman of the IOGT-NTO describes the current formalities around becoming a member in his organization: *"Today you just have to send in the membership fee and be registered in our member directory in order to be recognized as member. Formally we might be able to hinder someone to become member, but in reality they just send in their fees and becomes members"* (p 15, interview). What seems to happen instead is that already accepted members might be expelled if they express deviant views and/or in some other way display some sort of disloyal behaviour. Yet, such measures are probably relatively rare (Hemström 1972).

Even if a person might like what an organization represents and achieves, and from that decide that it is time to join as member, it is still not certain that he/she is welcome. No matter how open an organization say it is or how much one may want to affiliate as individual member, no organizations in this study seems to be really uncon-

ditionally open to each and every person. To a certain degree, they all apply what I interpret to be a conditioned openness.

Believing in Jesus Christ, Swearing Oaths, and other Preconditions

While some prerequisites are more generally applied, like complying with basic values and principles before being recognized as an individual member, there are others that are much more exclusive and organizationally specific.

At the same time as age seems to be some sort of standard precondition for being accepted as member, there are also a few noteworthy variations between the organizations in this respect. The Mission Covenant Church occupies an extreme position in this respect. Their regulations from 2000 stipulate that even newborn children are accepted as members, if their parents so wish. Otherwise, apart from in the IOGT-NTO where there is an explicit age limit of twelve, 18 seem to be the norm. For younger people it is sometimes possible to be represented by a guardian, or to join a youth organization.

Moreover, although an age requirement might appear rather inoffensive at first, this is not always the case. For example, the chairman of the Association of the Visually Impaired asserted that to discriminate aspiring members on the basis of their age has earlier evoked serious internal debates and conflicts. One of the larger and more hostile disagreements he mentioned in this regard erupted in the late 1960s. That quarrel concerned whether or not to apply an upper age limit of 67 years of age for those who wanted to join the organization. The main argument behind that idea, put forth by younger members, was that if all elderly people, of whom many tend to develop visual defects as a direct consequence of diabetes [*åldersdiabetes*], should be allowed to enter without restrictions, this would probably lead to a situation where younger members could become outnumbered, discriminated and, ultimately, also lose some of their internal power. Yet, although this debate of an upper age limit in the late 1960s appears to have been particularly intense and fierce, the contemporary age requirement, stipulating that no one under 18 years of age is allowed to become a member, has apparently never been an issue (p 4, interview, chairman of the Association of the Visually Impaired, see also chapter 7).

Even if aspiring members have to be of a certain age, or at least to be born, age is nominal in comparison to some other prerequisites that might be considered a lot more important to fulfill. For example, before anyone is listed as member in the IOGT-NTO, there is a demand for an explicit compliance with the following member oath (§ 4, regulations of the IOGT-NTO):

> I promise to do my best to promote the purpose of the IOGT-NTO movement, as it is spelled out by the basic principles and in the program. I also promise to live my life in total abstinence – i.e. not to use alcoholic beverages exceeding 2.25 percentage by volume, narcotic substances, or other intoxicants (my translation).

The use of a pre-stated and obligatory oath, employed by no other organization in this study, should be interpreted in accordance to what was discussed earlier – namely

as an emphasis of the acceptance and conformity with whatever fundamental principles and values the organization stands for. Thus, I would here like to argue that this kind of specific precondition renders the formal membership an equal gate-keeping function or sorting mechanism as, for example, employment or citizenship, in that it determines who is included and who is excluded from a community (cf. Ahrne 1994). And, the more detailed and elaborated this inclusion/exclusion mechanism is, the more it also contributes to a distinctive membership and, consequently, a community with a distinctive character. This, I believe, nicely follows Stryjan's (1989, 1994) argument that the membership controls the demographic composition of an association's member cadre, which, in its turn, decides the character of that particular association.

This becomes even clearer if we once again return to the Association of the Visually Impaired. No matter how much emphasis might be given to age in this context, it is the question of having an eye impairment or not, and how such a disability should be defined that seems to be the primary idea and foundation not only for the membership offered, but also for the entire organization. This is an example of what their regulations from 2004 (§4, section 1) stipulate regarding having a defect vision, and the right for members to participate in the internal governance system:

> **Member entitled to vote shall:** /…/ be so visually impaired that it is difficult or even impossible to read normal writing, orient oneself visually or, due to this defect vision, experience other considerable difficulties in the daily life /…/ (my translation).

However, to define a specific membership prerequisite such as a visual disability is apparently far from an unambiguous task. Not the least since such a definition may rest upon phrases like the ones in the quotation above, which probably allows for more or less subjective interpretations and, consequently, also disagreements and conflicts. Again, it is their chairman who touches upon this topic. This time he was asked to expand on what he experienced as the major changes regarding the meaning of membership during his 40 years within this particular community:

> When I first joined it was said that to become member one had to see at least as bad as 0.1.[12] That is, one only was allowed to be able to read the top line [on a Snellen chart]. No more. Later on this was thought to be a far too rigid way of looking at the ability to see, so the criteria was changed to a maximum of 0.3. That means not being able to read more than the top three lines [on a Snellen chart]. This new criteria was introduced after having discovered that many people with certain visual disabilities had obvious problems. This change was made in 1965, and it had a large impact on the organization because there was a lot of resistance to it. /…/ At that time, many said that 'then we'll have a lot of half-sighted members, who will make it difficult for us who are blind. Because, we'll then come second, and we'll not be able to pursue our agenda in the same way as before.' /…/ And, in a way, they were right. /…/ [B]y allowing people with better eyesight to become members, the interests and the agenda of weak-sighted occupied more space at the expense of the interests of the blind, which lead to a situation where somewhat different issues got pursued

[12] Visual acuity is measured according to the size of letters viewed on a Snellen chart or the size of other symbols read on a certain distance. Some countries express visual acuity in foot, others in meter. In Sweden, it is expressed as a decimal number ranging from 0,1 to 2,0. This equals 20/200 to 20/10 when foot is used as the unit of measurement (the number 20 indicates that the chart is read on a distance of 20 feet). Normal eyesight in Sweden equals 1,0 (20/20 in foot) (for more details, see e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_acuity).

> internally. /…/ In that sense, it [the issue of defining visual disability] has been of importance for the discussion concerning the membership (chairman, Association of the Visually Impaired, 4-5).

So, in order to qualify for a membership that entitles the member to vote and exert influence in this organization, he/she has to comply with how visual disability is defined internally. If the person in question does not, but for some reason wants to be a part of and support this organization anyway, he/she can instead attain what explicitly is framed as a supportive membership. Under section 2, paragraph 4 in the internal regulation from 2004, it is stated that the only requirement for being recognized as a supporting member is to sympathize with the work of the organization, and to pay the stipulated fee. Important to notice though, is the central difference between these two types of memberships. While the former comes with a set of regulated democratic privileges allowing you to exert influence and control in the organization, the latter lacks all such features.

A similar example of a precondition that seems to be equally distinctive is the fact that anyone wanting to affiliate with the Teachers' Union either has to work as headmaster or teacher, or be enrolled in studies to become one (Regulations 2004, § 2). Even if this requirement, obviously tightly coupled with a profession, by no means is unique in relation to other trade unions, it certainly discriminates between those that are welcome to enter and those that are not. This probably brings certain distinctiveness and specific qualities to both the individual membership that is offered, and the organization in question.

The last example comes from the constitution and founding religious principles of the Mission Covenant Church (2000, p 7), where an explicitly claimed total openness also seems to be preconditioned. The citation below contains an official view of the included congregations, and what is required from the ones wanting to join them.

> /…/ [t]he congregation is held together by its center, Jesus Christ, not by its boundaries. God alone knows who is a Christian. Everyone willing to follow Christ, and who wants to grow in faith and share the life and solidarity of the congregation is invited through the Word of God, the baptism, and the Holy Communion. One enters the congregation on God's invitation, and the human response is the explicit belief in Jesus Christ[13] (my translation).

Even if §2 in the regulations of one of the Mission Covenant Church's larger local congregations in Stockholm (Immanuelskyrkan 2002) does not spell this out with the exact same words, it contains a similar message: *"The congregation admits as member each and everyone who confesses a belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior"* (my translation). And, when I asked what this means more practically, the director of the Mission Covenant Church came up with the following description:

> Well, you have to tell the local reverend that you want to become a member and then you will be asked if you have a personal belief in Jesus Christ as your lord and savior. An affirmative answer to that question is enough for the reverend /…/ to say that 'this is ok, I'll

[13] With reference to Rom 10:9–13

tell the rest of the congregation'. /…/ So informal and simple is the process and there is no other formal demand put on the member (mission director, Mission Covenant Church, 13).

In sum, even if membership-based organizations generally apply at least some sort of minimal threshold as to whom to accept and whom not to accept as member, I believe that most of these preconditions differ more or less substantially from one organizational context to another. Table 2 below summarizes some of the different formal membership requirements among the organizations in this particular study.

From the topic of specific prerequisites determining who is allowed and who is not allowed to enter and participate as a member in the internal life of the organization, I shall now return to the main topic of this chapter – the link between the membership and the internal democratic governance system.

Table 2. Specific preconditions for individual membership

Red Cross	Compliance with fundamental values and principles.
Union of Tenants'	No specific preconditions.
Football Association	Each local club/association has individual preconditions. Mostly concerning compliance with basic organizational values, principles, activities and a minimum age.
Cooperative Union	Each local association has individual preconditions. Mostly concerning compliance with basic organizational values, principles and activities.
Social Democratic Party	No affiliation with another political party. Compliance with party values, principles, and regulations.
Teachers' Union	Employed as principal, headmaster or teacher or studying to become the latter.
Visually Impaired	Visually disabled. Minimum age of 18. If younger, representation by guardian is possible.
IOGT-NTO	A specific member oath emphasizing compliance with guiding values and principles of the organization and abstinence from drugs.
Mission Covenant Church	Confession to local reverend about a personal belief in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior.

10.2 The Representative Chain

In some of the federations in this study, initiatives to alter already existing governing arrangements seem to have been taken. While most of these examples appear to be less important modifications of already existing structures and procedures, others appear to be much more radical. An interesting example can be found in one of the Cooperative Union's larger member associations, *Konsumentföreningen Väst* [the Consumer Association West], active in the southwest parts of Sweden. As a direct result of an internal initiative launched a couple of years ago, a resolution that adds considerable constitutional changes to this association was passed at the yearly assembly in 2006. This resolution involved a move from representative democracy to a regime where the

more than 300.000 rank and file members nowadays preside over their organization in what appears to be a more direct way. The local chairman comments upon this major shift in a press release from May 22, 2006: *"We are shifting the leverage from representative to direct democracy. /…/As from next year, all of our 325.000 members are able to participate and exert influence directly over our activities and our future agenda"* (www.konsumentforeningenvast.se, my translation).

Yet, despite local exceptions, such as the one above, it may still be concluded that all nine federations in this study are governed in accordance with principles and procedures correlating with representative democracy. While one interviewee referred to this kind of governance regime as *"the more traditional form" (*chairman, Co-operative Union, p 3), others preferred to depict it in terms of a representative chain, connecting the entire federative structure in each organization. For example, this is how the chairman of the IOGT-NTO put it:

> /…/ the decisions are influenced through the representative system. As member of the association, [one can influence] the decisions, but as a member one can also influence who is going to act as envoy at the district meeting, and, thus who will be electing delegates for the national congress. One could say there is a chain, a representative chain, /…/ from the member of the association to the highest decision-making body of the federation (chairman, IOGT-NTO, 3).

It is not easy to provide a short and straightforward answer as to why representative democracy and no other form of democracy dominate in these organizations. However, in chapter 8 it was shown how interviewees from the Mission Covenant Church declared, with striking clarity, how norms and behaviours stemming from a long gone past and for a long time had influenced and reinforced certain principles, structures and procedures relatable to the membership as well as to the entire internal life of their organization. I believe that the ideologist in the Social Democratic Party also hit the nail on its head in her discussion of how the institutionalization of organizational structures makes it easier to continue down already well-used paths than to break new trail:

> Everything is a result of circumstances. So, it may be a problem today that one is stuck in organizational structures that were created in another type of society. Yet, with an organizational structure in place, that structure tends to receive an intrinsic value and starts living its own life. It is often difficult to change already established structures (ideologist, Social Democratic Party, 2).

As in the case with the Mission Covenant Church, I believe that the concept of path dependency (cf. Stinchcombe 1968) again could be used to make further sense of this situation. However, in order to clarify the continuous existence of representative democracy, and the absence of other forms of governance within these particular organizations, it might be necessary to start in another end. Being dependent on a past requires a history to be dependent upon, and in this case I believe it is mostly covered by the concept of *folkrörelse.* This notion, or rather the ambiguous discourse surrounding the idea of *folkrörelse* is what, since the end of the 19th century, predominantly seems to

have affected the understanding of Swedish civil society in general and its institutions and organizations in particular (for more details see chapter 3).

To further scrutinize the adoption of and adaptation to this notion and ideal, I believe the concept of institutional isomorphism might be useful (Kanter 1972; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Without going into any of the critique institutional isomorphism has received, it constitutes a basic argument as to why conformity among organizations, or whole groups of organizations, arises. From a fairly simple take on institutional isomorphism one could say that an observable homogeneity between and among organizations evolves from either coercive, mimetic, or normative mechanisms (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). These mechanisms generate processes in which individuals tend to behave and shape their respective organizations in certain ways and not others in order to make them appear more efficient and, thus, legitimate (cf. Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Deephouse 1996).

I think it is possible to say that the continual enactment of certain governance arrangements within the organizations in this study in part stems from coercive pressures and normative expectations concurring with the idea of *folkrörelse* in Sweden. That is, the positively connoted and highly esteemed organizational ideal in Swedish civil society that generally implies things like solidarity, protest, continuance, voluntary affiliation, national coverage as well as many active and participating individual members, and, last but not least, representative democracy (chapter 3, see also Antman 1993; Heckscher 1951; Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Lundström and Svedberg 2003; Stryjan and Wijkström 1996; Svedberg 1981).

10.2.1 How to Influence more Concretely

Before I continue, it is necessary to briefly take a look at how the interviewees expected democratic influence to be executed more concretely. This is, for example, how the head of organization in the Social Democratic Party approached this issue. Apart from the different types of decisions, in which individual members may participate more directly, I find it noteworthy that his, and several other interviewees', perception of where and how members can exercise influence is restricted to a local level.

> **How does it happen? Where can I influence? How can I influence?** Well, you have a membership linked to the local association /…/ and there you have your meetings where different types of question are discussed such as: 'Who should we nominate? What motions should we write? What other type of demands should we make? What other activities should we have? Those are the kind of issues decided upon at member meetings. As a member you also elect the persons that represent you internally /…/. Since it is so large, we very much build on a representative democracy. So, the members elect, for example, the 350 delegates that go to our congress as member representatives (head of organization, Social Democratic Party, 7-8).

Accordingly, the representative democracy generally implies that a member could nominate and elect representatives and, to a certain extent, also hold them accountable in relation to the overall activities of the organization. This means that one is, as member, also given power to remove them. In addition, it is also possible to be nominated

and elected, which may grant access to new and exclusive possibilities and arenas where influence can be exerted. Moreover, as member one is commonly also entitled to influence the agenda of the organization. This could be, for example, either via authoring motions or participating in internal policy and activity related discussions and decision-making procedures concerning everything from which motions to send and support during the general assembly, to more overall strategic decisions.

However, just as the head of organization stated in the passage above, as long as the membership connects the member to a local level it is there, and there only, that the member can expect to exert influence in a direct way. Even if he/she could choose to stand for election, he/she has to surrender power to representatives at all other places and in all other situations, which immediately makes his/her influence indirect. When it comes to representative democracy, this is standard stuff, but is still considered as one of its more fundamental problems (cf. Dahl 1998)

In relation to the formal procedures and processes of representative democracy, there seems to exist some noteworthy differences between the organizations in this study. Especially in terms of how and where the formal affiliation 'tie' together the member with the organizational structure that he/she belongs to. Judging from both the available interview material and official texts, it looks as if most individual membership constructions first and foremost establish a connection to a local context. That is, a kind of primary link between a member and a local association.

Yet, some organizations deviate from this pattern. For example, the entire federation that forms the Union of Tenants is, in legal terms, only one association. This means that the more than 500.000 individual members that belong to this structure formally also belong directly to that single association, even if most of them are involved primarily on a local level (for more details see chapter 7).

What this and other similar constructions imply in terms of individual members' ability to accomplish influence is impossible to say from the present empirical material. However, it seems possible to argue that, at the same time as this appears to boost centralization, it may also imply a formal access to other decision-making arenas beyond the local level. Yet, to determine this requires another type of study than the present one.

Even so, in order for any kind of governance to be exerted by the members, it is important that every link in this representative chain, which is supposed to connect the rank and file members with their organization, also holds in practice. At the same time as all interviewees seemed to agree upon the necessary principles, values, and procedures for this, many of them also expressed serious doubts regarding members' possibility to exercise internal influence in practice. That is, from the viewpoint of the interviewees in this study, there seems to exist a mismatch between the ideal and practical side of individual members' possibility to exert the internal democratic influence that is ascribed to them through their formal affiliations.

I find this intriguing, since it opens up for discussions on fundamental and delicate issues within the kind of federative contexts that are studied here. One issue concerns the interviewees' perception of whether or not members can exert influence at all beyond the principles and ideals of representative democracy. Another one is how larger and more important decisions actually come about if most members are deemed

to be passive because they do not/cannot participate in the overall governance of their organizations. Can the present arrangements then even be said to work properly? And, if the members are not the ones governing, who governs then?

10.3 The Proof of the Pudding is in the Eating

The interviewees are both ambiguous and sometimes even doubtful regarding the correspondence between the idea and the practice of the so-called representative chain. There were those who concluded that democratic arrangements and processes in general are long-winded and inert. Some preferred to add that the other side of the coin is that these features, at the same time, constitute some of democracy's primary advantages and virtues. Others not only perceived the formal structures and processes related to representative democracy as being slow and ineffective, but also dismissed them in terms of a non-functioning solution for how to exert formal influence as a member.

When responding to a question of how she estimated the functionality of their governance system, the chairman of the Co-operative Union said: *"Well, works and works. I would say that many people think it is just a too lengthy and laborious way. But, so is all democracy. It is slow"* (p 22, interview).

The chairman of the IOGT-NTO expressed a similar view. His outlook on democracy was that while it implies getting many people committed, engaged, and enthusiastic, translating words into deeds generally takes *"much more time than what one might expect"*. But, despite this *"sluggishness in the system"*, he asserted that it is *"the best alternative we have"* (p 8, interview).

The chairman of the Teachers' Union also articulated ambiguity regarding the topic of democracy. When asked if she believed their members actually sensed that they were able to exercise influence she immediately said no. However, when discussing the underlying reason for this negative answer, she emphasized the necessity of having a democratic arrangement that both is, and remains inert. She saw inertia as one of its great qualities. This is how she developed her argument:

> /…/ a democratically structured organization such as the Teachers' Union, with congresses, annual meetings where people are elected and discharged, held responsible and the like, has to have its sluggishness. But I don't see this sluggishness as a drawback. Because once we have made our decisions and do things, then it is carefully prepared /…/ [and] the decisions are well supported (chairman, Teachers' Union, 21).

10.3.1 A Paper Tiger

From a similar position, where democratic governance arrangements are portrayed as if not the best form of government, so at least as the best alternative around, there were those interviewees who were more ambiguous and skeptic.

One example of this is the director of the Mission Covenant Church. Although he considered their entire governance arrangement incongruent with the nature of being a church, he also asserted that thanks to one of their specific constitutional solutions, even the smallest congregations are permitted to send delegates and evoke motions.

This allows for what he stated as a relatively good-sized national assembly [*kyrko-konferensen*] to gather every second year, which he believed substantially increased the members' chances of exerting influence in comparison to most other organizations. However, he also said that this was ideally speaking, because: *"how this turns out in practice might be another thing. But on paper one should be able to say so"* (p 21, interview).

The chairman of the Union of Tenants' expressed similar disbeliefs. She concluded that what provides an individual member with the sense of being able to exert influence internally largely depends on his/her experience and knowledge of what to say and how to act within given structures and procedures. From this she said that if you, for any reason, lack these necessary skills and know-how, chances are great that influence more becomes *"a chimera"* than anything else (p 26, interview).

To expand this 'paper tiger'-perspective further, I would like to introduce the approach of some of the representatives from the Co-operative Union. When confronted with a question regarding the possibility to exercise influence as member, the ideologist hesitated a few seconds before responding: *"Well, it is possible, but it all depends on what it is that I would like to influence and how much time I'm willing to spend"* (p 14, interview).

He developed his answer by naming a few standard procedures and processes within a representative democratic setting, such as becoming elected representative, participating in decision-making processes, and writing and supporting internal motions. And, to further exemplify how individual members actually exert influence he retold the following anecdote, which also appears in the jubilee book celebrating the century long existence of the Co-operative Union (Giertz and Strömberg 1999: 148-51). This story departs from *"thirteen ladies in Bromsten"* [Bromsten is a suburb to Stockholm], who, during the later part of the 1980s, are said to have been both the initiators of and the driving force behind a suggestion that slowly gave rise to an increased internal opinion regarding environmental issues. To cut a long story short, after seven years of debates, discussions, and quarrels it was finally decided that an ecologically conscious business strategy should be formulated in combination with a development of a whole new range of ecological products. This whole process would soon after this lead to some major internal changes of the entire organization, officially known as *Gröna Konsum* [Green Konsum], which today has turned out to be a huge success story business-wise.

This textbook-like example is, however, paralleled with some of the doubts that the ideologist in the Co-operative Union, just as many other interviewees, put forth regarding democratic governance, and its possible downsides in real life. For example, while describing the standard democratic procedures and processes where member influence is supposed to take place, he also referred to things like the above mentioned seven years of discussions, debates, and quarrels by asking: *"who is really able to stay committed that long?"* (interview, p 14). He also said that *"representative democracy tends to crumble them"* (ibid., p 15), with which he meant that most internal motions and member initiatives tend to be 'crumbled' due to extremely long and enduring processes.

Thus, this story could be interpreted as a sort of alibi for a democratic arrangement that frequently fails. In other words, the above story could be a rare exception that

proves the rule. To support this rather bold suggestion, I would like to refer to an earlier passage from this interview. The topic was still internal governance, but this time the ideologist concluded the discussion by saying that the individual members in the Co-operative Union should generally be considered owners of the organization, but an odd example of owners. According to him, they were odd because members-as-owners do not make the same claims in terms of profit, dividends, return on investments and so forth as *"regular corporative owners do"* (p 13, interview). Instead, he asserted, they want *"exactly what we have stated"* [in an internal policy document] – that the organization should do some good for its members every day. This, he explained, means that the members: *"expect a decent store, with decent products, decent prices, and decent service. That is actually their demands as members and owners"* (ibid.). To further exemplify what he meant by 'doing good' for the individual members he added that there are few situations in which this becomes so clear as when stores have to be closed down:

> Let us take one of our former stores in Åkersberga [a suburb north of Stockholm]. Since its inauguration it had never rendered any profits, but the members in Åkersberga became furious because we closed it down. It was the last co-operative store in that municipality. /…/ However, as owner one would have yelled much earlier that 'we can't maintain this with those losses, because they are eating our common capital.' But members as owners do not react in that way. They react with disappointment over getting let down by an organization on which they have high expectations. This means that the responsibility as owner in this organization is transferred to… [hesitates]. Not even the national assembly does always exert owner responsibility. It can even be the board [of the Co-operative Union] that must do it, or it might even be its CEO that has to exert the owner responsibility towards subsidiaries or the like. **What do you mean, owner responsibility towards…** To be the one that raises demands for return on investments, value and market growth, which we partly have failed in doing during the last 20 years (ideologist, Co-operative Union, 13-14).

The reason for why this kind of events happen depends, according to this interviewee, apparently on the fact that no one in the organization wants to deal with this kind of decisions. Or, that no one, except officials and executives, are really capable to make this kind of decisions. This seems to stand in contrast with, for example, what one of the core co-operative principles that the Co-operative Union and many other co-operatives accept officially: *"Co-operatives are enterprises that put people at the centre of their business, and not capital"* (www.ica.coop). Thus, looking at some of the ruling principles and values of the Co-operative Union, and its formal basis of authority; that is, principles of local autonomy and a representative democratic arrangement, it seems relevant to ask who is construed as having authority and being the primary decision-maker in this case. Is it the members, who wanted to keep their local store, or the executive management at the national level, who wanted to cut losses?

Even if this might just be a very specific case, it is still interesting to see how the actual power here is described as being purposefully displaced from the individual members at a local level, and from the general assembly, the organization's highest decision-making institution, to the national board of directors of the federation. And, from the board of directors it is then even passed on to officials at an executive level. Or better put, into the hands of one man – the CEO.

It may be argued that no matter what kind of governance arrangements we are talking of, power always needs to be delegated. However, what this example from the Co-operative Union illuminates is not the point that power is delegated in a representative democracy, but rather that the amount of power left at the disposal of an organization's members can be diminished (cf. Stryjan 1989:60).

To this I would like to add another example, but this time from the interview with the CEO of this same organization. He said that democratic influence comes about through what he preferred to call the *"owner's line"* [*ägarlinjen*], which he claimed equals:

> /…/ member meetings, meetings of the association, district meetings, the Co-operative Union and its general assembly. That is where you can form a politic. /…/ But of course, in reality you are unable as a member to exert influence… Let us, for example, say you want to ban candy within three meters from cashier line [*kassalinjen*]. It is not a bad example. Quite authentic, actually. But, you have no chance of getting that through (CEO, Co-Operative Union, 16).

No matter how exceptional these examples might be, I believe they say something about the ambiguities that may arise regarding who is finally assigned the preferential right to interpret a situation and to make a closing decision within democratically governed federations. One might say that they also constitute examples of how a discourse that promotes solidarity, local autonomy, and individual emancipation in relation to membership, together with ideas of a bottom-up, self-governed organization, comes badly off in favor of a member-customer perspective, which is saturated by a techno-economic market rationale promoting profit, return of investments, market growth, and ideas of centralized and top-down practices.

This discursive interplay and its practical outcomes can be further framed as an example of the earlier discussed dual pull between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* aspects that supposedly reside in these types of organizations, and that can result in conflicts between the upper and lower parts of the hourglass model (see chapter 4).

10.3.2 No Chain is Stronger than its Weakest Link

If the proof of the pudding is a partly failing democratic regime, a relevant question to ask is why it fails? The secretary general of the Teachers' Union asserted that a majority of their members believe they can exercise influence internally. Yet, when I asked if this statement holds beyond a local level he corrected himself by saying:

> No, /…/ it is probably difficult beyond the local level. /…/ That is why I believe few people would answer yes to your question (secretary general, Teachers' Union, 18-19).

Interviewees from the Football Association also emphasized that influence on behalf of individual members is something that primarily takes place on a local level. Their chairman said that because the *"distance between individual members at a local level and the entire structure is too big"*, it is almost impossible for them to exert influence beyond their local clubs and associations (p 29, interview). He added that this is also how it

should be, because if the power to influence on behalf of their members would actually permeate the entire organization, it would in fact imply some sort of threat to the internal stability. This is how he put it:

> [W]e don't have a direct contact with them, and I don't see that we have the possibility today of involving a million people in a process within the Football Association. I cannot see it. If I would see it, then other parts of the movement would decrease in strength because the power of this million would govern all the way up. But, I am not sure that would be so good. So /…/ I believe in this separation in different levels (chairman, Football Association, 29).

This belief in a *"separation of levels"* not only implicates a state of affairs where members' and their will to act is perceived as detached from what goes on within the larger organization. It also implicates a situation in which certain parts of the federative structure are viewed and probably also treated as being more separated from each other than they are integrated. What the chairman meant with this internal isolation became even clearer when he continued to describe the overall organizational structure by saying:

> We have two strong motors. One is the organization of the federation and its way of governing, developing, influencing the football movement through different means. Then we have the democratic process in the associations that make us stronger in relation to the competitors (chairman, Football Association, 29).

Bearing the idea of a *"separation of levels"* in mind, it is almost as if the chairman sees an opposition between the larger federative structure and the democratic processes taking place within and between clubs and associations on a local level.

Returning once more to the idea of an hourglass, or a hybrid organization (chapter 4), it seems as if the chairman here talks about what he perceives as weak connections between what, in a simplified manner, could be described as the formal and democratically based decision-making apparatus on the one hand and the more bureaucratic, coordinative, and executive arrangements on the other. Moreover, if leaders and officials perceive different parts of a federation as separated, this most probably contributes to a situation where individual members easily become treated in terms of an anonymous and peripheral mass. This can also be a reason for why several interviewees seemed to perceive the individual members as being more or less excluded from internal processes and procedures beyond a local level.

The following is a somewhat similar, yet different, approach to the same topic. From the common idea that the members primarily exercise influence in accordance with a more than century old representative arrangement, thus connecting all levels in the organization, the party-secretary in the Social Democratic Party concluded that this chain never is better or stronger *"than its weakest link"* (p 7, interview). He also recognized that it is the 'first', or the local link in this chain that tend to be the weakest.

> We have a rather fragile structure. If you become a member of the Social Democrats there is a huge risk that there are no activities exactly where you live or work /…/. If you want to influence /…/ it presupposes that there exists parts close by of the organization that you can

> turn to /…/ but it is not always easy for our members to find that. Especially since the first joint often is so weak that you hardly have any contact with it (party-secretary, Social Democratic Party, 4).

He even asserted that if this first link fails and individual members *"don't get what they are expecting"*, there are generally *"severe internal consequences"* waiting around the corner (p 6, interview). Although he never really specified what these consequences might be, I believe that he could have been aiming at a scenario similar to the following.

Since organizations like the ones analyzed in this study officially applies a specific form of internal democratic arrangement, it is probably quite important for these formal structures and procedures to be in place, and also for them to work properly. However, when members feel disappointed and deceived, it is easy to depict a situation where the means and corrective inputs aimed at making the overall formal governance structures and procedures credible start to appear contradictory and perhaps also weak. The entire system might lose its legitimacy because of this. One may argue that if the members' experience that they are kept at a distance from the activities of the organization affiliating them could result in a scenario where the democratic arrangements are diluted and finally short-circuited. The oligarchic tendencies Michels (1911/1959) identified thrive in failing democratic systems. Here is how the CEO in the Co-operative Union reflected upon how an official position such as his own could affect a leader's perception of a democratic arrangement.

> If you sit in too expensive furniture then you are, of course, affected [by it]. And, a built-in danger with operations steered from the top is that one does not know what goes on further down in the base. Of course it's like that, but you can live with it if you are both intelligent and a have a representative democracy that works well. /…/ Yet, if that is turned into contempt… Not in the sense of open contempt, because that does not really exist. But, a more practical contempt where one does not have 'the energy' to listen to objections /…/ there is /…/ an obvious risk that the big and important thoughts are those that are thought centrally (CEO, Co-Operative Union, 21).

And, when the legitimacy of a democratically governed organization is failing, it seems natural to assume that its members, very well, knows the location of the exit sign (cf. Stryjan 1989, 1994; see also Hirschman 1970).

10.3.3 A Bypassed System

Given that the democratic arrangements in the organizations in this study do not always live up to the standards as they are supposed to, I find it interesting to reflect upon the fact that these organizations have existed for about a century or more. This insight asks the question whether democratic arrangements matter. One can wonder whether there exists some kind of internal substitute that either smooth over systematic shortcomings, or that fully replaces the official governance functions and procedures when they fail. That is, is there something within these organizations that pro-

vides their members with alternative ways to make a difference internally, or are they completely at the mercy of the formal governance arrangements?

When I asked about the individual members' real possibilities to exert influence the chairman of the Co-operative Union provided a very concrete example of what it is that I am aiming at here: *"Well, the easiest is if you know someone.* ***What do you mean?*** *Well, if you know someone who is an elected representative"* (interview, p 22).

Since neither she nor I tried to develop this answer during the interview, I can only provide an interpretation of what she implied. I believe she meant that one of the better and efficient ways in which to accomplish something within these federative organizations is dependent on whether or not you know someone occupying a position from where influence actually could be exerted. According to this view, if one is interested in making an impact internally, that depends on the personal network that is at one's disposal within a particular organization. Although the function of personal networks is probably just as real and common in these federative contexts as elsewhere in society, they imply that internal influence in these organizations may also come about via informal channels and events that might be clashing with the official democratic principles and procedures. A suitable metaphor for this and similar situations could be to say that they represent bypass operations of official democratic governance structures and procedures.

Other ways in which members were said to be able to move and shake things internally, just as unofficially as in the case with personal networks are, for example, to author and send private letters and e-mails directly to someone within the organization one belongs to, who has the possibility to do something. Another way that also was mentioned in the interviews was to call someone higher up in the hierarchy and put forth one's ideas and suggestions.

Similarly, a few interviewees claimed that they also tried to influence their members outside the regular structures and channels. For example, an interviewee from the Social Democratic Party said that because the regular democratic procedures and processes often are slow and time consuming, it is sometimes necessary to cut corners and communicate more directly with the members. However, he also claimed that most people that are active at the local and regional level did not appreciate the establishment of this kind of exclusive communication between the members and the national level in the organization.

10.4 Internal Influence with External Effects

From a somewhat functionalistic viewpoint, civil society organizations are frequently believed to fulfill certain civic functions within the larger society in which they are embedded. One argument in this direction is that civil society organizations are particularly apt at bringing about social cohesion and integrating different groups of people in society. Linked to this theme, is also the claim that when people come together in those organizations it tends to create a bi-product, called social capital. Social capital can be seen as an unintended consequence of collective action, and is often resembled with a lubricant for the relation between citizens, and a kind of glue for the entire social fabric

that forms a society (see chapter 1 and e.g. Putnam 2000, 1993; Amnå and Munck 2003; Rothstein and Stolle 2003; Kumlin and Rothstein 2005; Rothstein 2001, 2005).

A parallel idea to this bi-product theme is that these organizations are also vital for the creation and sustenance of democracy in society. Often with explicit roots in a Tocquevillian tradition, it is claimed that when individuals commit themselves to and participate in the internal life of civil society organizations, which may or may not be membership-based and governed in accordance with democratic principles and procedures, they receive schooling in democracy and other important civic virtues. In short, the type of civil society organizations that are included in this study are often perceived as training grounds for democracy and important instruments for the creation, education, and improvement of good citizens (see chapter 3 above, and e.g. Deakin 2001; Warren 2001; Skocpol 2003; Amnå 2007). Departing from these and similar theories, some also argue that this is how governance on a societal level generally comes about. That is, the same organizations are also believed to function as crucial intermediaries, through which individuals supposedly can aggregate and channel their ideas and interests to a societal level (cf. Hirst 1994).

In line with this, several interviewees argued that to practice democratic influence in an organization not only has effects in the organizations, it also has consequences that transcend the immediate limits of that same organization. However, while most interviewees conceived of large-scale effects in relation to societal issues, a few of them preferred to claim effects on an individual level. Like the chairman of the Association of the Visually Impaired, who claimed that when their members practice their democratic rights and manage to influence the organizational agenda, that also implies *"the opportunity to influence and change one's own situation"* (p 1, interview).

The secretary general in the Teachers' Union also touched upon a more personal level when reflecting upon why people affiliate with his organization. He claimed that most of their members have affiliated with the organization because of *"down-to-earth and wallet-related issues"*, and that they are predominantly interested in *"influencing their personal work situation"* rather than any large-scale societal issues (p 21, interview). However, earlier in the interview he concluded, in contrast to this more individualistic focus, that the Teachers' Union always has portrayed itself as a carrier of democratic principles and that it therefore is a necessary institution for the maintenance of welfare in society. Yet, for this perspective to become true he added that it requires *"a strong belief in the individual member as a factor for influence"* (p 14, interview).

10.4.1 Democratic Schooling for a Democratic Society

In accordance with the above-mentioned Tocquevillian tradition, there were also interviewees who portrayed this type of grand scale, societal effects of exerting internal influence with literal references to their respective organizations as schools for democracy. For example, here is how the chairman of the Football Association preferred to describe his own affiliation with the football club he had belonged to since 1955.

> I started as a leader when I was 14 years old, and then I did not see the membership as I see it now. /…/ The membership is about being part of a collective, and that collective has as its

> main objective to pursue sports activities. But not only sports activities, it is also a groups of friends /…/ as an adult I should also say an organization that provides people with democratic schooling. A sports association is for many people the first opportunity to learn how to make decisions together with other people (chairman, Football Association, 1).

However, one can wonder how this democratic schooling translates into actual effects outside the organization. The chairman of the Co-operative Union seemed to have a clear view of this. According to her, it all departed from the ambition to take good care of the members. This was not only because that makes them more loyal to the organization, which was something she considered extremely important for their business activities, but also because it restores a fading interest for democracy in society. This is how she put it:

> /…/ by taking care of our members and providing them with a good education [in democracy] we are making an important contribution to society. I believe that we are in a phase where one could say that democracy [in society] is in trouble. /…/ When participation in elections is diminishing and the *folkrörelser* are not gathering people in the same way anymore, and the members who want to take on a commission of trust are also diminishing, I think it is very important that some are willing to stand up and continue to work for a democratic development. I believe that this is of importance when one goes to parliamentary elections and takes responsibility for one's country, the municipal development, or whatever it may be. I want to maintain that *folkrörelser* are very important for the development of democracy [in society] (chairman, Co-operative Union, 14).

Moreover, the ideologist in the Teachers' Union claimed that she saw the development of an internal understanding for democracy as one of the more general and long-term aims of her organization. When I asked her to expand on this, she said that it is a result of the their history, which she described as being heavily influenced by values such as solidarity and the idea of working with "[internal] *democracy for a democratic society*" (p 20, interview). Furthermore, with explicit links to their members, she continued to say that this aim is not only about teaching democracy to members, but also about how democracy in fact gets practiced internally. That is, how the organization is actually governed makes a difference regarding whether *"democratic citizens"* will be fostered or not (ibid.).

In sum, this inside-out aspect of democratic governance displayed in some interviews is interesting for above all two reasons. First, because it departs from an assumption that as soon as a member puts her/his formal democratic rights into practice and starts exercising influence in an organization h/she entails the possibility of achieving effects and changes on three separated, but interconnected levels – the personal, the organizational, and the societal level. Second, this transforms the organizational context, in which the influence is realized, into both an aggregator and mediator for individual members' ideas and interests. In other words, realizing one's formal democratic rights through a membership in an organization implies, from this perspective, that internal decision-making procedures in an organization enables and reconciles the will, ideas, and influence of its members. However, in order for this to come true, it is important that little or no dissonance exists between the idea of exercising democratic influence and its actual practice.

10.5 Concluding Remarks

Judging from the analysis above one could say that membership and the governance arrangements within the federative organizations included in this study are as thick as thieves.

Furthermore, while the overall coordination of these federative associations can be said to build and operate on a democratic self-rule, the general perception also seems to include the fundamental requirement that these organizations also should apply a somewhat contradictory principle of being simultaneously open *and* selective in relation to those who wants to join them. Put in another way, a democratic regime assumingly needs to handle both the inclusion of 'suitable' persons and the exclusion of 'unsuitable' ones (cf. Dahl 1998), and the formal affiliation of members is a prominent mechanism for accomplishing exactly that (cf. Ahrne 1990, 1994; Stryjan 1989).

Although the official position of the organizations in this study is that they should apply a general openness, most of them are also adding more or less intricate conditions for affiliation. These conditions range from more or less generic age requirements and demands for compliance with overall principles and values in some organizations, to stipulations concerning, for example, one's employment or demands for explicit confirmations that one believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is not difficult to understand why these and other conditions are maintained. Why should a political party allow anyone who does not support its values and politics to enter and be ascribed with certain internal privileges? Similarly, why should a teetotaling organization such as the IOGT-NTO include people who might favor consumption of alcohol or drugs? Doing that is potentially counter-productive since it may cause endless internal debates, and conflicts or maybe even a complete deterioration of the organization. Thus, to apply an open-door policy regarding whom to include and exclude as member in the organization might imply the start of a process where the distinctive character of the organization is altered. It could also lead to a point where the basic motives for an organization's contemporary existence are challenged, or even dissolved (cf. Stryjan 1989).

Nonetheless, it could be argued that the application of this kind of preconditions is more called for in some organizations than in others. In relation to the nine federations in this study, I, tentatively, assume that the IOGT-NTO, the Mission Covenant Church, the Social Democratic Party, the Teachers' Union, the Union of Tenants, and the Association of the Visually Impaired have more to gain from trying to control whom they include as member than have the Swedish Red Cross, the Co-operative Union or the Football Association. The reason for this is that the latter three organizations pursue objectives and are engaged in activities that are broader, less controversial, or simply need fewer conditions in order to work than the other six. For example, it is not difficult to imagine football teams where the members both want to play football and practice track and field sports, or a chain of co-operative stores offering products and services that attract customers from various social strata of society. Some organizations may be able to harbor what in others might appear as a contradictory corpus of members without necessarily compromising the basic values and principles. However, as the empirical material show, even if some organizations might have less to lose on

applying a more liberal recruitment policy than others, that does not automatically mean that there are no preconditions.

No matter how obvious it might appear at first sight, I find the topic of a conditioned openness interesting for a number of reasons. One reason is the somewhat paradoxical situation that seems to originate from the perception that these and similar civil society organizations need to be 'open', while we actually are faced with a more or less conditioned right of entry. It does not matter how much we may want to join an organization, the final decision is not always ours.

Another reason, which has also been discussed earlier, is that this accentuates the gate-keeping function of the individual membership. While both affiliated and non-affiliated members might be welcome to participate in some activities arranged by an association, it is important to be able to distinguish who is who when it comes down to making final decisions on central internal issues and matters.

In addition to this, and well in line with the argument that one aspect of the membership is that it defines an association's corpus of individual members (see chapter 5), I believe one may say that the more refined this gate-keeping function is, the more it separates one membership from another and, therefore, also one organization from another. In other words, the distinctive outline of an individual membership has implications for the character of the association offering it and vice versa of course.

According to Stryjan (1989), the survival of these organizations is largely constrained by the ability to recruit 'suitable' members. This ability to recruit selectively, he asserts, builds on a possible match between what is required by an organization and what is available within the context in which it is embedded. One possible consequence is that the particular composition and size of an organization's pool of prospective members could be less influenced and controlled than what leaders and officials might want to believe. Another consequence could be that an organization's corpus of members for most part is viewed as an intended or unintended product of the context, rather than as a result of isolated organizational activities and campaigns.

10.5.1 Direct or Representative Democracy

I will now return to the main theme of this chapter – the formal rights of individual members', and their possibilities to influence the organizations they belong to. The empirical material presented above shows that this power, almost exclusively, departs from governance regimes relying on representative democracy. However, it is certainly not given by nature that these and other similar federations must be coordinated through a representative democracy, or any other form of democracy for that matter. Even if it falls outside the frame of this thesis to try to disentangle this question, it is necessary to at least elaborate a little bit upon it, mainly because I believe the answer contributes to an important understanding for how the membership is probably perceived more generally within these organizational contexts.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned path dependency (cf. Stinchcombe 1968) and isomorphic processes (Dimaggio and Powell 1983) as two probable answers as to why representative democratic principles and procedures so unanimously have been and

still are employed within these organizations. Yet, they do not explain why some structures and procedures, and not others, were chosen at particular instances in time.

Without digging too deep into the pros and cons of different democratic systems, I confine myself to say that the choice of democratic form is closely related to the organizational context. Dahl (1998:110f) identifies this in terms of a fundamental quandary that can be developed as follows: a smaller democratic unit with fewer members implies both an opportunity for members to participate more directly, at the same time as there is less need for delegating decisional power to representatives. However, the larger the unit becomes and the more formal members it affiliates, an increased capacity to deal more efficiently with problems relevant to its cadre of members is indicated, but also an enhanced need for the affiliated members to abstain authority to representatives. In short, while direct democracy work better in smaller units, representative democracy suits large-scale endeavors better (cf. Webb and Webb 1897/1920).

If we by size mean both the territorial span of an organization and its number of members, the above-presented predicament leads me to conclude that because most of the organizations in this study grew fast and became large in size early on (see chapter 7), it is possible that direct democracy never really stood out as an attractive alternative. If the increased size of these organizations was then coupled with internal processes of rationalization and ambitions of maximizing effectiveness (measured as time consumption and resource spending) – which is what frequently seems to happen when democratic settings grow (Dahl 1998) – representative democracy was probably seen as a better, if not the only viable alternative. From this it might be proposed that organizational size combined with demands of effectiveness and processes of rationalization could explain why some of the organizations in this study adopted regimes based on representative democracy early on.

If individual members are supposed to govern the organizations in accordance with representative democratic ideals and procedures, one can wonder what this means more concretely in real-life situations? The interviewees described regimes that linked single members together with all parts and levels of the organization that they belong to. Although a few alternative solutions exist, the first link in this 'representative chain', as some explicitly called it, typically connects the individual member with a local unit, which makes the influence here direct *per se.*

This means that members can expect to make a difference personally by authoring motions and participating in internal discussions and decision-making procedures concerning everything from strategic issues and the overall organizational agenda to more day-to-day kinds of matters related to a particular local context. Elsewhere along this representative chain, the influence is indirect, which means that elected representatives speaks for the individual members, often as a group. Consequently, members' influence also includes nominating and electing other members as representatives. By either removing or re-electing them, members are also given the power to hold these representatives accountable for what they do and say. In addition, as individual member one is usually also entitled to be nominated and elected representative oneself, which obviously may grant access to new and exclusive decision-making arenas.

Due to the nature of the present empirical material, I am unable put forth any definite claims that individual members' seemingly undisputable right and opportunity to

exert influence falls short in real life. My intention is neither to disavow the employed governance practices, nor the people that enact them or the organizations harboring them. Yet, it is difficult to deny the fact that the interviewees that discussed the reality of this kind of governance arrangement perceived it as cosmetic make-up or a chimera, because it was conceived as working better on paper than in reality. However, this does not mean that these statements mirror each and everyone's experience of the governance practices within these federations.

Still, the type of critique put forth in the interviews regarding this does not come as a total surprise. There is a rich scholarly tradition in which researchers, for well over a century now, have studied and discussed the topic of democratic governance in relation the kind of organizations that are included in this study (cf. Webb and Webb 1897/1920; Ostrogorski 1902/1982; Selznick 1949; Duverger 1951/1963; Cassinelli 1953; Lipset *et al.* 1956; Zald and Ash 1966; Panebianco 1988; Baccaro 2001; Skocpol 2003; Jonsson 2006).

Building on how some interviewees' discussed the issue of individual membership and democracy (see e.g. p 178 above), it is tempting to briefly consider one of the classics within this stream of research, namely Michels (1911/1959) and his idea of an iron law of oligarchy. He claims, although in a rather deterministic fashion (for a similar critique, see e.g. Lipset *et. al* 1956), that whenever there is organization, there is also oligarchy, or even monoarchy. This would mean that while the formal governance arrangements within the federative organizations in this study are enacted in real life situations, these organizations would also gradually transform from being a medium for their members, towards becoming exclusive tools for a handful of their officials and executive leaders.

10.5.2 Democracy as an Ideal

Along these lines, Dahl (1998: 42) raises the question whether associations can ever be fully democratic: *"In the real world, is it likely that every member of an association will truly have equal opportunities to participate, to gain an informed understanding of the issues, and to influence the agenda?"* His own answer to this rhetorical question is simply *"probably not."* The reason, he says, is that representative democracy, or any type of democracy for that matter, first and foremost should be treated as an ideal to strive for rather than a practice without defects. If democratic values and principles then are treated as an ideal, he continues, it is as useful as any other standards against which we could measure performances. In this way, democracy may also serve as a guide for how to shape and reshape concrete associational structures, constitutions and practices to become even more democratic.

I prefer to adopt a somewhat less categorical and deterministic perspective than Dahl (1998) or Michel (1911/1959). It is an exaggeration to assert that members' either can or cannot accomplish influence through democracy within these larger federative structures. It is simply not a matter of either or. Instead, I believe it varies from context to context, from issue to issue and from situation to situation. As this variation might stem from procedural know-how among participants, systemic inertia, or complex

structures, it can also be enabled or constrained by built-in tensions between local interests and goals versus more centralized dittos in the kind of complex federative organizations that are included in this study.

Moreover, members' democratic influence in real life situations is probably also largely dependent upon taken-for-granted norms and behaviour directly related to more formal organizational structures and the positions people occupy therein. I think the anecdote from the Co-operative Union about the final decision at a top-executive level in the national organization to, against the will of the members, close down a local store due to poor return rates (p 180 above) well captures the point I want to make here. If something else than profit driven values and norms had ruled this situation, it is possible that the final decision would have stayed with the individual members at the local level, and that the outcome thereby could have been quite different.

I also interpret these and other related accounts of failing internal governance arrangements as concrete illustrations of some of the more fundamental problems that the earlier presented hybrid organization might entail in real life (see chapter 4). From the idea of a large and complex organizational body that comprises two separate, but still mutually dependent and interconnected structures (see figure 1, chapter 4), I argue that accounts such as the ones from the Co-operative Union mentioned above quite well depict how a federation that is perceived as democratically governed in reality may contain both polyarchic and oligarchic, or even monoarchic, practices simultaneously. This means that the power that ought to reside with the members can be shifted back and forth between the part of the organization where local autonomy and democratic principles and procedures are promoted (the upper part of figure 1), and another part that generally functions as a classic top-down bureaucracy (the lower part of figure 1).

11. Reconsidering Individual Membership

In this chapter, I return to the purpose of this study in order to conclude the analysis and to elaborate further upon the conceptual model of individual membership before closing the chapter with a broadened discussion on oligarchic tendencies, increased bureaucratization, and a drift towards commercialization in the federations included in this study.

My aim is not to find the essence or 'real' meaning of individual membership, because I do not believe such a meaning exists. As most other humanly derived concepts and phenomena, individual membership could be given many different but equally 'true' meanings. In this sense, it ought to be regarded as an intended or unintended result of our ideas, beliefs or actions.

However, that is not to say that this specific relation between individuals and organizations could be or mean just anything. Within a certain context, I believe it could only be perceived in a limited number of ways before becoming something else. Whatever we make of it, it is largely enabled or impeded by cultural and structural conditions and features in our surrounding (see chapter 2). Moreover, since contextual constraints and possibilities have a tendency to resist change, the character of individual membership may appear rather stable, even if its meaning in fact varies if considered over longer periods of time or between disparate milieus (Duverger 1951/1963; Hvenmark 2003; Skocpol 2003).

Guided by these insights, I have in this study set my mind on investigating the meaning of individual membership as it is perceived by a particular group of people belonging to a specific organizational context. The empirical material derives from interviews with top-level leaders and/or executives in nine well-known Swedish civil society organizations. These nine organizations can also be described as large membership-based and democratically governed federations, or simply as *folkrörelse* organizations, which would be a typical Swedish way of labeling them (chapter 3). 21 of the 24 interviewees were also formal members of these organizations.[14] The main motive for interviewing these leaders and officials is that their account and interpretation of things can be assumed to carry more weight and status than many others (chapter 6). The analysis also includes official texts, such as by-laws, annual reports and jubilee books from these organizations.

With respect to the above-stated, I have not primarily investigated the meaning of individual membership in relation to any particular events or processes, nor tried to capture any eventual changes over time. Instead, I have, as fair-mindedly as possible,

[14] While two interviewees from the Teachers' Union stated that they were not allowed to affiliate due to the constitution of their organizaiton, there was one interviewee from the Association of the Visually Imparied who claimed he had not joined because of a perfect eye sight.

primarily analyzed how it is perceived in this group of people representing these particular organizations. This effort has been guided by the following research questions: How is individual membership perceived? What are the linkages between these perceptions and the societal context? How do these perceptions relate to the organizational structures and practices?

A theoretical framework that rests above all on two pillars guides the analysis of the present empirical material. One of these pillars departs from ideas of federative organizations (chapter 4) and the other is concerned with the individual membership within these and similar types of organizations (chapter 5). The theoretical framework receives further contextualization and depth through linkages with the much-cherished idea of *folkrörelse*, which for a century now seems to have dominated a common understanding of Sweden's civil society in general and its organizations in particular (chapter 3).

11.1 A Concluding Assessment of the Empirical Material

In my view, the empirical material in this study illustrates how rich in content and wide in scope the meaning of individual membership is. The empirical material and analysis presented in chapters 7 to 10 suggest an arrangement that includes the following separate, but still tightly interrelated themes – a set of central values, assumptions and principles; a channel for resources and a resource in itself; a gate-keeping function and a basis for specific member roles and functions. These themes will be further described below.

11.1.1 Central Values, Assumptions and Principles

Most interviewees associated individual membership with what can be most closely described as a set of basic values, assumptions and principles, which involved such things as a formalized belonging to a community; the formalization of personal beliefs and commitment; a sense of solidarity with fellow members; and the democratic right to govern the organization to which one belongs (see further chapter 8 and 10).

In close relation to these assumptions and principles, there were those who also stated that their organizations would simply cease to exist if it was not for the existence of individual members. Or, that without such, they would just be like any other for-profit or public organization (p 120 above). My interpretation is that the interviewees perceived individual membership as an organizational raison d'être and an elemental building block that provides these federative organizations with a unique and distinctive character compared to other types of organizations.

11.1.2 Channeling Resources and a Resource in Itself

The affiliation of individual members was broadly associated with a resource perspective. This means that the membership typically was understood as an important

resource in itself and/or as a highly regarded medium through which both tangible and intangible resources could be accessed and channeled back and forth between an organization and its environment. The issue of the membership fee is a clear example of membership as a channel for resources. In some organizations in this study it is considered an absolute necessity for their survival, while it was not as important in others (p 136 above). Another example is the voluntary work carried out by individual members that seems to be much needed in all nine organizations (p 140 above).

This resource perspective was also accompanied by a frequently repeated assumption that it is crucial for an organization to affiliate 'many' members (p 129 above). However, there seems to be no specific number that determines what makes the 'many' many. It does not seem to matter whether one organization has 20.000 members, another 500.000 and a third 1.000.000 – all of them may very well be considered to affiliate 'many'. Thus, this well-spread focus on amount is apparently less about exact numbers, and more about some kind of general justification that an organization simply must have many members.

This was also observable in relation to the perception that individual membership may constitute a resource in itself. Several interviewees mentioned that an important indication of how an organization is doing can be derived from the amount of members it affiliates (p 132 above). This implies that as long as an organization is considered to affiliate many individual members it is also considered to be successful. This also appears to give the organization certain status within its particular context. In addition, the affiliation of many was linked to the creation of a two-sided legitimacy (p 133 above). On one hand, it legitimates the mere existence of the affiliating organization, and on the other its leaders and officials, whose mandated space within which to act is assumed to increase the more individual members there are. However, if an organization, for some reason, would lose members are instead construed in terms of organizational decline and failure with lost legitimacy as a direct consequence.

11.1.3 Roles and a Gate-keeping Function

Judging from how individual membership comes out in the empirical material, one can also say that it seems to be perceived as containing a mechanism for categorizing and typecasting individual members for specific roles and functions in their organizations (chapter 9). This seems to be rooted in an ascribed inclusion/exclusion aspect, or a gate-keeping function that determines who is allowed to affiliate as member and who is not (p 167 above). This gives rise to an obvious either/or situation in which one is considered either as a full member or as an unaffiliated non-member. There is simply nothing in between these two binary and mutually exclusive positions.

Moreover, this ascribed gate-keeping function does not only help to establish and support parts of an organization's perimeters by a constant recognition of who does and who does not belong to its member cadre, it also matters for issues such as access to the internal life of the organization in question (chapter 10). For example, when central and critical decisions are called for it is generally asserted that it is necessary to keep track of who is entitled to raise his/her voice and cast a vote and who is not. It

was also claimed to be important to determine who belongs and who does not in relation to situations where an organization may offer or produce something exclusively for its cadre of members.

Moreover, one of the more commonly applied classifications once someone has been accepted as member seems to be the black-and-white division of active and passive members (p 151 above). In relation to this, several interviewees expressed a strong wish and need for more activity among their members, which might be a direct consequence of the fact that the vast majority of the rank and file members within the organizations in this study tend to be casted for roles deemed as passive. One can also say that there was an apparent and strong desire for attracting members who not only are prepared to take on more responsibility for the organizations they belong to, but who also *do* more than pay the required fee and wait for the official magazine or newsletter to arrive, which generally equals to a passive behaviour.

With this initial and broader positioning of members as being either active or passive as a point of departure, many interviewees also developed a set of additional and specific member roles. One such role was the supporter, which was described as a genuinely passive role because it did not include much more than the affiliated individual's mental commitment to the organization he/she belonged to (p 155 above).

Another role that I would place somewhere in the middle in the active/passive divide was the customer (p 160 above), a role particularly emphasized by interviewees from the Swedish Football Association and the Swedish Co-operative Union. The customer role was construed from the preference that people are members out of primarily self-centered and utilitarian motives, which might be enforced by more or less extensive offers of tangible and/or intangible advantages or fringe benefits that an organization may offer exclusively to its cadre of members. Affiliating for these reasons can be seen as the opposite of what could be considered a sense of belonging to a community, solidarity and democracy. The existence of this and other similar extremes in the empirical material does, in my opinion, quite well capture the elasticity of a phenomenon such as the individual membership.

Principals, Owners and a Perceived Democratic Deficit

A third example of a more specific member role, emphasized by various interviewees, was being identified as the person from whom the entire formal governance regime of the federation departs. Although a person in this position could, from my point of view, be described as being the principal of the organization, some interviewees explicitly preferred to call it being its owner (p 156 above). Disregarding the label, it seems to require a good portion of commitment and involvement to actually achieve something through this role in these democratically governed federative organizations. This probably forms the main reason behind the frequent concern for what many interviewees perceived as a widespread passivity among their members. This supposed disinterest and unwillingness to participate was articulated not only as undermining the internal democratic regime, but also as an overall threat to the survival of these organizations (p 126 above).

This worry is even more interesting when paralleled with the frequently referred to questioning among several interviewees of the individual members' actual chances to enact the role of principal/owner in the organizations they belong to. While this particular role was said to ideally involve the highest formal authority possible in these organizations, it was, at the same time, asserted that it involved a surrendering of large parts of this power to representatives and experts (cf. chapter 10). Below I will return to and problematize this in terms of democratic regimes as chimeras or paper tigers.

11.1.4 Homogeneity and Variation in the Empirical Material

I would like to point out that even if no interviewee came close to discussing all the topics that I have accounted for above when conveying their perceptions on the individual membership, they all combined at least a bit of everything. One can also say that the general perception of membership among the interviewees on one hand is rather uniform. On the other hand, though, this homogeneous pattern does not come without a few interesting variations.

For example, the mission director and the ideologist from the Mission Covenant Church put forth one of the more interesting examples in this respect. They were the ones who explicitly spoke of individual membership in terms of a historical remain, which in their organization had been targeted for change many times but endured equally as many. Although they did not like to use the notion of membership, since they thought it implied being more of an association than a church, they could not avoid concluding that it would be very difficult to continue without it, at least given the current structure and contextual situation of the Mission Covenant Church (p 123 above).

I have not found any significant support for divergent perspectives between the three different categories of interviewees. Nor have I found any really notable differences between interviewees representing the same organization. This means that the diverse themes and perspectives discussed differ more from one organizational context to another, rather than between the interviewees and their different positions.

An example of this is whom the interviewees chose to construct as member of the organization they represented. While interviewees from six of the included organizations seemed prone to view individuals as the primary member of their respective organization, I found the argumentation among interviewees from the Co-operative Union, the Mission Covenant Church and the Football Association much more vague in this respect. With a point of departure in their organization's regulations, they tended to establish what first appeared to be a clear boundary line between the national level on the one hand, and the regional and local level on the other. And, since the formal affiliation of individuals generally linked the person to the local level, he/she fell outside the concern of these interviewees. However, none of them seemed capable of ignoring the fact that their organizations also formally comprised large cadres of *individual* members, since all of them, without me necessarily prompting it, kept discussing and relating to the individual members in their organization. Consequently, who they preferred to construe as a member appeared not to be so much a

question of formal boundary lines, structural positions or jurisdiction as an issue related to specific situations or topics. For example, just consider how one of the interviewees from the Co-operative Union asserted that only local associations are able to affiliate with this federation, at the same time as it was stated that the individual members are the 'real members' (p 126 above) of the organization.

My interpretation of this somewhat ambiguous attitude towards rank and file members amounts to what I call a push-and-pull strategy (p 129 above). This means that members, depending on the current situation and topic, are either assigned less importance by being pushed towards an organization's outer limits, or given more status and significance by being included and pulled inwards towards a perceived center where, I assume, the interviewees also picture themselves.

11.2 From Theory to Reality and Back Again

The attentive reader has probably already noticed the many existing linkages between theory and the empirical material in this study. The similarity between the analyzed official texts and interview accounts and the language used by some of the scholars included in my theoretical framework has surprised me more than once. Still, it would have been rather strange if this correspondence did *not* exist, since theoretical accounts generally are driven by empirical observations. However, what might not always be equally apparent is what propels and enables theoretical interpretations of empirical observations.

11.2.1 Structure, Culture and Agency

Departing from my theoretical framework, as it was presented through chapters 2 to 5, one can say that I view the continued existence and meaning of individual membership as departing from an idea of a process involving one of the perennial problems in social science – the continuous interplay between acting agents, structure and culture. This means that no matter how individual membership is perceived, it can never be anything but a result of our own ideas, beliefs and activities, which, in their turn, are either constrained or enabled by a variety of structural features and cultural conditions (for more on this see chapter 2). This is also the point of departure my approach to and analysis of the present empirical material.

For me, cultural conditions involve those specific values, norms, principles and assumptions that facilitate both the universal and more specific opinions and observations that enable us to distinguish, for example, the Red Cross from the Union of Tenants'. Similarly, I define structural features as the specific roles, functions and hierarchies that differentiate some organizations, such as the federations included in this study, from others. These structural and cultural elements and aspects may, from time to time, appear to stand in stark opposition to each other in the everyday life of an organization. It is, however, more likely that they act and blend together to such an extent that it for most part will be difficult to tell them apart or to say which have given

rise to the other. Thus, their empirical interrelation is a little like the hen and the egg metaphor (Archer 1988).

The anecdotal account from the Mission Covenant Church's first time in Sweden (see chapter 7 and 8) is a good example of this. According to the interviewees, this meant that the only way to establish this religious community and gain to legitimacy and recognition in Sweden during the later half of the 19th century was to formally become a nation-wide association with a federative structure. This federative structure affiliated and registered its followers and churchgoers as equal individual members, who were supposed to govern their organization in accordance to democratic principles and procedures. The main reason behind this was apparently that Swedish society, already in the later part of the 19th century, had become strongly influenced, not to say dominated, by ideas, norms and customs that clearly made it opportune to adopt what these interviewees called a "*folkrörelse* pattern".

My understanding of this is that the interviewees describe a process in which the genesis of their organization was both heavily constrained and facilitated by dominant cultural and structural aspects and elements, which from the very beginning got continuously fed into each other so that it soon became almost impossible to disentangle what had caused what. This structural and cultural blend had then become institutionalized. Moreover, these two interviewees also claimed that what happened in the organization initially not only mattered during its early history, but had also continued to matter all the way up to our time. I am here primarily thinking of the internal structures and procedures as well as the cultural norms and assumptions that these interviewees claimed still dictated large parts of the internal life of their organization. They even stated that this explained why so many of their contemporary followers either did not want to, or had problems thinking of their organization as being primarily a church and not an association. In relation to this, they also discussed the individual membership in a way that resembles it with an anachronistic heritage that continues to influence how people think of and act in their organization (p 123 above). As an example of this, they claimed that this century old legacy was the main reason for why a recent effort to change the individual membership had failed.

In real life situations, such as the ones these interviewees referred to, it is often tricky to discern what is culture and what is structure, or where one of them starts and the other ends. This can easily create a blurred image, in which it appears almost impossible to tell the two apart. Yet, it is not only possible, but for analytical purposes even desirable to keep them separated (see chapter 2; and Archer 1988, 1995, 2000), which brings us back to the conceptual model of membership I have applied in the analysis.

11.2.2 Revisiting Stryjan's Model

My interpretation of the empirical material in this study is in many ways connected to Stryjan's model of membership as it was presented in chapter 5 (see figure 2 below). The primary advantage of that model in relation to this study is that the three aspects of membership it includes – the bearers of membership, a shared frame of reference,

and a commonly shared repertoire of action – I believe form a comprehensive conceptual unity and a well-defined frame for some of the more salient empirical aspects of the individual membership.

Individual action (re)shaping membership	**Membership**	Structural features shaping membership
Joining/exit	**Bearer(s)**	Recruitment
Discourse	**Frame of reference**	'Organizational culture'
Precedents, personal example	**Repertoire of action**	Rules, procedures

Figure 2. Individual and structural antecedents of membership (Stryjan 1989:65).

Studies that take their point of departure in this conceptual framework alone would, nevertheless, probably fall short if they were not simultaneously assisted by more systematic understandings of the particular context in question. In Stryjan's case, this involves an empirical focus on Israelian Kibbutzim and other types of co-operative endeavors (cf. Stryjan 1985, 1989, 1990, 1994). In the present study, this means integrated discussions on federations and the typical Swedish *folkrörelse* discourse (chapter 3 and 4). As I see it, another advantage of this conceptual model is that it opens up for further problematizations regarding what helps (re)producing certain meanings of membership and not others. In the following, I will revisit Stryjan's model for membership that was presented in chapter 5. This means that I below will discuss my own empirical observations in relation to topics such as organizational culture as a shared frame of reference, bearers and boundaries, a repertoire of action and member roles. The chapter is then concluded through a reconsidered conceptual framework for how to understand individual membership.

Culture as a Shared Frame of Reference

It may be argued that both individual members and others in an organization could be referring to a similar set of accepted values, principles and basic assumptions, that is, a common culture or a shared frame of reference (p 57 above), as a way to make sense of the organizational context they belong to. With this in mind, I would like to state that it is no coincidence that many interviewees in this study tended to associate individual membership with things like solidarity, a sense of belonging and democracy at the same time as they applied the idea of *folkrörelse* (chapter 3) as a way of classifying what they wanted their respective organization to be.

Emanating from the idea of *folkrörelse*, the values, norms and assumptions that keep reappearing throughout the present empirical material, could hereby be interpreted as an important part of a larger collective belief system within the studied organizations, against which commonly shared ideals, norms, practices and phenomena may be pro-

jected, tested and ultimately legitimized or rejected. This larger collective belief system, or organizational culture as it also could be called, constitutes a backdrop for the development of a more coherent and shared frame of reference. Furthermore, this frame of reference is then also what influences and cultivates people's perceptions of all kinds of notions, situations and phenomena, individual membership included.

It should be noted, though, that even if I believe that it might be possible to identify a specific and dominant culture within an organization, it is also necessary to accept the fact that every organization includes parallel sets of values, norms and behaviours. Yet, these sub-cultures are often neglected or maybe even counteracted by the majority.

Bearers and Boundaries

Another aspect of membership concerns the persons directly connected to it (p 56 above). This aspect involves two flows – those who join and those who leave – and the ones left in between comprise the present cadre of members that is associated with the individual membership an organization offers.

In close relation to the arrival of individual members lays also the issue of whom and on what grounds someone is being either accepted or rejected as affiliated member with an organization. Because, no matter how much we want to join, the final decision in this respect is not always ours. Instead, what ultimately determines an eventual acceptance could largely be translated into an organization's recruitment policy.

I have earlier discussed this in terms of a gate-keeping function, which constitutes a sort of institutional threshold or sluice gate that regulates who does and who does not get to belong to an organization (cf. Ahrne 1990, 1994). My interpretation of how this in-/exclusion mechanism is construed within the organizations in this study is that it appears to be a construct rooted in more general cultural conditions as well as in more organizational specific dittos. This is also why different organizations apply different conditions for whom to include and on what grounds.

Nevertheless, it is generally asserted in the empirical material that the organizations in this study are open to each and everyone who would like to join them. This claim, I believe, stems partly from the seemingly omnipresent *folkrörelse* discourse, which typically includes this idea of a general openness (see chapter 3). Still, because of this gate-keeping function, the openness is in fact better described as a conditioned openness (p 169 above). This implies that everyone who wants to become a member has to accept and be accepted in accordance with a set of official requests. For example, an obligatory payment of a membership fee, a minimal age and maybe also a general acceptance of what the organization in question stand for and does.

In some cases, though, this comes accompanied by harsher and much more specific demands, which I understand as being more directly related to the basic ideas and character of the organization in question. For example, wannabe members to the IOGT-NTO have to make an official temperance pledge before acceptance. While the members in the Mission Covenant Church are supposed to explicitly acknowledge their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to be accepted, their counterparts in the Teachers' Union are obliged to pursue a professional career as teachers or headmasters

in order to obtain or retain an affiliation with that organization. And, those who want to affiliate with the Association of the Visually Impaired are only allowed to enter as long as they match certain criteria regarding their physical vision (p 171 above).

From an overall perspective, I would like to assert that no matter how this gate-keeping function is designed, it is commonly regarded an important aspect of individual membership among the interviewees. That is, even if a selective replenishment of an organization's corpus of members may be deemed archaic, awkward or even controversial, it could just as well be viewed as a fundamental mechanism aimed at preserving what might be called an organization's overall identity and culture. It could even be considered crucial for an organization's survival over time (p 170 above).

The practice to sift the wheat from the chaff and create the mutually exclusive categories of members and non-members is also tightly connected to the issue of creating boundaries and mobilizing resources. An organization's boundaries can be said to pass not only between those who does and those who does not belong, but also to run *through* the members it affiliates (p 56 above). This creates an image where individual members assumingly balance on a rim with one foot inside the organization that affiliates them and the other planted in its immediate surroundings. Membership is hereby not only a creator of borders, but also an important two-way link between an organization and its environment, with the members somewhere in between. From an organizational perspective, this means that a well-defined cadre of members also constitutes a resource pool through which members' 'extra-organizational' means – such as private capital, social networks, knowledge, information, 'proper' attitudes, time and voluntary efforts – could be both accessed and tapped (p 136 above).

A Repertoire of Action and Member Roles

A bridge from the previous to the present section is provided through the fact that official efforts to regulate a cadre of members not only impact the overall character of the affiliating organization and its potential supply of resources, it is also closely related to the issue of what individual members are for and what they supposedly can/cannot do in their organizations.

Thus, I would like to argue that even if the gate-keeping aspect of membership largely seems dependent upon both global and more local cultural conditions – such as organizational specific policies, norms and practices – its effects are in a sense both cultural and structural. By structural implications I am here thinking especially of the different member roles that emerge in the present empirical material (chapter 9), and that seem to locate members in certain positions within the structural matrix of the federative organization they belong to. A frequent point of departure among the interviewees regarding these roles was the rough categorization of members as being either active or passive (p 151 above). From this black-and-white divide evolved accounts that located individual members in different but more or less fixed positions and functions, such as owner/principal and beneficiary/customer (see p 156, 160 above).

This is where I would like to bring in the third aspect of individual membership – an established *repertoire of action* (p 61 above) – which implies a theoretical problemati-

zation of the concrete actions members officially may resort to in order to participate and contribute to the organization they belong to. Another way of putting this is to say that actions involving members could be approached and further problematized from the positions and functions they imply.

From the earlier developed discussions in chapter 5, it suffices to say here that this third aspect of membership includes four basic modes of member activity and behaviour: *loyalty*, *involvement*, *voice/protest* and *exit*. Since the interviewees did not say much about why or what happens when individual members walk out on their organizations, the fourth mode – exit – is basically left outside the following discussion.

Compared to the idea of an established repertoire of action, member roles such as supporter or customer could very well be understood as *modes of loyalty*, especially if the members are seen as fulfilling their roles and functions in a satisfactory way (p 62 above).

Yet, a loyal and supportive behaviour among rank and file members is not necessarily negative for or irrelevant to an organization. On the contrary, as long as someone retains his/her affiliation as member with an organization it could be supposed to indicate a preserved support and legitimacy for what the organization does and stands for. It could also mean a continued financial assistance through membership fees and other types of monetary contributions. Additionally, since a loyal and supportive behaviour among members *per se* probably does not involve much complaint, criticism or protest, it could also be regarded as vital for an overall maintenance of the established rules, procedures and structures that formally comprise an organization (ibid.).

Furthermore, member positions and functions such as supporters, prime beneficiaries or customers may also contribute to setting the stage on which other roles could be enacted. Generally, these would be perceived as including more participation and aimed at attaining rather than inhibiting change.

Just as some interviewees' suggested, to only affiliate supporters will probably not get organizations like the ones included in this study very far. Most likely, this is also the explanation behind the common perception in the interviews that the organizations in this study seemingly are in a constant need of new members who are prepared to do more and to become more deeply involved in the activities of their organizations (p 153 above).

There are of course member positions that may imply a possibility to take on more responsibility, exert more influence, and become more involved in an organization. One way to do this is to conduct more ordinary and preset voluntary tasks. Another way, which was also mentioned in the interviews, matches the role of owner/principal. To be part of an organization's formal and overall governance structure may imply, at least ideally, greater opportunities to intensify one's personal commitment to, and more concrete involvement in, the internal life of that particular organization.

Modes of involvement could be described as differing from those of loyalty in the same way as innovation differs from non-innovation. That is, while loyalty stem from a basic assumption of permanence together with active or passive preservations of things related to the organization a member belongs to – involvement implies more engagement, critique and a type of intrapreneurship in the sense that a member takes initiatives to pursue goals and to participate in activities in order to improve or comp-

letely change his/her organization or its situation (see p 63). Another difference is that modes of involvement refers to activities and behaviours where *"/…/ the involved member does not invariably strive to maintain an organization just in order to have it supply his needs /…/ [h]e may as well be exerting himself on behalf of his organization, because he finds the exertion itself, for what he considers a worthy case, intrinsically rewarding"* (Stryjan 1989:76, emphasis in original).

Consequently, to step forward and become more involved as a member seems to involve a rather paradoxical combination of both altruistic and egoistic motives. Yet, that does not mean that modes of involvement necessarily equal to a naive and uncritical enthusiasm, because to be involved also seems to entail being prepared to go beyond one's *"/…/ formally defined positions and functions"* (ibid:77).

The latter indicates the close relationship between modes of involvement and those of *voice/protest*. However, I find the line between the two in Stryjan's accounts to be rather vague. The major difference accounted for is that involvement includes more organization-specific standards, while voice/protest departs from both more universal norms, values and ideal models for how one's organization ought to be (p 64 above). This would mean that while modes of involvement include positions mostly known and internally accepted in an organization, modes of voice/protest are instead influenced and energized by norms and ideals that might be alien to what frequently is taken for granted within the organization in question. Still, both modes are important. Involvement because it can induce new solutions to problems as well as add new options to an already established repertoire of action, and voice/protest because it may lead to a more thorough reconsideration of available actions, directions and premises (p 63-64 above).

Coming back to the role of owner/principal, I would argue that it presumably entails a little of everything from the aspect of a repertoire of action. However, given the way it was approached in most interviews, it is possible to say that there is more involvement than loyalty attached to this role. I am also inclined to say that it seems to be more about involvement than voice/protest, despite the fact that the latter most definitely can be part of the specific role and function of owner/principal. This is so, since allowing more space to protests and criticism may facilitate internal reconsiderations, reorientations and sometimes maybe even necessary improvements (p 64 above).

This might be especially true within constitutional arrangements that ideally rest on democratic values, principles and procedures and where promoted key words involve inclusion, integration and participation on equal grounds on behalf of every affiliated individual member. Yet, to go against a collective consensus or strong internal phalanx is not always an easy task. A protestor's stance, even in a democratically governed organization, could prove risky and may frequently also be self-defeating (ibid.).

In addition, I think the member roles discussed above could also be understood as different phases of belonging to an organization. Our commitment to an organization and its activities cannot be assumed to always remain on the same level. Instead, its intensity may vary over time. For example, our inclination to enact modes of involvement may fade out towards more loyalty-like behaviour or grow into a strong sense of giving voice to explicit protests. This means that members, at times, either may be treated as or start behaving as ordinary 'passive' supporters rather than highly engaged

and committed principals that 'actively' take responsibility for the organization they belong to. The point here is that a certain enactment of different member roles simply should be expected and that it, assumingly, could be a direct result of either someone's personal situation or alterations related to the organizational context in question.

What is more, passing from one mode to another could also be a one-way story. For example, it is probably easier for deeply involved members to raise their voices in protest and attempt change if deemed necessary than what it might be to later on return to modes of involvement. To start enacting member roles that implies protest could simply be a signal of a point of no return. The reason for this should presumably be that if the majority does not adopt the protest and the protestors do not recant, they would seldom be given the chance to return to a more involvement-like behaviour. One can also assume that if those who protest feel they are not listened to, there are simply fewer motives for trying to go back. This largely leaves them with two options – to be loyal in a 'passive' way or to exit (ibid.).

Finally, even if a repertoire of action in principle can include a wide range of member roles, it is not always up to every member to decide whether or not one should become more or less involved. It might just as well be an issue of to what extent one is allowed to become involved. This became apparent when the interviewees discussed the possibilities for individual members to actually govern and influence their organization (p 178 above). My interpretation of their answers in this respect is that whether or not a member is permitted to get involved in his/her organization largely is either enabled or constrained by the complex interplay of ideological and cultural premise, elements directly related to organizational structures, and leaders' and officials' interpretation of the situation. The result of this interplay may very well be that protest is banned and that leaders are assigned a disproportional amount of power (cf. Stryjan 1994). An illuminating example of the latter was the description of how the final decision to shut down one of the Co-operative Union's local stores outside Stockholm was transferred from the implicated members to the CEO at the national level (p 180 above).

Before returning to the issue of democratic governance and individual membership towards the end of this chapter, I would like to introduce an elaboration on the conceptual framework regarding membership developed by Stryjan (chapter 5).

11.2.3 Clarifying the Interrelation Between Structure and Culture

As stated earlier, a common conclusion among the interviewees is that the organizations found in this study would be something else if it were not for the way they affiliate and integrate their individual members. The same could be said about the individual membership itself, which would most certainly be something else if it were not for these organizations and their respective context. That is, even if the meaning of an affiliation of members could be perceived in great many ways, the amount of options is limited. I also think that the empirical material in this study indicates that the relation between individuals and their organizations becomes something else beyond these supposed limits. At the same time, though, I would also claim that the

meaning of membership is everything but predetermined. It seems to be a matter of what people make of it in relation to a given context.

Accordingly, one could say that the membership and the organization condition each other. But, since their respective existence and meaning depends on people's constant interpretation and reinterpretation of them it would be a mistake to consider either of them as encoded or fixed over time and across contexts. This could also be concluded in an even more theoretical statement: whatever the individual membership is claimed to entail is potentially constrained or enabled through people's constant interaction with structural and cultural elements and conditions peculiar to a context. This is not only an underlying recurrent theme throughout the present empirical material, it is also the base for my theoretical frame of reference as it was presented in chapters 2 to 5.

Following on an insight that surfaced towards the end of my work with this study, there is one aspect of Stryjan's conceptualization of membership that calls for further discussion and elaboration. The issue involves whether or not culture, structure, and agency analytically are treated as separate entities in his model.

In many of the discussions related to his conceptual framework, Stryjan writes things like: *"/…/ an organizational culture is a common denominator shaping members' outlook"* (1994:65), or: *"/…/ different organizational structures would give rise to differing paths of organizational change /…/. The constraints that an organizational structure imposes may be transcended, modified, or replaced by agent-members acting to change their organization"* (1989:151). In parallel, he is constantly also discussing things like ideals, basic assumptions, norms, policies, rules, procedures, positions, functions and hierarchies, but without much clarity as to how he sees this as being *either* culturally *or* structurally related. Thus, in one way I get the impression that he clearly sees structure, culture, and agency as separate entities. At the same time, though, I am not sure about how he sees this given that it tends to be left without concrete definitions. The following is an attempt to clarify this.

One could say that the logic in Stryjan's model departs from the idea that it is individuals' actions and structural features that shape individual membership and its three aspects. My main interest here concerns the interrelation between what he calls structural features and the three aspects of membership (see the right and the center column in figure 2, p 199 above).

The right column includes and summons recruitment, organizational culture, rules and procedures as the structural features that shape individual membership. I do not doubt that what is included here enable or constrain any eventual 'shapes' of a membership. What I do oppose, though, is that what is encompassed rather is a mix of what I would define as both cultural conditions *and* structural features (chapter 2). I am even tempted to claim that what Stryjan construes as structural features in fact is more about culture than structure. Be that as it may, this apparent mix induces, from my perspective, a certain amount of ambiguity as to what it is that actually influence the three specific aspects of individual membership, and how that is done.

In an attempt to understand this further it might be suggested that this is a result of Stryjan's point of departure in Giddens' structuration theory (1984). If this assumption is correct it could mean that Stryjan has imported the conflation of culture, structure

and agency that Giddens' theory has been criticized for (cf. Archer 1988, 1995; Porpora 1998; Willmott 2000). Although trying not to get caught up in too many detailed discussions, I would still like to elaborate a bit further on this since I believe it could help advance our understanding of the individual membership even more. Note, though, that my intention below is not to turn my back on either Giddens or Stryjan, but to embark upon a discussion that tentatively leads to a somewhat more clarified view of what it might be that propels the meaning given to membership.

A Supposed Giddensian Conflation

My interpretation of Giddens' writings on structure is that he let it include things like ideology, norms, and values, as well as formal policies, by-laws, procedures, and all sorts of institutionalized features and repetitive actions that may come out of this (1984:21-25). When these structural properties are then enacted or reproduced by agents, they tend to 'structure' or generate certain patterns of relationships, or social systems, as he also calls them (ibid:25). This would imply that he views structure and structural properties as principles *for organizing* social systems, and not as an *organization of* interrelated social positions, which is more how I would like to define social structure (chapter 2).

Porpora (1998:339) captures the difference between these two views of structure by saying that while Giddens' view implies that structure is *"collective rules and resources that structure behaviour"*, the latter regards structure as *"systems of human relationships among social positions"*. In analytical terms this means that the first view gives priority to rules and resources, while the second prioritizes relations.

In this respect it becomes interesting to consider Archer (1988, 1995, 2000), who argues that Giddens not only conflates structure with agency, but also, and maybe more important for this case, structure with culture. Regarding the first aspect I will not go into more detail than to say that Giddens' supposed conflation of structure and agency, from Archer's perspective, stems from his refusal to see them as two ontologically separate entities. That is, instead of saying that structure is *real* in the sense that it exists external to and in separation from what we do and say, she claims that Giddens asserts that structure is virtual until being instantiated by agency. This makes Archer state that Giddens is forced to incorporate agency into his definition of structure, and that the two hereby becomes reducible to one another. Another way of putting this is to say that the two are both equated *and* collapsed into each other (Willmott 2000:72f; see also Archer 1995, 2000).

The critique that structural features are confounded with cultural conditions derives from the idea that Giddens would define the existence of social structures as being dependent on some kind of more or less shared tacit recognition and acceptance among the agents of the structures they enact and reproduce (cf. Archer 1988). And, from this it has been suggested that the way in which Giddens refers to structural properties implies that it might be more accurate to define them as having more to do with culture than anything else (Archer 1995; Porpora 1998; see also Willmott 2000).

Yet, in what way does this matter in relation to the present study? Since both culture *and* structure are two major aspects of agency and vice versa (Archer 1988, 1995), I would say that it is indeed important to analytically keep these aspects of social life separated when they are to be employed and integrated in a joint framework. If not, I guess important aspects of their interplay runs the risk of being obscured and even missed in an analysis.

Accordingly, I would like to argue that Stryjan's ideas of membership includes a similar tendency to blur the simultaneous separation and interconnectedness between structure and culture by the mere act of conflating them. To exemplify this, references could be made to the way he uses structural features as a summarizing term in his model to denote aspects that I would rather call cultural (figure 2, p 199 above).

This could, of course, just be a matter of different perspectives and definitions, which makes my demurs redundant and not worthy of attention. Or, it could also be that I have misread things and that I am well out of my hat here. If, however, my observation in this respect is correct it implies a necessity to separate and to propose partly new perspectives of both structural features and cultural conditions in relation to individual membership and its antecedents. But, what I will argue for in the next section is not an attempt to reject the entire conceptual model I have applied in my analysis. Rather, what I propose below is a more clarified idea of how and what it is that propel different meanings and constructs of individual members' affiliation with organizations.

11.2.4 Elaborating the Conceptual Framework

Figure 5 below summarizes a tentative model that further clarifies how I believe meaning is construed and reproduced in relation to individual membership. The model consists of two separate parts, cultural conditions and structural features, which are interconnected through a third part, agents, and their interpretations and actions. The three aspects of membership, which I have discussed and used in my analysis throughout this study – bearer(s), a frame of reference, and a repertoire of action – are here retained, but developed and positioned so that they stand out more clearly as a result of agency. The following sections comprise a brief elaboration on these different parts as well as a discussion on how their interplay tentatively (re)produce a perceived meaning of individual membership. I start with the latter.

With reference to chapter 2, it could be argued that membership, just like most other social phenomena, largely receives its significance from people (i.e. agents) who *per se* are engaged in continuous exchange processes with the cultural conditions and structural features that together form part of the context in which these persons find themselves. That is, those who participate in similar processes do so by either acting upon a set of cultural and structural conditions *or* themselves being acted upon by a set of cultural and structural conditions. Yet, this is not the same thing as saying that culture and structure only exist through or because of this intermediary role of people's actions or thoughts. Instead, both culture and structure could instead be supposed to exist irrespective of each other and of what contemporary agents may do, say

or think of them. This is why it is possible to say that not only we humans act upon culture and structure, but that they also act upon us. Moreover, since this exchange process not only includes the option of people being acted upon but also the reverse, it is a mistake to believe that our actions and perceptions are contextually predetermined. Instead, our actions and perceptions may just as well be a direct result of substantial changes within the environment in which we are embedded (chapter 2). The two dashed arrows connecting cultural conditions, agents and structural features (figure 5) illustrate this important mutual interchange.

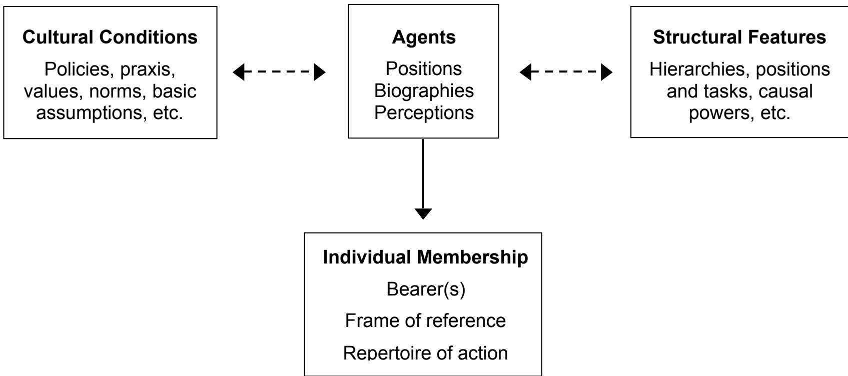

Figure 5. A reconsidered model for individual membership and its antecedents.

It must also be taken into consideration that cultural and structural conditions and features do not emanate from nowhere, but that they are historical products. This is also why it is possible to say that culture and structure in a sense precede us and that we are bound to (re)produce their contemporary existence. Yet, to follow this argument any further means getting involved in even deeper ontological and epistemological discussions and that is not my intention here (for more on this see chapter 2). Instead, building on my analysis, I will in the following add a few remarks regarding each part of the model.

Acting Agents

This part of the model includes a compilation of significant personal aspects on those who actively participate in the ongoing process of (re)creating individual membership. This may, for example, include information on what someone has done earlier in life; current or past positions and functions within a particular organization; or specific precedents as well as explicit ideas, opinions and beliefs regarding both individual membership and the particular context in question (chapter 2). I label this "positions, biographies and perceptions".

For example, it could be assumed that a person who has pursued a professional career in a conventional for-profit corporation may present a slightly different view regarding a topic such as individual membership than someone who has spent most of his/her (professional) life within a membership-based and democratically governed federation. Along this line, it may also be assumed that a politician or a civil servant may have a different view than, for example, a scholar on how to interpret a subject matter such as the formal affiliation of individual members. It does not have to be like this. One view is not necessarily more correct or better than the other, but it can be important to bear in mind that our personal and professional background and belonging *may* tint our perspectives, assessments and perceptions of things.

Moreover, Stryjan's model of the reproduction of membership emphasizes the member as agent. However, depending on the research agenda it is probably feasible to include several other categories of actors here as well, such as officials, (non-member) volunteers, and donors. Furthermore, some groups of actors are presumably more influential than others in this respect, which is also the rationale behind my choice of interviewees for this study (see chapter 6).

I have not done any detailed examination of the interviewees' personal backgrounds and life stories in this study due to the focus and structure of the present empirical material. A few interviewees mentioned something of this in passing, but since it was not specifically on my agenda nor explicitly emphasized by the interviewees, it never really got developed and discussed more thoroughly. Nevertheless, I included a question regarding personal background in the follow-up mail I sent, which provided some insights into this but not enough for any systematic analysis. I believe this is an interesting and, as far as I know, a rather underdeveloped topic that probably could be fruitful to explore further in future research related to individual membership.

Cultural Conditions

From the discussion above it hopefully remains clear that I believe that culture and structure ought to be put on par with, instead of being collapsed into, each other, since they are ontologically different but still closely related. From this follows that I see cultural conditions as giving rise to unique institutions, to strategies of action, and to taken for granted attitudes and behavioral patterns particular to organizations and social groups. This means that cultural conditions here include whatever basic assumptions, theories, beliefs, values, norms and feelings that are embraced within defined milieus. It also entails more specific cultural artifacts such as policies, strategies, goals, objectives, annual reports, by-laws, regulations, role descriptions, procedures, routines, ceremonies, informal stories and anecdotes, and all other kind of intelligibilia that has the capacity of being interpreted, deciphered, grasped, understood or known by someone in relation to a specific context (see chapter 2 for more details, for more on culture in organizations see also e.g. Garfinkel 1967; Morgan 1986; Schein 1992). This corresponds, in principal, to what has been included in the concept of 'cultural conditions' in the model (figure 5).

It has been pointed out in the analysis that what seems to impact on people's perception of individual membership partly derives from cultural conditions and components particular to certain organizations. For example, I assume that the organizational specific values and assumptions that distinguish the Mission Covenant Church from other organizations is probably an important reason for why this is the only organization in this study where an membership does not come with a fixed fee, or for why the IOGT-NTO requires that its members swear a unique temperance pledge upon acceptance.

In addition, what also seems to matter culturally with respect to individual membership is apparently also associated with more emblematic features of the surrounding societal context. The most prominent example of this in the empirical material is the typical Swedish idea of *folkrörelse* (chapter 3).

Important to note, though, is that even if I believe that it is both possible and sometimes even relevant to speak of dominant cultural patterns, it must at the same time be acknowledged that every social collective, larger or smaller, contains nuances and differences in this respect. These variations and shades derive from how we, individually or aggregated, interpret and interact with the cultural conditions we stand before. In some cases, this can even lead to the establishment of sub- or counter-cultures within a specific context. Whether we see these cultural nuances or not is, therefore, probably a question of how close we look, or, maybe more important, from what position we look and whom we ask.

Structural Features

I associate structural features with contextual specific configurations or complexes of interrelated roles and positions that come with certain functions and practices. That is, every organization contains both some sort of formal and informal hierarchical systems, which prescribe how people within that particular organization are related to each other. Here I restrict my focus to formal hierarchies. These formal human relations can only exist due to the unique structural position each person occupies. Each of these positions or roles is then also bestowed with sets of norms and expectations regarding what duties, behaviour and functions its occupier is supposed to fulfill (see chapter 2 for more details). In short, we enter into and become part of an organizational frame by occupying or being perceived as occupying unique, pre-defined and interrelated positions or roles that come with particular sets of functions or expected positioned practices. One could also add that while these roles are constitutive of structure, their duties and functions has a kind of integrating aspect for structure.

For example, within a regular corporation the archetypical set of interrelated roles and practices are maybe owners and managers as well as white- and blue-collar workers. In a university, it is probably that of faculty, staff and students. In the federative organizations included in this study, such interrelated positions and functions would typically be, officials and executives; elected representatives, rank and file members, voluntary workers and activists; and maybe also external supporters and donors as well as outside recipients of what an organization actually accomplishes.

Moreover, structural positions can also be associated with specific interests and rights. The former means that positions may be more or less explicitly related with an informal and biased collective interest. It might, for example, be tempting to assume that managers in an organization should have more or less in common by the mere fact of occupying a managerial position and doing what managers are supposed to.

The rights and privileges that come with a position or a role might also be labeled causal powers. People assigned to positions as leaders are generally attributed with a so-called preferential right of interpretation, which is a causal power that equals the right to interpret reality, to define what is important and what is not, and to decide what should be on or off the agenda. In this sense, the causal power of a specific role or position is also an important aspect of what either constrains or facilitates agency, since it is through the relations that connects the structural positions that people occupy in an organization that entail the potential to cause specific effects. This means that when we occupy specific positions in a social structure, we are also assigned the capacity to do certain things. So, when someone affiliates as member with an organization, he/she tends to become endowed with specific causal powers. These powers to do not reside with the person *per se*, but with the specific way in which he/she thereby are positioned and related to others that also belong to the same organization. Still, this does not necessarily mean that we constantly exercise whatever power our position may be associated with. It merely means that we are empowered to *potentially* cause certain things to happen (see chapter 2).

Individual Membership

I have also elaborated a bit further upon the three aspects of individual membership that have been discussed throughout this study. These aspects are: bearer(s) of an individual membership; a shared frame of reference that guide people's ideas and actions; and a viable repertoire of action prescribing the interaction between an organization and its affiliated individual members (for more on this see chapter 5).

As a result of my analysis, I would like to expand the aspect of *bearer(s)* so that it explicitly includes more than just a focus on the demographic composition of an organization's cadre of members. I am here thinking especially of the kind of institutional control that follows with the affiliation of individual members. This has been discussed above in terms of a conditioned openness and a gate-keeping function, which in principle emanates from local guidelines and procedures that formally determine who is and who is not allowed to affiliate as individual member. The importance of both these functions does not only rest with the mere act of checking up those who aspire to affiliate with an organization, but they are also important determinants for an organizations' entire cadre of members, and thereby for its outer limits too. Moreover, organizational boundaries and the composition of an organization's corpus of members are in this study frequently connected to the issue of mobilizing resources (p 136 above). This monitoring of who has and who has not got formal access to the internal life of an organization is generally also tightly connected with issues of internal governance (chapter 10).

From my understanding of a shared *frame of reference*, it might be possible to say that this second aspect of membership tends to be closely related to overall cultural patterns within organizations. However, I would also like to add that local contexts, such as those in this study, should not be studied in isolation from the larger society in which they are embedded. One reason for this is that it might imply an imminent risk that the analyst overlooks or fails to understand important themes and issues related to individual membership that have their origin outside a particular organizations.

I believe that much of what has been stated above and in previous chapters regarding a viable *repertoire of action* (p 61 above), the third and final aspect of individual membership, captures many relevant insights on what individual members may resort to in order to exert influence in their organizations. However, I would like to open up for the possibility to also include additional roles and functions beyond the trouble-shooting and correction suggested by Stryjan (1994:66). Just think of the weight the interviewees from the Co-operative Union laid on such member roles as prime beneficiary or customer. These are two roles with functions that not necessarily involve 'corrective inputs' but that apparently were considered as being utterly important and valuable for this organization (p 160 above). Accordingly, what possible roles and functions a repertoire of action includes ought to be informed primarily by empirical analysis rather than to be predetermined by the analyst.

11.3 Broadening the Discussion

The present analysis could probably be developed in numerous ways. One of the things I find especially intriguing is the articulation among the interviewees of both similar and opposing values, norms, assumptions, and roles with respect to individual membership.

From this it seems possible to think of a fictitious continuum where one end indicates either an implicit or explicit rejection of more self-interested values and member roles, while the other end indicates values and member roles that have a pronounced focus on self-interest. Following the analysis above, I would place the Social Democratic Party, the Mission Covenant Church, the Association of the Visually Impaired, and the Red Cross closer to the end that rejects self-interest. In the same way, I would locate the IOGT-NTO, the Teachers' Union, the Union of Tenants, the Football Association, and the Co-operative Union somewhere in the middle of this continuum.

The intention with this somewhat roughly construed picture is not to create fixed dualities, but to illustrate and open up for further discussions on how membership may be perceived differently with regards to context and over time, even if the latter is not really incorporated in the present study. I am here thinking especially of those cases where the membership is not only perceived as being related to values and member roles supported by individualism and self-centeredness, but is simultaneously also perceived as containing assumptions and positions permeated with ideas of co-determination and a more community-like spirit. The simultaneous contradictions and tensions that could arise from these situations intrigues me and are equally interesting

to discuss as a single case or as a comparative study between organizations, or in relation to larger societal developments.

Accordingly, the aim in this section is to initiate problematizations of specific parts of this study's analysis in the light of larger societal currents and developments that are believed to have an affect on contemporary civil society organizations both in Sweden and elsewhere. Some of these trends concern increased bureaucratization, professionalization, and commercialization (cf. Skocpol 1999; Enjolras 2001; Papakostas 2003; Skocpol 2003; Chartrand 2004; Lorentzen 2004; Johansson 2005a).

A steppingstone for this discussion is the common perception among the interviewees in this study regarding a potential mismatch between the much-cherished idea of an internal governance arrangement based on democratic values and procedures and the real life praxis of the very same system – a topic I have only touched upon in passing so far. Most interviewees, who spoke explicitly about this, appeared to frame it as a problem related to organizational structure. That is, if the organizational structures were not considered to be too complex, they were deemed too weak or fragile to be able to harbor and 'carry' people's commitment and participation all the way through. Either way, these structural shortcomings were claimed to distance rank and file members from their organizations, which supposedly implied serious constraints upon the realization of democratic governance (p 178 above).

On the premise of a mutual dependency between governance arrangements and formal organizational structures, I do not object to any of these ideas. Yet, with reference to what I have discussed earlier in the present chapter, it may also be assumed that any eventual constraints that organizational structures impose could be transcended or even changed by people acting as change agents. This makes me believe that deficient organizational structures may not be the only reason why these forms of democratic governance were seen as chimeras by the interviewees (ibid.).

I would like to add that individual members' ability to influence their organizations could also be tightly coupled with how their affiliation is perceived and maintained internally. In other words, it may depend on what degree to which and in what ways members are allowed to partake in the internal life of their organizations. As Stryjan puts it: *"The relevant issue /…/ is not the amount of power delegated but the amount of power left at the disposal of rank and file members"* (Stryjan 1989:60, emphasis in original).

We can hereby conclude that we have returned to the point of departure of this study. That is, what largely matters here is how the meaning of individual membership is perceived by those who, in one way or the other, are involved in its (re)production.

Thus, whether or not individual members are able to exert influence internally or not is related to how managers and significant others interpret issues such as what members are for and what they are supposed to do. This brings previous discussions on different member roles and functions back into focus. However, in order to move beyond earlier and somewhat static identifications of certain member positions, I will below initiate a discussion on the simultaneous existence and perceived reality of two specific roles – the customer and the owner/principal.

11.3.1 Commodified Relationships and Increased Bureaucratization

I would like to recapitulate how representatives from the Football Association perceived individual membership in relation to the general development of their organization. In chapter 9 (p 162 above), the chairman of the Football Association described how the world of organized soccer in Sweden had gone through some fundamental changes since the early 1980s. Two parallel developments that he particularly pointed out were how the Swedish football scene has become not only more professionalized through an increased number of officials, administrators and professional trainers and players, but also increasingly more commercialized. One immediate effect of this, which he emphasized particularly, was that along with all the money that nowadays seeps into the sport from advertisement, sponsor deals, commercial agreements with large TV-networks, and other similar activities has also come a shift in perspective and new practices at all levels in the Football Association. One of the more important novelties in this respect is an intensified interest and propensity to both think and act in a corporate way. That is, football activities in general and professional ditto in particular more and more are organized and financed through for-profit corporations and private interests rather than through community solutions and non-commercial associations. Apparently, this has not left perceptions or practices related to the membership untouched. He claimed that rank and file members nowadays are not as prone as before to employ their stipulated right to exert democratic influence internally in the organizations they belonged to. Mostly, he added, because they are afraid of making decisions that supporting corporations and private financiers might consider inconvenient or as pointing in the 'wrong' direction.

What this chairman did not touch upon, though, was that this trend of commercialization also seems to entertain the idea that members, via the mere act of affiliating with an organization involve themselves in some kind of market-like relation and transactions, and that they thereby inhabit the position and function of regular customers. Nevertheless, this was discussed explicitly by one of his colleagues.

I have previously displayed a shorter extract of how the ideologist in the Football Association, from his vast experience of having been with the organization since the early 1950s, spoke of individual members as more and more occupying the role of customers (p 163 above). Below I will present a slightly longer version of the same interview account in which he conveys a complementing picture of how this idea of members as customer has become a contemporary reality. I have also decided to reuse this passage because it so clearly shows how this commercialization trend is believed to have led to the introduction and establishment of a sort of market logic and behaviour. This means that the organization gradually is construed as a producer and seller of goods and services that its prime customers – the rank and file members – are supposed to buy. The core commodity, or product, in this development is apparently the individual membership, which needs to be constantly recharged with enough attractiveness so that people will continue to 'buy' it. What is also noteworthy in this account is how this described development also seems to go hand in hand with a more professionalized and bureaucratized organization. This is here made explicit through an increased internal emphasis on the work of officials and other salaried employees,

but also through a reduced significance of members' participation in and influence on the internal life of their organizations.

> In principle, I believe the changes that started in the 1950s are applicable to most Swedish civil society associations. The societal context where different then, no matter if the organizations were into football, gymnastics or some other activities. After the working day most people went home to their families or spent time with an association /…/
>
> People took part of the associational life through independent associations, and each and every affiliated member was supposed to contribute to and participate in different activities. As member, one was able to put forth, discuss and decide upon propositions at the same time as one actually felt that one contributed to the organization. People applied for a membership because of a particular interest in specific associations, and, when accepted, they were also expected to be part of the course of events in those organizations.
>
> During the past few years, the situation is more that you buy a service through your membership. In most associations one meets fellow members through activities planned and managed by others. One participates, becomes relatively satisfied and leaves. No one expects more of a membership. In most cases, no one even asks if they could be of any help in the internal life of the organization.
>
> /…/ Thus, individual members buy a service entailing a sport activity, rent for the premises, organizers and insurances. One participates and is content with that. /…/ Most people rarely, if ever, take part in the internal life of the organization, which is handled over to officials and a few enthusiastic board members.
>
> In large associations it is today primarily officials that plan and manage the activities. There is, however, nothing wrong with this, besides the fact that it may give members a sensation of being less a part of the associational work. They receive a service, and that's it. In small associations without officials or staff, though, thrive such members who have affiliated because they actually want to take an active part in what goes on internally. From my perspective it seems as if these members become fewer and fewer.
>
> The individual membership creates a sort of guarantee through the assurance it offers and will therefore continue to be employed in the future. People who practice some sort of individual sport and who is not fully satisfied with what their association offers will leave in order to buy a similar service somewhere else. /…/ It is like going to a gym, signing a contract and receiving a service in return (ideologist, Football Association, e-mail).

The quote above highlights that civil society in general is exposed to a trend of marketization that more and more civil society organizations are being corporatized, and that social relations within this particular sphere are being commodified. Similar observations are found in a recent study by Wijkström and Einarsson (2006) that shows how Swedish civil society organizations progressively adopt a language based in the idea of the market and that they implement models and practices typical for the corporate world (cf. Brunsson 1991; Wijkström *et al.* 2004; Björkman 2005).

The reason behind these changes is probably difficult to pinpoint exactly, but it has been argued that they stem from the Swedish public sector, which itself has undergone similar transformations that fits the label of New Public Management (Sundström 2003). New Public Management is often explained in terms of a development where the public sector and its organizations are being colonized by a neo-liberal ideology and practices leading to things like an all-embracing commercialization of activities

and operations; integration of corporate-like ideas and behaviours; and marketized relationships where citizens no longer are citizens but customers who are supposed to buy and consume welfare products and services (cf. Power 1999; Christensen and Laegreid 2001; McLaughlin *et al.* 2002; Dent *et al.* 2004; Tranvik and Selle 2007a).

Thus, one explanation for the above-mentioned marketization and adopted corporate behaviour among contemporary Swedish civil society organizations could be that these trends reach civil society through state subsidies or political decrees and reforms (Johansson 2005a; Petersen 2006). Furthermore, when organizations are beginning to resemble each other across industries and societal spheres in this manner could also be explained with the fact that people strive to make their organizations appear both effective and legitimate (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). In this struggle for recognition and adaptation it is common that organizations either mimic or are forced to accept and implement whatever values and practices believed to be both eligible and successful within the surrounding societal context (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Principal and Customer – a Pull between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

An interesting question in relation to the present study concerns what these trends might lead to within organizations. For example, what happens when a neo-liberal ideology becomes accentuated within a democratically governed federation? What kind of consequences can market- and corporate-like practices have on an organization's internal life? What situations and larger patterns may surge from a more general understanding of affiliated individual members as occupying and enacting both the role of principals and that of customers? Does the parallel existence of these two positions conflict or concur? To illustrate my reply I would, once more, like to come back to how individual membership is perceived in the case of the Co-operative Union.

There is no doubt in what positions and functions the three interviewees from the Co-operative Union preferred to put their organization's almost three million individual members: on one hand as owners, and, as such, bearers of the internal governance structures and functions; and on the other as customers, deemed vital for the overall survival of the organization (p 156 and 160). The perception that individual members are regarded both as principals and customers may in this case appear to be as obvious as the sun and the moon. Thus, this concerns a federation of consumer associations, formally owned by its members, and which also run a large number of grocery stores and hypermarkets in harsh competition with privately owned corporations (see chapter 7 for more details).

One could also say that it is almost as if a dual character of being both a fully commercial market actor and, at the same time, a non-market civil society organization is incorporated into the foundation of this organization. Anecdotes such as the 'thirteen ladies in Bromsten', who through a prolonged personal involvement managed to instigate a few fundamental organizational changes, even add a portion of harmony to the co-existence of these roles (p 179 above).

However, from incidents such as the one in which one of the organization's local stores was forced to shut down because it had not met the profit standards set up by central management ascribe nuances to this picture (ibid.). The interviewee who retold the latter even said that the involved local members, who apparently considered their store to be more than just a cost-cutting measure, had fought long and hard to maintain it. But, the concluding decision was not made theirs. Nor did it end up with general assembly or the board of directors of the entire federation. Instead, it was the CEO at the national level who finally was let to decide to run over the local members and to close the store down on economical grounds only.

I do not refer to this story to conclude or illustrate that this was right or wrong, good or bad. On the contrary, I see this more as an illuminating example of what might happen when a market rationale and corporate logics and practices collide with values and assumptions such as belief in permanence over time, solidarity, community spirit, and principles and procedures related to democratic governance.

Hereby, one can say that this anecdote shows how individual membership all of sudden could be interpreted quite differently from the above-presented harmonious co-existence of the 'owner'/principal and the customer role. In this case the former comes off badly in favor of the latter. That is, instead of a perception including the ability to enact the role of principals, entitled to exert influence internally, it appears as if these rank and file members are viewed as a group of irritating and obstructing customers whose significance and interest weighs lightly compared to a standardized profit margin that has to be met. As I see it, the result of this is that the meaning of individual membership is interpreted and altered to such an extent that the members end up in a position where they are left with very little, or even nothing to mount against other internal interests and forces of power. In short, they are run over, and there is not much they can do about it. One could also say that because of central management's preferential right of interpretation, the members' present repertoire of action seems to have been deprived of all modes of action that include their involvement.

Yet another way of saying the same thing is that the power of the members, in this case their decision-making power, was transferred from the upper parts of the earlier described hourglass organization, characterized by an emphasis on democracy, solidarity and principles of equality and mutual dependency, to its lower, more bureaucratic parts, dominated by an idea of managing practical economic and political issues as rationally and effectively as possible (p 45 above).

This power shift can be resembled with Kanter's discussion on what she calls the two dominant pulls of social life (1972:148-58). That is, the continuous struggle between *Gemeinschaft* – understood as community, solidarity, emancipation, empowerment, political equality, democracy, etc. – and *Gesellschaft*, understood as expediency, effectiveness, economic rationales, bureaucracy, contractual relations, etc. (see also Asplund 1991; Jonnergård 1994 for a similar discussion).

Yet, does this mean that what is valued in a community-based context is necessarily compromised or even corrupted by commercialization or vice versa? Is it impossible to combine, on equal terms, the role of a solidarity driven, involved, and democratically oriented 'owner' and that of a self-interested, distanced, cost-conscious, and rationally

calculating customer? Whether a blend is possible or not is probably a question of how things like organizations and social relations are perceived. From an individualistic and more utilitarian outlook, for example, I assume the role of customer might receive more attention and appreciation. The main reason for such an assumption is that this stance implies that adherence and commitment are approached in a fairly rational fashion and that people above all are believed to relate to each other in terms of objects and means rather than as subjects and goals. On the other hand, from a collectivist or communitarian perspective, human organizations and social relations might be seen as normative. This implies greater emphasis on a collective sharing of values and norms, that people relate to each other as ends rather than means, and that their mutual commitments in a sense are more non-rational (cf. Etzioni 1968; Parsons 1971; Warren 2001 for more on this). So, a more communitarian stance would probably entail a downplay of the customer role and greater emphasis on the democratic 'owner' position and function (cf. Lorentzen 2004).

In empirical studies, the role of members as customers and that of them being democratic principals have even been described as downright contradictory. For example, through a larger quantitative survey among more than 1.200 rank and file members in 294 Norwegian member-based sports associations it has been demonstrated how these organizations seem to be caught up in a commercialization process that gradually transforms their affiliated individual members into customers (Enjolras 2001). In the analysis of that material, it is further argued that to primarily enacting the role of customers has direct negative effects on individual members' involvement and participation in internal decision-making processes. This is also said to weaken not only the internal democratic governance in these organizations', but also their function of assisting the integration of people into society (see also Klausen and Selle 1996 for a parallel discussion).

Whether or not a formal internal governance apparatus is perceived as being weak, a chimera, or even as operating properly, I think that examples such as the ones above from the Co-operative Union and the Football Association indicate that power continues to be exerted and decisions taken whether members are involved or not. Still, one may wonder what happens when individual members voluntarily chose to distance themselves from or if they are deliberately excluded from an association's internal life? Who acts in their stead, then?

From Membership to Management and Oligarchy

One answer is that if the position of rank and file members is manipulated, or if they choose to withdraw from certain roles, opens up for officials and other professionals to advance and fortify their positions and their power (Michels 1911/1959). When this happens, it is often explained with reference to larger and general trends of professionalization and bureaucratization (cf. Papakostas 2003; Chartrand 2004).

For example, in a book from 2003, the American sociologist Theda Skocpol summarizes a large research project where the aim has been to track down the historical development of what she calls large translocal, voluntary, and membership-based asso-

ciations in the US, which carry several resemblances with the Swedish federative organizations in the present study. One of Skocpol more general conclusions after having identified and followed some fifty organizations from the mid 19th century up until our days, is very well captured in the title of this book – *"Diminished Democracy, from Membership to Management in American Civic Life"*. Thus, a central message in this book is that what affiliated individual members controlled earlier in their organizations gradually has been taken over by officials and professional managers (for a description of a similar development in Sweden see Wijkström and Einarssson 2006). A consequence of this shift is that many older civil society organizations have either vanished or come to change fundamentally by becoming increasingly staff-led, centralized and top-heavy. This development has also given rise to new types of institutions, all with a somewhat similar character.

One example that Skocpol mentions in this respect is the non-profit organization, which tends to encompass a professional staff and volunteers but generally no, or very few, rank and file members. She claims that if individual members are involved in these organizations, they are usually not affiliated in the same way as when the U.S. was proclaimed a grand nation of joiners in the 1940s (cf. Schlesinger 1944).

One of Skocpol's further conclusions regarding this development is that *"[t]he very model of civic effectiveness has been upended since the 1960s. No longer do civic entrepreneurs think of constructing vast federations and recruiting interactive citizen-members. When a new cause (or tactic) arises, activists envisage opening a national office and managing association-building as well as national projects from the centre. Members, if any, are likely to be seen not as fellow citizens but as consumers with policy preferences"* (1999a:492). To this one could add that when organizations are becoming more and more commercialized and professionalized their is also an internal tendency to centralize power (see also Klausen and Selle 1996; Selle and Østerud 2006; Tranvik and Selle 2007b for a similar discussion).

However, it may be stated that oligarchic tendencies in civil society settings is everything but new. It has been repeatedly discussed ever since de Tocqueville first published *"Democracy in America"* (1835/2000) and Michels (1911/1959:401) coined his nowadays classic idea: *"It is organizations which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy".* That proposition implies that leaders in associations are generally freed from the control of the organization's rank and file members (cf. Cassinelli 1953). Despite the critique Michels' century-old study has received (cf. Lipset *et al.* 1956; Hands 1971), I believe that many of his insights are still relevant. This becomes clear when one considers the many scholarly studies and discussions where Michels' ideas have been applied and even further developed (cf. Duverger 1951/1963; Harrison 1959; Lipset 1968; Panebianco 1988; Quagliariello 1996; Courpasson and Clegg 2006; Jonsson 2006).

One of Michels' primary contributions, as I see it, is his identification of what propels an ever-increasing centralization of power within organizations in general and democratically governed ditto in particular. Some mechanisms he discusses in this area are organizational size and complexity; a continuous drive for internal specialization and hierarchization; an increased disinterest and distance among affiliated members; and leaders' informational advantage and their control over the internal agenda set-

ting. Yet, I do not agree with Michels' seemingly deterministic view of organizational oligarchy. From the mere fact that he denies people most of their possibility to change the course of events in their organizations, I find his perception of human agency rather limited (see Lipset et al. 1956 for a similar discussion).

The earlier discussed example, the 'thirteen ladies in Bromsten', who initiated a major change in the Co-operative Union, is just one indication that members at times actually are able to exert influence internally in their organizations (p 179 above). Still, the above-described events preceding the shutdown of one of the Co-operative Union's local stores suggests that officials and leaders just as well may attempt to distance themselves and to obstruct the influence of rank and file members in order to obtain maneuverability and a freedom to set agendas. If we are to believe Michels, this could be interpreted as a clear sign of a managerial tendency to both centralize and monopolize power.

In sum, building on the entirety of the present analysis, I would say that what individual members are for, and what they are supposed to do, is largely a matter of how their affiliation is perceived and interpreted not only by themselves, but also by others. What this comes down to more concretely is to what extent an individual membership's frame of reference and repertoire of action ought not only to match each other, but should also concord with whatever real life situations members may face within the organization they belong to. Thus, whether members are constrained or enabled to influence and participate in the internal life of their association depends to a large extent on how their leaders, managers and other significant organizational representatives choose to perceive the individual membership that is offered.

11.3.2 An Imperfect System is Always an Imperfect System

To bring this analysis to an end, my intention here is to add a somewhat polemical comment to the interlinked ideas held by several interviewees' – that the organizations they represented could be seen as schools of democracy and that these organizations hereby also improve democracy in society (chapter 10). Neither of these ideas is new. In fact, they are both commonly said to derive from de Tocqueville (1835/2000), and have been persistently put forth both in media, by politicians, and by representatives of civil society institutions. They have also been applied and discussed extensively in social theory, where they also have been tested empirically (cf. Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Hirst 1994; Cohen and Rogers 1995; March and Olsen 1995; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000; Putnam 2000; Deakin 2001; Warren 2001; Skocpol 2003; Torpe 2003; Amnå 2007).

A common basis for these two ideas is the perception that people's affiliation with associations by definition entitles them to participate in, influence, and control the institution they belong to. This is generally thought of as being directly linked to an *internal* democratic function of associations, in the sense that people's active participation in the governance of an association teaches and trains them in democratic values, norms and procedures. This equals the democratic school-argument. An individual schooling in the daily trade of democracy is also argued to have direct effects outside

associations, since people hereby is supposed not only to become more interested and skilled in partaking more generally in societal and political issues and events, but also prone to do so.

Moreover, as a result of the above-stated, the same associations are also viewed as having an *external* democratic function since they are assumed to act as mediating channels between local, regional, national and even international contexts. Thus, their democratic character turns them *per se* into intermediary structures bridging together individuals (micro) with societies (macro) (cf. Skocpol 2003; Putnam 1993; Hirst 1994). The combination of these internal and external aspects of democracy in associations can also be rephrased in the following way: people's participation in the internal democratic governance functions of associations teaches them necessary civic virtues and skills that increase and enhance political empowerment, social integration and social capital in society. This argument also surfaced in this study's empirical material (p 184 above).

However, the idea that internal democratic governance in associations should give rise to a sort of 'wasted heat' or add-on effects in the society in which they are embedded does not stand unquestioned. Part of this questioning concerns what appears to be an instrumental perception regarding the internal life of associations together with what appears to be an almost over-explicit functionalistic view of the relation between individuals, organizations, and society (cf. Selle 1999; Warren 2001; Trägårdh 2007a). Rosenblum (1998) even suggests that it in fact might be impossible to generalize about any such associational virtues, functions, and effects at all (see also Warren 2001 for a more thorough discussion on this).

In relation, I would like to draw attention to something that stands out as a paradox in the present analysis. What I find contradictory is the seemingly common view among the interviewees that the federative organizations included in this study work as 'democratic training centers', while they portray their democratic governance arrangements, through which members are expected to make a difference internally, as chimeras and paper tigers (p 178 above).

Thus, if we assume that the interviewees are correct in this respect, it appears quite implausible to claim that those who join the Social Democratic Party, the Co-operative Union or some of the other organizations in this study would either learn or train themselves in any democratic virtues and skills at all, since the system in which this is supposed to happen does not work. Moreover, if the structures and functions of these federations are so complex and weak as conveyed from some interviews, it seems highly unlikely that individual members should ever be able to exert influence in their own organizations, or even less so *through* them in the surrounding society.

12. Summary and Closure

This final chapter contains four parts. The first part includes a brief summary. Then follows an account of what I see as this study's main contributions, to which I also add ideas for future research. The chapter ends where it all started – in a few reflections regarding my personal experiences from the world of organized climbing.

A point of departure for this study is the observation that individual membership often seems to be approached as an object that serves as explanation rather than as a phenomenon that needs explanation. Therefore, one could say that by adopting more of a *relational perspective*, this study differs in relation to more typical approaches to individual membership (cf. Almond and Verba 1963; Erbe 1964; Sallach *et al.* 1972; Curtis *et al.* 1992; Putnam 1993, 2000; Tan 2000; Curtis *et al.* 2001; Torpe 2003; Vogel *et al.* 2003). This means that I see members' formal affiliation with organizations in terms of a relation that exists as a direct and exclusive result of their constant engagement in its (re)production. Thus, its meaning is not predetermined, but above all propelled by people's interaction with each other as well as with the context with which they are confronted (chapter 2).

The purpose of this thesis is to develop concepts and conceptual relations that describe individual members' formal affiliation with membership-based and democratically governed federations. This purpose is operationalized through an analysis of how a group of top-level leaders and officials from nine such Swedish membership-based federations perceive individual membership.

The theoretical backdrop for the analysis concerns the interplay between *culture – individual –social structures*, a perennial problem within social theory (cf. Archer 1988, 1995, 1998, 2000). The more specific and applied conceptual understanding of individual membership in the study departs from the idea that it includes three main aspects: *bearer(s)*, a *frame of reference*, and a *repertoire of action* indicating what specific roles members may resort to in relation to their organization (Stryjan 1989, 1994).

In order to problematize the organizational context of the study and how it may affect people's perception of membership, I develop a model that describes the included federations as *hourglass constructs*, whose salient feature involves a somewhat contradictory hybridization of democracy and bureaucracy (p 45). These hybrids and the environment in which they are embedded are also discussed and further problematized through the typical Swedish idea of *folkrörelse*. I argue that this concept, despite or due to a rather ambiguous character, for many decades has occupied a close to hegemonic position as the dominating framework for how to approach civil society and its organizations in Sweden. Consequently, it has also strong implications for how individual membership tends to be perceived among Swedish politicians, scholars, journalists, and lay people (chapter 3; see also e.g. Hvenmark and Wijkström 2004). Even if

this hourglass model needs further elaboration and refinement, I believe that it opens a door to an improved and more nuanced understanding of some of the more central issues and problems regarding federative organizations.

The analysis (chapter 7 to 11) shows that the individual membership commonly is referred to as a basic *building brick* for the organizations in questions. That is, these organizations would without the membership, either not exist or at least become something else. One could also say that the general perception is that membership contributes to these organizations' *internal structure* while also providing them with a certain *identity,* aligned with the typical Swedish idea of *folkrörelse.*

In the analysis, I also reveal that the affiliation of rank and file members with an organization is construed as a mechanism that either *includes or excludes* people from organizations. In this sense, one either belongs or not, and membership is the decisive mechanism deciding which it is.

Along these lines, I discuss membership in relation to the establishment of *boundary lines* between what could be framed as the in- and outside of an organization. Although one might think that it should be clear whom the interviewees would primarily see as their rank and file members, some expressed what I regard to be a rather ambiguous view on this, indiscriminately relating to both affiliated associations *and* individuals as the primary members. There were those interviewees who chose to associate themselves with affiliated local or regional associations while dissociating themselves from the individual members by 'pushing' them towards a believed organizational periphery. However, these persons could also associate themselves with these individual members by 'pulling' them back to what I interpret as an organizational center position in which the interviewee probably also pictured him-/herself. I refer to this ambiguous way of relating to affiliated individual members in terms of a *push-and-pull strategy* (p 129 above).

Another prominent theme in the analysis concerns *resources* and access to the same. Most interviewees appeared to perceive the formal affiliation of individual members as a sort of channel through which resources, such as money and voluntary work, could be extracted from outside the organization. From the argument that as long as people kept affiliating with the organizations, membership was also perceived in terms of a resource in itself since it was believed that a certain amount of memberships legitimized both the continued existence of the organization and the position and actions of its leaders.

Even if a membership could be said to imply a role in itself, most interviewees also suggested it implies a number of more specific *member roles*. From the overall division of members into those who are considered to be either active or passive members, the analysis reveals extensive discussions on additional roles, such as members as supporters, financiers, ambassadors, voluntary workers, customers, and owners/principals (chapter 9).

The analysis also entails an elaboration of how individual membership and its antecedents could be further clarified. This means that I develop a *reconsidered model* of membership that tentatively offers a more clarified picture of how its meaning evolves through the continuous interplay between culture, acting agents, and social structure (p 209 above).

Finally, with reference to member roles I also dedicate substantial parts of the empirical description and analysis to the issue of *democratic governance* (chapter 10). The reason for this stem from the fact that not only the organizations in the study, but Swedish civil society associations in general, tend to be officially governed by the members they affiliate. Consequently, membership in Sweden is almost *per se* associated with democratic ideals and procedures. However, all nine federations included in this study have a governance system that departs from ideas and principles related to representative democracy. These systems tend to follow a three level structure comprising individual members and local associations, regional/district organizations and a general assembly on a national level. However, with a point of departure in many interviewees' conclusion that these governance arrangements work better on paper than in reality, I also discuss issues like *oligarchic* and increased *bureaucratic tendencies* in relation to these organizations. This part of the analysis also includes discussions on what appears to be a drift towards more *commercialized organizations*, which also seems to propel a gradual *commodification* of individual membership (chapter 11).

12.1 Contributions and Future Research

This study comprises empirical and theoretical contributions to above all five areas. The first concerns individual membership as such, and the second the typical idea of *folkrörelse.* The third concerns the issue of federative organizing and the fourth democratic governance. Moreover, a fifth area to which I think this study contributes concerns organizational theory more generally.

From a somewhat non-assuming and explorative approach, which implies that the meaning of membership is treated as an open question, this study adds both unique empirical descriptions and partly new and nuanced knowledge as to how this specific relation between individuals and their organizations could be problematized and conceptualized further. The fact is that the richness of the empirical material and the complexity of the analysis clearly illuminates how dynamic and how much plasticity the formal affiliation of individual members tend to entail, even within a relatively limited contextual setting as in this study.

Thus, one should not presuppose that a formal individual membership implies the same thing over time and across contexts, since it cannot be anything but what people involved in its (re)production make of it. Consequently, its meaning will always be a matter of who, where and when we ask about it. Therefore, since the aim here is to create a better understanding of membership, this study also pinpoints the necessity to attend to this unique relation with an open mind. However, because membership is to be regarded a human construct, it should also always be assumed that its perceived meaning is permeated with vested interests. This makes it important to also take up a critical attitude to what people have to say about this relation. That is something I have intended to do throughout this study.

The elaborated model I suggest as a vehicle to analyze membership constitutes a straightforward but still powerful conceptual tool for future research. Not the least since it can be a first step towards comparative work on the meaning of individual

membership in (a) different epochs; (b) within *a* specific context; or (c) in *different* geographical, institutional, social, or other types of environments. Today, this is an area of interest where we seem to lack even the most fundamental knowledge.

Regarding the issue of context, I believe that another contribution of this thesis is the discussions on the idea of *folkrörelse*, which I problematize as a dominating part of a cultural framework dictating how civil society related issues, problems, and organizations often are approached and perceived in Sweden. In particular, the empirical analysis contributes to an enhanced knowledge of how *folkrörelse* seems to play an important role for how individual membership is perceived. However, the Swedish (or Scandinavian) civil society setting is most certainly not unique in the sense that it is dominated by a certain and idealized framework. Rather, it is likely that comparable, but still different, constructs exist elsewhere. Therefore, it would be both interesting and of great value to investigate this matter more systematically through, for example, comparisons stretching across nations, regions, and over time. In addition to the kind of descriptions these comparisons could generate, it would also be interesting to question why certain approaches to civil society might be favored within specific settings. It would, in addition, be interesting to problematize why specific environments may give rise to and favor the existence of certain relations between individuals and civil society organizations, or why priority might be given to specific organizational solutions and not others within different civil society contexts.

Much of the earlier research on federative organizing seems to have, deliberately or not, focused on either the relation between different member organizations within a federation or between a federation's member organizations and its central/common unit. Consequently, this implies that individuals tend to be ignored in these studies and that the membership discussed includes organizations rather than rank and file members. This gives a strong focus on organizations as actors instead of individuals, which I would argue might lead to either incomplete or somewhat blurred pictures with respect to issues such as power, control and, of course, the affiliation of members.

Thus, one could say that this study, through its focus on the formal affiliation of members, not only brings individuals back into the arena, but also contributes with enhanced knowledge of how this specific relation could be perceived and made sense of within a federative context. Moreover, it seems common in earlier approaches to federative settings to also limit the perspective to certain activity fields and types of organizations, such as co-operatives or trade unions. However, this study's inclusion of federative organizations active within a number of different fields generates knowledge of issues and problems that partly seem to be common across organizational settings and activity fields.

The fourth area to which I claim that this study contributes concerns democratic governance. From the present empirical descriptions and analysis it could be argued that depending on how and in what way individual membership is given meaning is decisive for members' ability to govern their organizations. I am here especially thinking of how some ascribed member roles and functions appear to position members differently within the structural matrix that constitute their organizations, which thereby empowers them to a larger or lesser degree. With this as a point of departure, I focus

parts of the analysis on the seemingly contradictory member roles of owner/principal and customer.

Besides, in relation to developments such as bureaucratization, professionalization, and commercialization that also are discussed above, it would be interesting to further explore their impact on individual membership and democratically governed civil society organizations. This could perhaps be realized via questions such as in what way these tendencies change existing governance arrangements? Who supports/opposes these trends internally in an organization? What does this resistance/acceptance look like, or are there alternatives or countermovements?

Finally, I believe there is great need for more integrative approaches in the area of organizational and management studies so that knowledge claims made in relation to specific contexts could stimulate new approaches and insights within different research agendas. For example, foundations, social movements, associations, activist groups, and most other existing types of civil society organizations constitute an often-ignored empirical and theoretical strand in relation to more mainstream organization and management studies. At the same time, much civil society research that includes a focus on organizational issues and problems seems to either overlook what might be valuable insights into more mainstream approaches to organizations, or to apply more conventional organizational theories and concepts without much adjustment or adaptation. I will not speculate about reasons here, only conclude that there is a lacuna in both directions (yet, for an inspiring exception see Davis *et al.* 2005).

Therefore, I believe that this study could inspire future research efforts to transcend what often appears to concealed doors between scholarly investigations focusing on phenomena construed as specific to either civil society organizations, for-profit firms, or public institutions. For example, the way I have discussed and conceptualized membership here could maybe also inspire future research on other parallel relations that connect individuals with social collectives, such as citizenship or employment.

Another parallel area, around which our current knowledge is no more than fragmentary, concerns the interactions, cooperations, and exchanges taking place in the borderlands between different organizational spheres in society. For example, I believe that the discussions above on how Swedish civil society organizations seem to become more and more professionalized and corporate-like, or how a general trend of marketization and commercialization seems to imply an increased commodification of individual membership, could work as a springboard for future studies on how civil society organizations are affected by interacting with either public sector institutions or for-profit companies. Here, I believe that it would be especially interesting to initiate studies regarding what happens when conventional management tools, such as TQM (Total Quality Management), BPR (Business Process Reengineering), or Balanced Scorecard, are being accepted by and implemented within civil society organizations.

12.2 Epilogue

With an ever-growing interest in climbing there are today almost endless amounts of magazines to read, films to watch, gear to buy, new websites to explore, stores and

indoor gyms to visit. What for only three decades ago was a small, obscure, outdoor activity has, today, grown into a full-size business on a global scale. Climbing has never before been bigger in terms of money, organizations or places to visit. Not to mention the seemingly never-ending amount of people that keeps entering the sport. The latter has actually become the real crux of the matter since it has created an acute contemporary problem – restricted access to outdoor climbing areas. In fact, this is probably the most serious problem the climbing community in Sweden and elsewhere is facing at the moment. And, it is not a small problem. I would even stretch myself to label it a question of destiny for the entire sport, as we know it.

The great influx of new climbers was a topic on everybody's lips here in Sweden already during the first half of the 1990s. Then, maybe because of a lack of interest or maybe because there was something to gain from it, there was only a few that wanted to discuss a potential downside for a sport that was booming in every sense of the word. However, it did not require that much imagination to depict a scenario where more and more climbers would create an increased pressure and finally an intolerable wear and tear on the relatively limited amount of available rocks and mountain areas.

In addition, the U.S. experience offered a parallel, which made the potential threat even more real, and also easier to identify. The explosive growth of climbing in the U.S. in the late 1970s and early 1980s had produced great access problems. Towards the end of the 1980s, things had even gone so askew 'over there' that climbing was banned in several popular areas. Yet, nothing really happened until it had dawned upon the American climbing community that this not only would *become* a problem, it was already a veritable threat to the sport. Apart from opening up structured dialogues with land owners on how to secure a future access, a non-profit organization was put up with the single aim of administering a mutual fund dedicated to keeping climbing areas open, and the climbing environment conserved for future generations of climbers. This fund also enabled the climbing community to get involved in purchasing land from private landowners; providing financial and legal resources to local climbers' coalitions; constructing trails; organizing volunteer clean-ups of popular areas; installing sanitary facilities; funding scientific studies; and publishing educational materials (for more details see www.accessfund.org).

However, as stated above, few Swedish climbers seemed interested or willing to understand the potential downsides of being part of a booming sport in the early 1990s. I recall people saying things like: *"There is no way we'll end up like the Yankees"*, and: *"You know, we have this ancient and unique Swedish legal right of access to private land that safeguards our access to the rocks"*. Some even put off the idea of future access problems as prophesies of disaster. Although I remember hoping they were right, I am today sorry to say they were all wrong.

The problems began to emerge somewhere around the mid 1990s, when Swedish authorities decided to ban climbing in one of the major climbing areas in Central Sweden. The official reason was that rare lichens had to be protected, but everyone knew that it had more to do with the local farmer who very much disliked that more and more people crossed his estate on their way to this climbing site. Shortly after, some of my friends got their car tires slashed by some angry people who lived next to a cliff outside Stockholm, and who, obviously, did not like climbers coming there.

From these and many other similar incidents one can say that things slowly, but surely, got heated up. Today, access problems are something that every Swedish climber has to live with, and the Swedish Climbing Association has nowadays even identified this as one of its most prioritized issues (www.klatterforbundet.com).

On a personal level, all this has renewed my interest not only for organized climbing in Sweden, but also for my own formal affiliation with the Swedish Climbing Association. However, this interest is not like it was before when it more fulfilled a sort of social and identity function for me (see Prologue). After some twenty years of climbing, I have now started to realize that it can be useful to belong to an organization through which resources can be mustered, and change actually achieved. It has even come to a point where I am again keen on becoming more involved in the internal life of this organization. Maybe not so much to guarantee access for my own sake, as for securing it for days to come so that future climbers will be able to enjoy Sweden's fantastic climbing sites. This means that it now perhaps is time to roll up the sleeves and do something more concretely. Who knows, one of these days you might find me acting on a working committee, or hearing me raising my voice at the national assembly in the Swedish Climbing Association. I might even join the 'frontline' at the cliffs, in order to make a difference.

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Appendix I

Table X. Summary of interviews conducted between April 2002 and November 2004

ORGANIZATION	POSITION	DATE FOR INTERVIEW	TRANSCRIPTION PERIOD/PAGES	PREL. ANALYSIS
Social Democratic Workers' Party	1 Party secretary	21-11-02	Summer 03/25	Spring -04
	2 Head of organization	11-12-02	Summer 03/31	Spring -04
	3 "Ideologist"	28-11-02	Summer 03/30	Spring -04
Co-operative Union and Wholesale Society	4 Chairman	11-05-04	Summer 04/34	
	5 CEO	17-05-04	Summer 04/22	
	6 "Ideologist"	15-05-02	Summer 02/33	Spring -04
Association of the Visually Impaired	7 Chairman	16-12-02	Summer 03/22	Spring -04
	8 Head of operations	03-04-02	Winter 04-05/28	
Swedish Red Cross	9 Chairman	17-12-02	Summer 03/24	Spring -04
	10 Secretary general	29-11-02	Summer 03/26	Spring -04
Swedish Football Association	11 Chairman	03-12-02	Summer 03/35	Spring -04
	12 Secretary general	07-11-02	Summer 03/30	Spring -04
	13 "Ideologist"	27-09-04	Winter 04-05/32	
IOGT-NTO	14 Chairman	27-11-02	Summer 03/24	Spring -04
	15 National director	27-11-02	Summer 03/28	Spring -04
	16 "Ideologist"	13-09-04	Winter 04-05/29	
Teachers Union	17 Chairman	16-11-04	Autumn 04/25	
	18 Administrative director	22-11-04	Spring 05/	
	19 "Ideologist"	22-11-04	Winter 04-05/21	
Union of Tenants	20 Chairman	29-04-02	Summer 02/28	Spring -04
	21 Administrative director	04-05-04	Summer 04/36	
Mission Covenant Church of Sweden	22 Chairman	12-11-04	Spring 06/31	
	23 Mission director	01-06-04	Summer 04/30	
	24 "Ideologist"	28-04-04	Autumn 04/41	

Appendix II

<u>General view of membership</u>
1. What do you spontaneously think of when I say membership?
2. Are you affiliated with any organization? Which, why and for how long?
3. How would you describe your relation to this/those organization/s?
4 .Would you say that this relation has changed since you first entered? If, how?

<u>The person and organization X</u>
5. Who are you (age, social background, education, etc.)?
6. Describe your background in organization X?
7. How did first come in contact with X?
8. How is X organized and would you describe its structure?
9. How is X financed (broadly)?

<u>Relating membership with organization</u>
10. Why does X affiliate members?
11. Are there different categories of membership in X? If, what are the differences between them?
12. How does one become affiliated member with X?
13. Who is/is not allowed to become affiliated?
14. Are there any restrictions? If, describe.
15. Is it possible to imagine X without individual members? Why?
16. What would X be without its individual members?
17. What does the individual membership mean in relation to X?
18. Are there any linkages between individual members and the objective of X? If, describe.

<u>Relation between the interviewee, his/her position and the affiliated members</u>
20. Do you meet with individual members through the work you do at X? If, describe?

<u>Primary concern is not past/future dimension, but what the three answers directly/indirectly say about the present</u>
21. How do you think individual members were viewed when you first were engaged in X?
22. How Would you characterize the general talk of individual members in X today?
23. From the described past and present, how do you think membership will be viewed within X in the future?

<u>Focus on issues of internal power structures and positions</u>
24. Are the individual members affecting the work that goes on in X? How?
25. Does the affiliated individual members matter at all for how X is governed? If, how?
26. Who 'owns' X/who is its principal? How is the 'owner-'/principalship expressed in reality?
27. Can I, as individual member, exert influence in X? How?
28. Do you also think that the affiliated individual members experience a possibility to exert influence? Why?
29. Are there any typical conflicts between affiliated members and X? Can you exemplify?
Do you want to add something particular?
Do you think I have forgot to ask something important here?

Appendix III

EFI, The Economic Research Institute

Published in the language indicated by the title. A complete publication list can be found at www.hhs.se/efi Books and dissertations can be ordered from EFI via e-mail: EFI.Publications@hhs.se

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2008

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Kviselius, Niklas Z. *Trust-building and communication in SME internationalization: a study of Swedish-Japanese business relations.*

Schilling, Annika. *Kan konsulter fusionera?: en studie av betydelsen av identitet vid en fusion mellan konsultföretag.*

Strömqvist, Maria. *Hedge funds and international capital flow.*

Söderström, Johan. *Empirical studies in market efficiency.*

2007

Books

Andersson, Per, Ulf Essler and Bertil Thorngren (eds). *Beyond mobility. EFI Yearbook 2007. EFI/Studentlitteratur.*

Ericsson, Daniel. *Musikmysteriet: organiserade stämningar och motstämningar.*

Samuelson, Lennart (red). *Bönder och bolsjeviker: den ryska landsbygdens historia 1902–1939.*

Wijkström, Filip och Torbjörn Einarsson. *Analysmodell för sektorsöverskridande statistik:fallet vård och omsorg.*

Dissertations

Ahlersten, Krister. *Empirical asset pricing and investment strategies.*

Alexius, Susanna. *Regelmotståndarna: om konsten att undkomma regler.*

Andersson, Magnus. *Essays in empirical finance.*

Berg, Bengt Åke. *Volatility, integration and grain bank: studies in harvests, rye prices and institutional development of the parish magasins in Sweden in the 18th and 19th centuries.*

Bianchi, Milo. *Of speculators, migrants and entrepreneurs: essays on the economics of trying your fortune.*

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Nilsson, Daniel. *Transactions in cyberspace: the continued use of Internet banking.*

Petrelius Karlberg, Pernilla. *Den medialiserade direktören.*

Portnoff, Linda. *Control, cultural production and consumption: theoretical perspectives, empirical dilemmas, and Swedish music industry practices.*
Sköld, Martin. *Synergirealisering: realisering av produktsynergier efter företagssamman-slagningar.*
Sonnerby, Per. *Contract-theoretic analyses of consultants and trade unions.*
Tyrefors, Björn. *Institutions, policy and quasi-experimental evidence.*
Valiente, Pablo. *Re-innovating the existing: a study of wireless IS capabilities to support mobile workforces.*

2006
Books
Lundeberg, Mats, Pär Mårtensson and Magnus Mähring (eds) *IT & business performance: a dynamic relationship. EFI Yearbook 2006. EFI / Studentlitteratur.*
Thodenius, Björn. *Organisering av kunskap : en studie av Wallenberg Consortium North.*
Wijkström, Filip och Torbjörn Einarsson. *Från nationalstat till näringsliv?Det civila samhällets organisationsliv i förändring.*
Wijkström, Filip, Einarsson, Stefan och Larsson, Ola. *Staten och det civila samhället: idétraditioner och tankemodeller i den statliga bidragsgivningen till ideella organisationer.*
Östman, Lars. *Lysande ögonblick och finansiella kriser: Dramaten under ett sekel.*

Dissertations
Argenton, Cedric. *Quality provision in duopoly.*
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2005

Books

Andersson, Per, Susanne Hertz and Susanne Sweet (red). *Perspectives on market networks: boundaries and new connections.*

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Books

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Lind, Johnny. *Strategi och ekonomistyrning: en studie av sambanden mellan koncernstrategi, affärsstrategi och ekonomistyrning.*

Lind, Johnny och Walter Schuster (red). *Redovisningens teori, praktik och pedagogik: en vänbok till Lars Östman.*
Sevón, Guje och Lennart Sjöberg (red). *Emotioner och värderingar i näringslivet. EFIs Årsbok 2004.*
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