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**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION AND THE DANISH EU DECISION MAKING PROCESS.**

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I am a Ph.D. student from COS at Copenhagen Business School, and I started this study in April. This paper is primarily based on my master's thesis on the social dimension and the Danish EU decision making process. My Ph.D. study will likewise focus on the European social and labour market policy as my empirical field of interest, although with a slightly different perspective. Thus, my Ph.D. study is heavily based on my master's thesis.

This paper consists of five parts. In the first part, I will ask two main questions concerning the study of the social dimension and the Danish EU decision making process. In the second part, I will outline my theoretical and methodological approach to the study of these two questions. In the third part, I will give a fairly short account of the history of the social dimension since 1985 and the challenge I think this development poses to the Danish EU decision making process. In the fourth part, I will take a closer look at the Danish EU decision making process, by focusing on the process of negotiation concerning the Commission's November 1993 Green Paper on Social Policy. Finally, the fifth part is a conclusion and an outline of further studies within this field, my Ph.D. project.

## **Introduction.**

Denmark is one of the countries that have worked the hardest to put the question of unemployment on the European agenda. It is widely believed that the problem of unemployment should be dealt with on a European basis, and that a collective effort will have a greater effect on the rate of unemployment in the member states than 15 individual ones. This is why the Danish chairmanship held a conference on unemployment and social exclusion in Copenhagen, and Delors was given the assignment to write a White Paper on growth, competition and employment in 1993. We think it is important that the other member states have a social system that is as good as our own. Even so, at every referendum the government and the labour market organizations have always emphasized that a new proposal will have no influence on the Danish social and labour market policy, because this is a question of subsidiarity.

The European social and labour market policy - the social dimension<sup>1</sup> - has undergone substantial development in the last decade. Studies often show that no "real" progress has been made, since there has been a lot of talk about the social dimension, but no actual results in the form of directives etc. This is partly true, and this is precisely why this area is so interesting. I focus on the "talk", and I think that it is very interesting **how** agents talk about the social dimension, and how it should develop in the future, because this involves the articulation of differences between what is a part of

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to emphasize that in Euro-jargon there is no distinction between social policy and labour market policy, this is simply called social policy.

the social dimension, and what is not. These differences are very important to the development of the policy field. Within the social dimension the agents define the problems and point out solutions for these problems, i.e. causal connections are established between the problems and “the necessary policy”.

The way of talking about the social dimension on the European level has changed fundamentally in the last decade - especially since 1985. Firstly, agents have gone from talking about the social dimension within a limited internal market context to talking about the area of social and labour market policy as part of a more overall structural strategy to fight unemployment and social exclusion. Secondly, more and more areas from what we in Denmark would characterize as social policy, are being discussed within the context of the social dimension on transnational level. There has been a change in the relationship between social policy and labour market policy within the social dimension in the last five years. This development poses a radical challenge to the Danish EU decision making process. The dissolution of the boundary between social policy and labour market policy on transnational level demands that the national levels are able to formulate overall strategies involving both social policy and labour market policy as part of a structural policy directed at improving the employment situation.

It is not possible for the Danish agents to take the transnational policy development of the social dimension into account when negotiating European social and labour market policy in the Danish EU decision making process. When Danish agents coordinate national EU policy they implicitly articulate differences between themselves and their environment. These differences are reproduced through the agent's interpretation of themselves, their choice of negotiation strategies and the structure of the decision making process. The structural properties of the decision making process makes it very difficult - if not impossible - for the agents to interpret the transnational policy development as something qualitatively new. This implies that the development of a national political strategy within this area becomes problematic. It becomes difficult for the agents to formulate a proactive political strategy. Instead they will tend to act on an ad hoc basis.

I can pose two questions that will help me examine these two claims. The first one concerns the political development within the social dimension on the transnational level and the second one concerns the Danish EU decision making process and the possibilities to develop a national political strategy within this political area. This question focuses on the reproduction of the decision making process by studying a specific case - the Green Paper of November 1993. The two questions are:

1. How has the articulation of the social and labour market political area developed at transnational level from 1985-1995?
2. How does the national EU decision making process within the social and labour market political area work, and which consequences can this have for the possibilities to develop a national political strategy in the light of the transnational challenge?

## **Theory and Method.**

### *Institutional history, the first question.*

Generally, it is important to emphasize that I do not think of my historical analysis of the social dimension as the only true story of the social dimension, I am not interested in describing the development as it was, because I do not think this is possible. I look at every historical analysis as a construction, where you choose to focus on certain variables. In that sense my story is just one of the stories that could be told of the social dimension. I focus on discourse<sup>2</sup> and frames of meaning, and I focus on the problems and the solutions that are being pointed out and talked about in different texts. When I read a description of the social dimension I ask myself questions such as: Which problems are said to be the most important ones, and which solutions are being pointed to in an effort to solve these problems? How does the text argue to establish these causal relations between problems and solutions? This approach implies that I am not interested in whether the problems “really” *are* problems, or whether the solutions “really” *can solve* the problems. What is interesting to me is that it is these specific problems and solutions that are being made an object of investigation and study.

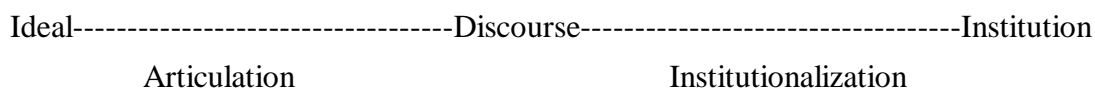
I am inspired by the research done at COS about institutional history as a method to study the institutional construction of society.<sup>3</sup> I interpret my first question about the development of the social and labour market political discourse as a historical institutional problem focusing on the articulation and reproduction of discourse. The diachronic strategy of analysis is a method that produces a specific kind of knowledge: Knowledge about the development of communicated frames of meaning and institutions in which actions become meaningful. It produces knowledge about historical

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<sup>2</sup> I define discourse as a specific form of coordination, through which differences are formulated (e.g. between the past and the present, between outside and inside, between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable etc.), problems and solutions are pointed out and talked about, and specific agents are given authority. This results in the establishment of a kind of common framework of reference within the policy area.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. **Andersen, N. Å.** “*Institutionel Historie - en introduktion til diskurs- og institutionsanalyse*”, COS-rapport no. 10/94.

institutional construction and change, and this is the kind of knowledge needed to study my first question. The diachronic strategy of analysis can be illustrated in this way:



The ideal is the nodal point of the discourse, it is a collection of constitutive distinctions that function as the basis on which the process of articulation can unfold. In this sense the ideal defines the field of articulation and constitutes discourse as a possibility. Ideals obtain meaning when it is referred to in the articulation of problems and solutions. Discourses are anchored around ideals. Articulation is a process in which the spreading of a specific ideal is extended to include agents and objects that was formerly articulated within another discourse. I focus on the process of articulation in my history of the social dimension. I can reformulate my question in methodological terms: I study the process of articulation within the social and labour market political area on transnational level. How there has been a fundamental change in the way that differences are being made within the discourse between what is a part of the social dimension and what is not, what is a problem within the social dimension and how this is articulated as a problem, which measures are being pointed out as solutions to these problems, and how these are articulated as solutions. I study how the social dimension is articulated within a specific context on the basis of specific ideals, and the consequences of this for the development of the policy area.

My variables are thus: First, **problems and solutions**. For example it is important for me to study how unemployment is articulated as a problem during the whole period of 10 years, to see if there has been any change in the initiatives that are articulated as strategies of solution to fight the unemployment. Second, **changes in the nodal points of the discourse - the ideals**, because problems can be seen as mirrors of the ideal of the discourse. In this way I study whether changes in the articulation of problems and solutions are based on changes in the ideals. Third, **the articulation of the past and the future**, in connection with problems and solution, because problems can be interpreted as “sins of the past” and solutions as “answers” to future challenges/threats. I see the future within the discourse as the construction and articulation of future images on which basis strategies of solution can be articulated. And finally, how **the boundary between social policy and labour market policy** is articulated within the discourse at transnational level. This boundary is important to me, because the only manifested conflict in Denmark in this area is between the Ministry of Social Affairs on the one side, and the Ministry of Labour and the labour market organizations on

the other. This could indicate that the boundary between social policy and labour market policy on transnational level is changing.

On the basis of a discourse analysis focusing on these 4 variables, I can say something about if and how there has been a change in the way differences are discursively articulated within the social and labour market political area at transnational level. In this sense, I can say something about the properties of the transnational challenge that is directed towards the Danish EU decision making process. I cannot say anything about why the social dimension is developing in this way at this very point in time, which has been the ambition of other writers within this field. This ambition requires another strategy of analysis.

*Structuration theory, boundaries and institutionalism, second question.*

I study the Danish decision making process via a case study - the Commission's Green Paper on social policy. Case studies have generally been criticized for being too particular and focusing on single cases thereby making it impossible to generalize. Because of these "flaws" it has been argued that case studies cannot contribute to scientific development. Case studies can possibly generate hypotheses as a first step in the scientific process, after which one must use other methods for analyzing and developing theory. I think that this attitude stems from a specific interpretation of scientific knowledge that places more value on context independent knowledge as opposed to context dependent knowledge, and sees the main purpose of research as a constant strive towards ever more "correct" theory, i.e. theory that can explain and predict to a larger extent and with more precision the developments within a certain area by using context independent rules and laws. This is not a view I share. One cannot, and should not, in my opinion, study society and social relations outside its context.

I have chosen an atypical case (normally the Danish decision making process would negotiate proposals for directives) because this will enable me to study the fundamental characteristics of the Danish EU decision making process. The Green Paper was a discussion paper and the government should coordinate an answer to their expectations and strategies towards developing the social dimension. In that sense the negotiation process can be seen as pre-negotiations forming the basis for future directives. An analysis of the negotiation process concerning the Green Paper can tell me something about how the Danish agents reproduce the decision making process and the possible consequences this can have for the development of a national political strategy within this policy field, and this is the purpose of my second question.

To study the Danish decision making process as an interaction and negotiation process exemplified through a case study involves a shift in analytical perspective. Where the diachronic discourse analysis is a historical analysis, this analysis is a vertical “cut” - a snapshot of a situation characterized by a relatively short period of time (approximately 1½ years). The strategy is to “freeze” the institutionalized EU coordination system and study the processes that take place - how is the system reproduced, and which consequences can this have? I am inspired by Anthony Giddens’ terms of system reproduction, the duality of agent and structure, context and practice. I use Giddens’ terms in order to “think” process analysis. In my interpretation he shares a lot of traits with my general institutionalist approach to the two kinds of analyses. For example he sees structure as both constraining and enabling, and agents and structure as mutually constitutive in the reproduction process.

On this basis I interpret the Danish EU decision making process as an institutionalized social system consisting of a “web” of institutionalized social practices that agents reproduce in the interaction process. The agents use a number of rules and norms for interaction when they reproduce the social system. I call these rules and norms agent strategies or negotiation strategies. Thus one part of the analysis is to study the rules and norms of negotiation that the Danish agents use to reproduce the system and in connection with this, the sanctions used if an agent neglects a rule or norm.

Another part is to study the institutional space in which the negotiation process takes place. It is important to know whether this is an ad hoc process (because it is an atypical case) or whether the system is highly institutionalized. It is equally important to know what kind of relations the agents have to each other in the reproduction process, because this has implications for their status and role in the process. In this respect I am inspired by Ronald L. Jepperson, and his terms of degrees and forms of institutionalization. Time is a very important concept when looking at the degrees of institutionalization. The longer a specific practice has taken place the more likely it is to build on common rules and norms, which makes the relation less “fragile” to social intervention. I had to largely depend on my interviews in connection with my master’s thesis, in the sense that if the agents told me that something was normal practice I obviously had to believe them. I operate with three forms of relational institutionalization: Legally institutionalized relations, where an infringement of rules and norms of negotiation is followed by some sort of legal sanction; Rutinized relations e.g. tradition and habit, where an infringement does not lead to legal sanctions; and finally personal relations, where friendship and favours play an important part of establishing a good working environment, where relations are built on mutual trust and respect.

The second part of the second question was to study the consequences of the decision making process for the possibilities of developing a national political strategy within this policy field. By this I mean that some constraints are constituted in the negotiation process that makes it difficult for the agents to respond pro-actively to the transnational challenge. The agents reproduce some practices which has effects on the structure of the system, the agents interpretation of their own identity and their choice of negotiation strategies. This process in turn has consequences for the agents reflexive capacity (i.e. their ability to reflect on their own way of developing policy, the political processes they take part in, their interpretation of themselves and their relation to the environment), and thereby their possibilities to respond reflexively to the transnational development.

When agents in a system act, i.e. reproduce the social system by using institutionalized rules, norms and negotiation strategies, they at the same time reproduce a specific identity - they articulate a boundary between themselves and the environment. They refer to themselves in a specific way, and thus obtain a degree of autonomy. The fundamental question in this part of the analysis is: What is constitutive for the agents interpretation of their own identity and meaning? I work with two “steps” - two variables. Firstly, if they are not reflexive in relation to themselves. This can happen in two different ways: Either they refer strategically to an externally defined resort boundary or they implicitly refer to an externally defined sectoral boundary that is a policy field, where the important agents are pointed out simultaneously. Secondly, if they are reflexive in relation to themselves. This is the case if the agents implicitly formulate common overall views between the sectors and develop common future images. Through this kind of analysis I am able to say something about how agents reproduce boundaries in the negotiation process, which are both constraining and enabling, how these boundaries constitute the structure of the negotiation process and the agents reflexive capacity. Finally I am able to discuss the consequences this can have for the possibilities of developing a national political strategy for the social and labour market political area in the EU.

This case study thus involves 3 different analyses:

1. From formal to “real” decision making process, a description of the institutional space, degrees and forms of institutionalization, relations between the agents.
2. Meaning and identity in the decision making process, boundaries in the process, the agent’s formulation of meaning and identity.
3. Strategies of negotiation in the process, the agent’s reproduction of the boundaries through choice of negotiation strategies, their institutionalized practice, their roles and status in the process.



## **The Social Dimension.**

In this part of the paper I will briefly outline the results of the discourse analysis of the social dimension. I concentrate on the conclusions from my master's thesis, and even so it will definitely lack details.

I have chosen to divide the period 1985-1995 into two phases, from 1985-1990 and from 1990-1995. In the years 1990-1991 a change happened in the Commission's strategy towards the promotion of the social dimension. I would not call this an actual discursive break, it was rather, a change of strategy and a gradual change/development of the anchoring ideal. It would not be true to say that the social dimension started in 1985, there had been some development before this time. But in 1985 the Community was facing a situation where the development of the social dimension had been stopped as a consequence of a whole range of other problems (e.g. budgetary problems, agricultural problems, lawsuits between the member states and the EU institutions etc.). From 1980-1985 no new directives were passed through the Council of Ministers, there was a complete blockage. The labour market organizations on transnational level<sup>4</sup>, which had started a sort of dialogue in the 1970s, were no longer on speaking terms. It was in this situation - in 1985 - that Delors thought it was time for relaunching the social dimension.

### *The social dimension of the internal market.*

In 1985 the Commission put forward the plan for Economic and Monetary Union, where the internal market was the first step. The internal market program is of decisive importance for the development of the social dimension, because it was within this context that the social dimension was articulated. This could be seen already in the Commission's White Paper on the internal market, but it became so much clearer during the next 5 years. In 1985 the Commission succeeded in relaunching the idea of a social dimension and at the same time articulating it within an internal market context, as an accompanying policy. The dominating project of this first phase was to establish the need for a social dimension in the Community, because this was a question of great controversy for a number of member states - one may mention Great Britain, for whom it was completely unacceptable to let the Community interfere in labour market regulation. Thus the regulation question was the overall theme of this period.

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<sup>4</sup> ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) and UNICE (Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe).

The debate about the social dimension was linked closely to the internal market program, and a causal relationship was articulated between the implementation of the liberalization program and the development of the social dimension. The internal market became the cause for the need of a social dimension. It was this link between the internal market program and the social dimension that had enormous consequences for the articulation of problems and solutions within the social and labour market political discourse at the transnational level.

The first and dominating fear evolves around the question of the consequences of the internal market for the employment in the member states. The increasing competition, which on the one hand is seen as the prerequisite for the economic growth, will probably in the short run result in an increasing unemployment. It will be unacceptable for the Community if the standard of living was to decrease substantially in the short run. Partly because increasing social suffering is unacceptable for a modern democracy and partly because the internal market will lose public support. The two problems that are articulated in this period are the problems of social dumping and of regional inequality. These are the two problems that the Commission concentrates on<sup>5</sup>, and time and effort are spent on documenting the problems and effects scientifically. The solutions that are being pointed out in this phase are thus designed to solve these two problems. The two main solutions are the agreement on a non-binding solemn declaration of the worker's fundamental labour market and social rights - called the social pact or the Community pact (from 1989) and a reform of the structural funds, which were to combat regional inequality through financial support.

Thus in 1990 there was a new situation. The attempt to relaunch the social dimension had been a success, there was a continuous debate about the social dimension within a clear internal market context. A number of differences about what was inside and what was outside the discourse were being articulated in this phase, and two main problems and solutions were being causally linked and studied. At the end of this first phase a common discursive frame of reference was established among the EU institutions within the social dimension, and it was clear that the labour market issues were completely dominating. The social issues had largely been articulated as national issues, where the Community had no authority. Unemployment had been articulated as a technological and conjunctural problem, although we see the beginnings of a structural articulation of unemployment towards the end of the period. This trend was to be overwhelming in the next period.

#### *The development of overall strategies 1990-1995.*

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<sup>5</sup> In spite of the other institutions' tireless attempts to articulate a broader social approach to the social dimension, including e.g. poverty, social exclusion etc. These proposals are largely suppressed by the Commission, which has a clear selectoral function in the discourse.

In the beginning of this period there was a remarkable silence about the social dimension. The solemn declaration had just been accepted, the EU institutions were generally disappointed with it and the following two years showed a complete neglect of the declaration by the member states. The reports on the implementation of the declaration in the member states are depressive reading. But something happened. The beginning of this phase was influenced largely by the work with the Maastricht treaty, and some institutional changes were made. The labour market organizations reached an agreement on a new procedure to pass directives within the social dimension, this agreement almost unchanged became a protocol to the Maastricht treaty, signed by 11 member states (not including Great Britain and Northern Ireland), and this represented an institutionalization of a new set of rules and procedures within the social dimension.<sup>6</sup>

This period represents a change in the approach towards the social dimension, a change that can be seen not only in the articulation but also in the kind of documents. From 1992 we can see a continuous flow of White Papers and Green Papers which had been largely non-existent in the former years. White Papers and Green Papers were discussion papers which aimed to develop overall strategies within different policy areas in the EU. The Commission chose to change strategy from concentrating on single directive proposals to focus on developing an overall strategy for the social dimension. Delors presented a White Paper on Growth, Competition and Employment at the government conference in Copenhagen in 1993.

Unemployment was relaunched as the most important problem in Europe, but this time it was not articulated as a technological problem or a conjunctural problem, now it was a structural problem. Two basic structural problems were seen as dominating the labour market: The wage structure and as a consequence of this the motivation structure. The minimum wage was considered too high in relation to productivity and there was no motivation for the unemployed to seek ordinary jobs when the unemployment benefits were too high. Thus there were structures at the labour market that prevented the attainment of full employment, because the supply side (the labour force) could not adapt to the demand of the enterprises, this created bottle-necks at the labour market and prevented growth. The overall purpose of the White Paper, which was not a paper on the social dimension, was to place the unemployment problem on the European agenda. The argument was that the fight against unemployment was a very complex task, that needed untraditional solutions. Fundamental structural reforms on all markets were needed in this battle, and this presupposed a joined effort - not just from the member states and the EU institutions but from all policy areas - an integrated structural strategy that involved macroeconomic policy, fiscal policy, labour market policy, social

policy, educational policy, transeuropean networks within technological policy etc. Every Community policy should be directed at fighting the unemployment, enhancing growth and increasing competition.

The social dimension were articulated within this new framework. The debate about the internal market program had stopped, nobody questioned the need for a social dimension, even Great Britain and UNICE had accepted some kind of social dimension in the EU, the regulation debate had been silenced. In November 1993 Padraig Flynn launched the Green Paper on social policy, a new kind of discussion paper and a new kind of hearing procedure. All the member state governments should give a written answer to the Commission, who would then write a White Paper for the overall strategy within the social dimension, which would finally result in a Commission action program with more specific reference to actual directives. The Green paper constituted a new approach to the social dimension through articulating the social dimension as part of the overall structural project outlined in Delors' White Paper. Within the social dimension the balance between labour market policy and social policy shifted. The focus was now on the social consequences of the employment situation, and this implied a shift in the direction of more social policy. Social exclusion was high on the agenda. One of the purposes to fight unemployment was to combat social exclusion and poverty in the Community, and to help reintegrate the socially excluded people in Europe. What we can witness in the Green Paper and in Delors' White Paper is an "explosion" of the policy field.

This phase was characterized by overall structural projects on transnational level. Unemployment was articulated as a structural problem, which led to a general redirection of the Community policies towards structural change. Within the social dimension this led to a focus on the social consequences of the unemployment, where social exclusion and poverty were seen as the most important problems. The political development within the social dimension was heavily influenced by the integrated strategy perspective, and identified itself as a specific part of Delors' White Paper. The structural perspective led to a focus on long term solutions in the form of strategies integrating active labour market policy, social policy, educational policy, housing policy, handicap policy, policy concerning pensioners, tax policy, social security policy and macroeconomic policy. This did not mean that the traditional areas (equal rights, health and safety, free mobility etc.) were neglected, these were all included in the strategies. Rather, there was an expansion of the discourse and a change in emphasis.

This development posed a challenge to the Danish EU decision making process, because it involved being able to integrate a lot of different policy areas in the decision making process. The Danish ministries would have to coordinate policy across resort areas, and involve a whole range of agents

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<sup>6</sup> The protocol have now been signed by 14 member states.

in the decision making process. All this would be in order to practice “the necessary policy”. As we shall see in the next part this was a very difficult and potentially explosive situation for the Danish agents in the EU decision making process. The transnational change of the boundary between social policy and labour market policy resulted in a severe conflict between the agents in the Danish decision making process.

### **The Danish EU decision making process.**

The Danish decision making process concerning the Green paper started in the autumn of 1992, when the labour market organizations were informed of the plans by the Commission at meetings in their transnational institutions - ETUC and UNICE. The Danish government received an official invitation to participate in the hearing procedure from the social dimension commissioner Padraig Flynn. The Ministry of Labour wrote a short letter in return displaying a generally positive attitude towards the initiative. The Ministry of Social Affairs collected the ideas in the ministry and wrote an answer to the Commission based on this. The other Danish agents were very surprised by the interference of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The labour market organizations had a large number of meetings between themselves: Study groups among the trade union organizations and the employers associations to test ideas, close connections to the Ministry of Labour, coffee meetings, lunches, dinners, telephone calls. The Green Paper was also discussed in an informal forum called the cave meeting. This is a regularly held meeting between the Ministry of Labour and its most important negotiation partners - the labour market organizations and the communes. The purpose of these meetings was to get the problems out of the way before the meeting in the first level of formal decision making process - the EU special committee in the Ministry of Labour.

One year after, the Ministry of Labour collected a common answer from the members of the EU special committee, the Ministry of Social Affairs worked out a new answer based on their first answer to the Commission. The labour market organizations were furious. The reactions span from “very ambitious” to “extremely incompetent” and “exceedingly unintelligent”. The labour market organizations felt that the Ministry of Social Affairs were trying to sell out the Danish social policy, inviting the Community to intervene in a whole range of policy areas such as handicap policy, social exclusion and poverty issues, social security issues, old age pensions etc. suggesting further cooperation at transnational level; areas that have absolutely nothing to do with the social dimension, which in their opinion we all know is only about labour market policy. The paper from the Ministry of Social Affairs ended up twice on the front page of “Det fri aktuelt”<sup>7</sup>, where the minister of social affairs repeated the ideas of a universal social system in Europe. This made the Danish LO sharply

reject the ideas in public. At the meeting in the EU special Committee the Ministry of Social Affairs were instructed to think about their position on this question. The following official answer to the Commission was completely revised on the part that originally was from the Ministry of Social Affairs. This area was now clearly a national policy area, the principal of subsidiarity was emphasized.

This was what happened when the Danish EU decision making process was faced with the transnational challenge. This conflict implies that there was a fight over the boundary between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs within the social dimension. The Ministry of Social Affairs clearly tried to articulate a strategy that cross over these meaning creating boundaries in the decision making process and led to all kinds of sanctions. It is interesting to see how this conflict was handled in the decision making process.

In the following I will skip the discussions and cut right to the conclusions of the three analyses I outlined in the part on theory and method.

*From formal to “real” decision making process.*

The Danish decision making process consists formally of 4 levels: Lowest the EU special committees located in the ministries, then the EU council inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consisting only of civil servants deciding which cases are controversial, and which can be easily decided upon administratively, then the governments council of foreign affairs where the governments overall opinions are established (politicians), and finally the European council of the parliament which gives mandates to the ministers that should negotiate the cases in the European council of ministers. Generally most cases are decided at the lowest level in the EU special committees.

As I have already indicated the process does not start with the meeting in the EU special committee, actually this is often where it ends. There is a substantial coordination outside or along side the formal decision making process. The most interesting and most important part of the coordination happens at the cave meetings, which are completely secret meetings taking place between EU special committee meetings but with no necessary connection to them. These cave meetings have gained in importance over the last few years because of an increase in the members of the EU special Committee. You cannot just appear at the EU social committee meeting and start negotiating, actually every major change has already been made before hand. The meeting in the EU special Committee is reduced to a strategic game, where single sentences are being rephrased, and agents that need reminding of their place in the hierarchy are sanctioned. You get the impression of a highly

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<sup>7</sup> A Danish newspaper.

institutionalized web of routinized relations between the “important” agents. The Green Paper was treated just like any other proposal that had to be coordinated in the decision making process.

The relations between the important agents are mostly routines and habits. It is no longer meaningful to ask why things are coordinated the way they are. Their answer is that this is the most appropriate way, and it is a good Danish tradition. The relations between the labour market organizations and the Ministry of Labour are very close and very important. There is a special kind of attention between these partners, e.g. the Ministry of Labour will tend to know what the labour market organizations think about a proposal (the problems etc.) and then write something that they know will be accepted. Another kind of important relation is the personal, “chemistry” is very important. Some of the labour market organizations coordinate precisely because this “chemistry” exists between the representatives. There are only few legal relations in the process, and they function merely as a way of securing the proper procedure between the formal fora in the process.

#### *Meaning and identity in the process.*

In this part I analyzed how the agents discursively articulated boundaries of meaning while reproducing the decision making process. By implicitly articulating boundaries in the process and referring to themselves in specific ways the agents constitute their own identity, and reproduce the structure of the decision making process.

It is very clear that the agents interpret the social dimension as a political initiative concerning the labour market by the Commission, they all create a very sharp distinction between the social dimension and actual social policy (what we in Denmark would characterize as social policy). This distinction is articulated when you look at the drafts for the official answer, and see the changes they undergo. When the paragraph from the Ministry of Social Affairs is changed, there is in effect a suppression of all social political elements in the text, the positive attitude is change to an unsympathetic attitude and an emphasis on procedural questions such as the principle of subsidiarity. The question of social policy is either ignored or reduced to a procedural discussion, social elements are effectively excluded from the debate in Denmark. The agents are not willing to recognise that the Green Paper represents a shift in the boundary between labour market policy and social policy, they see it as the same as the social pact of 1989.

The agents show great respect for what they call the resort boundary between the two ministries, but this boundary is not only about specific cases as far as I see. While articulating a sharp difference between the two ministries the agents point to the important agents in the process. Agents are given

authority in the process. This is why I call this a sectoral boundary, that cuts right through the Danish decision making process, structuring the system and creating meaning and identity for the agents in the reproduction process. The identity of the agents is closely connected to the two sectors, and the social dimension is placed in the labour market political sector. There are no common frames of reference between the two sectors, on the contrary there is suspicion and a general lack of understanding between the agents in the two different sectors. But the sectoral boundary is implicitly on the agenda in the conflict between the two ministries, there is a fight to change it. Though for now it seems as if the labour market political sector has got the upper hand in the battle.

### *Strategies of negotiation in the process.*

In this part I focused on the institutionalized practices of the agents, the rules and norms they use while reproducing the negotiation system. I focused on how the agents through their use of strategies of negotiation produce and reproduce the sectorally divided decision making process, and thus are involved in the mutually constitutive process.

There are at least two fundamental rules that are neither written or explicitly articulated in the process. The Ministry of Social Affairs was criticized because it had not coordinated its paper with anyone (of importance), and they sent the paper directly to the Commission, before it had been through the Danish process. This is something, you just do not do. From the other agents reactions to this I can deduce that this is a fundamental infringement of any kind of sensible negotiation practice. The first rule in the Danish decision making process is: You should **always** coordinate you papers with the labour market organizations. The second rule is: You should **never** send papers to the Commission before a minimum of coordination has taken place. Thus there is a general principle of consensus in the Danish decision making process. Because the Ministry of Social Affairs broke both these rules in the process they are looked upon with suspicion, and they are heavily controlled by the Ministry of Labour, so that these things will not happen again.

The Ministry of Labour and the labour market organizations are using a strategy that I have called the labour market political defence strategy. When they are faced with the transnational challenge they do not react by reflecting over the boundary between social policy and labour market policy. On the contrary they reproduce their sectoral identity by excluding social political elements. By using the consensus rules and reproduce their relations to each other they succeed in keeping their sectoral identity and reproducing the sectoral boundary that structures the decision making process.



The sectoral boundary has implications for the status and the role of the different agents. There are three different kinds of agents in the process: Active agents with high status, Passive agents with high status and passive agents with low status. These roles are closely linked to the sectoral identity. The active agents with high status are the ones participating in the cave meetings: The labour market organizations and the Ministry of Labour. The passive agents with high status are typically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, they do not play a significant role in the process, but they are good to have. The Ministry of Social Affairs was generally looked upon as a passive agent with low status before the Green Paper conflict, this has changed. Now they are seen as a potentially problematic agent that needs to be controlled. In this way the agents are arranged in a kind of internal hierarchy of important and unimportant agents with high or low status, in close connection to the sectoral boundary that cuts through the decision making process.

## **Conclusion.**

The Green Paper is a case of policy development within the social dimension. It is a coordination process wherein the Danish government outlines its fundamental attitude towards the future development of the social and labour market political cooperation on the transnational level. My analyses showed how a sectoral boundary is reproduced in the decision making process through the institutionalized practices of the agents and the institutional structures. The meaning creating overall interpretations that are reproduced in the Danish decision making process, are articulated within two sharply divided sectors - the social political sector and the labour market political sector.

When the agents in the negotiation process strategically refer to a resort boundary between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs as the outer boundary of the policy area, they look upon the resort boundary and the sectoral boundary as given and unproblematic. They never question the sectoral boundary and they never reflect on how this boundary is reproduced in the process. There are no attempts at articulating common frames of reference between labour market policy and social policy to face the common task: fighting social exclusion and unemployment. On the contrary, social exclusion is looked upon as an irrelevant element that has to be excluded from the discourse of the social dimension. The agents are not reflexive in the Danish EU decision making process about their way of formulating policy, their negotiation processes and the boundaries. The creation of meaning in the process, what makes actions sensible and rational and what constitutes the identity of the agents, is so closely connected to the sectoral boundary that it becomes impossible for the agents to coordinate across sectors. The overall interpretation of a structural political companionship between labour market policy and social policy on transnational level clashes with the sectorally based overall interpretations in the Danish decision making process. The Danish agents has

to react to the transnational challenge within this sectorally divided context. This is not possible as long as they are completely unreflexive towards the structural boundaries in the process.

The Danish agents have, what I would call a phase 1 interpretation of the social dimension, as an accompanying policy to the internal market program where the fear of social dumping is prevailing. But instead of pro-actively launching a counterstrategy to the Commissions proposals in the Green Paper, they just say “no” or try to ignore the social political elements by not even mentioning them. A pro-active strategy requires in my opinion a much higher degree of reflection in the negotiation process. This involves being able to articulate a common sense of identity (us against the world) and develop common future images. In this way the sectors would be “open” to reflection as opposed to closed around themselves. For example, it could be possible to articulate a common sense of identity between the labour market political sector and the social political sector against an outer “threat” - social political harmonization in the EU. In that way the community of sectors could articulate a common boundary that would enable the articulation of a political strategy. This is not happening in the Danish EU decision making process today, instead the Danish agents react from case to case, and cannot formulate a pro-active political strategy.

I worry that when the transnational boundary between labour market policy and social policy is shifting without the Danish agents being able to be reflexive about this, we could end up gradually losing authority within the social and labour market political area. I do not necessarily worry about losing authority, I just believe that it should happen as a result of a pro-active strategy within this area.

#### *Further studies.*

In my Ph.D.-project I want to study the negotiation processes at a microsociological level as the second question of my master’s thesis, and what interests me the most is the linking of different political subsystems in order to develop pro-active political strategies. My Ph.D. project will be a comparative study of the complex EU coordination processes of three different countries: Denmark, Sweden and Germany, and on this basis study the possibilities and prerequisites for developing political strategies within the social and labour market political area, as opposed to defensively react from case to case. The project will study the connection between the negotiation processes of the member states and the national agents ability to actively take part in the transnational policy development. I will focus on two levels of coordination and the connection between these:

1. The national level: An analysis of the national negotiation processes centred upon the ministries involved, the interest representatives and other agents of importance in the countries.
2. The transnational level: An analysis of the transnational decision making process centred upon the Commission, its cabinets, DG V, the transnational interest organizations with special emphasis on the relationship between the national agents and their transnational organizations.

The project will study and compare the degree and forms of corporatism in the negotiation processes, it will study forms of coordination and the agents possibilities of action in the process, and it will study when, how and where the national agents are involved in the decision making process and their strategies. On this basis the project will study the consequences of the coordination processes for the possibilities and conditions for pro-active policy development.

It is central to this project that the state is interpreted as polycentric. This implies that the state is not a clear and well-defined entity with complete authority to develop policy. Rather politics is a process that takes place in a number of relatively autonomous and partly closed centres (subsystems) with the participation of both private and public agents, where the state has lost its higher status and takes part in the process at equal terms with the other agents. The negotiation process are interpreted as negotiation games taking place in these relatively autonomous and partly closed political subsystems. A coordination process can thus be seen as a political subsystem that agents reproduce through their institutionalized practices. The institutional perspective implies that agents on the one hand constitute and structure the negotiation process through their actions and identities, and on the other hand that their possibilities to act and define themselves as agents simultaneously are constituted by the institutional structure of the negotiation process.

When policy development takes place in a number of political subsystems it becomes important to focus on forms of coordination or linking between different political subsystems, if you want to study pro-active policy development. The question of pro-active policy development will in this project be interpreted as a fundamental linking or coordination problem, where agents in the different political subsystems must relate to the policy development in other subsystems and integrate this in their own political strategies. The overall theoretical problem of this project is thus how possibilities and conditions for linking and coordination between different political subsystems are created. Furthermore it is the projects ambition to develop a theoretical approach/method to close studies of negotiation games that combines the institutional approach with other theorists such as Jon Elster and Anthony Giddens.

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D. 1. august 1995, **Vicedirektør Jørgen Rønne**, DA, medlem af Arbejdsministeriets EU-Specialudvalg.

D. 3. august 1995, **International sekretær Søren Kargaard**, FTF, medlem af ØSU, medlem af Arbejdsministeriets EU-Specialudvalg.

D. 14. august 1995, **Fuldmægtig Henrik Schilder**, KL, medlem af Arbejdsministeriets EU-Specialudvalg.

D. 16. august 1995, **Konsulent Nanna Westergård Nielsen**, AC, medlem af Arbejdsministeriets EU-Specialudvalg.

D. 17. august 1995, **Fuldmægtig Karin Møhl Larsen**, Socialministeriets Internationale Afdeling, medlem af Arbejdsministeriets EU-Specialudvalg.