

Chapter 4. Undermining corporatism

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Over the past few decades, Swedish governance has been profoundly transformed. Political scientists attribute much of this transformation to decorporatisation. The participation of interest organisations in formal decision-making has decreased. An important landmark in this development was the 1991 decision by the Swedish Confederation of Employers (SAF) unilaterally to withdraw its representatives from government agency boards. This decision signified the fall of the traditional ‘Swedish model’ of formalised, institutionalised participation by SAF, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) in the shaping of policy on labour market and working life issues. SAF’s exit also functioned as the basis for a still-valid 1992 parliamentary decision, which demanded that the boards from which SAF had stepped out be restructured. As a result, the representation of trade unions on these boards also came to an end.¹

The underlying motives for the SAF withdrawal have been subject to extensive discussion.² The purpose of this paper is to problematise the understanding of SAF’s motives laid forth by Rothstein’s and Bergström’s (*R&B Korporatismens fall och den svenska modellens kris* (1999)). More precisely, this chapter will question the validity of R&B’s thesis of reactive intentionality, and the lack of empirical support for the authors’ null hypothesis of strategic considerations.³

Next, R&B’s thesis will be recapitulated, followed by a closer description of the authors’ null hypothesis, a presentation of positive evidence for the same null hypothesis, and, finally, a dissection and critical examination of the authors’

¹ The decorporatisation of Swedish politics has been discussed in, inter alia, a number of more extensive research projects in the Department of government at Uppsala University: first within the framework of RIO (the Riksdag and the Organized Interests) where in particular Lewin, 1992; Rothstein, 1992; Hermansson, 1993; and Öberg, 1994 should be mentioned, and later within the framework of PISA (Political Institutions and Strategic Acting) with Hermansson et al., 1997; Öberg, 1997; Öberg et al., 1999; Melin, 2000; Svensson, 2001 as some of the contributions. See also SOU, 1990:44; Micheletti, 1994; Pestoff, 1995; Hermansson et al., 1999; Rothstein and Bergström, 1999; Johansson, 2000; 2003.

² Notable contributions to this discussion are, among others, Ljunggren, 1991a; b, De Geer, 1992, p. 175; Lewin, 1992, p. 101 and 104f; Kjellberg, 1992, p. 101; Rothstein 1992, p. 349f; Crouch, 1994, p. 213; Pestoff, 1995, p. 165f; Hermansson et al., 1997, p. 375; cf also Pestoff 1987; De Geer 1989, p. 288; Wockelberg 1996, p. 27; Öberg 1997, p. 52 ff and p. 61ff; Johansson and Magnusson, 1998, p. 328; Micheletti, 1994, *passim*.

³ The chapter is based on Johansson 2000. The author is responsible for all translations of cited Swedish literature and sources in English. In the process of writing the chapter, Magnus Lundgren, former MA student in the Department of Government at Uppsala University, contributed with translation drafts and proposals.

positive arguments for using reactive intentionality as an explanation for SAF's withdrawal. The chapter will end with an assessment of the reliability of R&B's conclusion, and a positioning of SAF's decision within a wider political context.

R&B's thesis of reactive intentionality as a motive explanation

R&B conducted an empirical study seeking to explain SAF's exit from the government agency boards.⁴ In doing this, the authors adopt an intentional model, in which the decisions of a certain actor are explained by reference to intentions and calculations. For purposes of analysis, SAF is regarded as a homogenous actor (Rothstein and Bergström, 1999, Chapter 2).

R&B's central explanatory hypothesis is the idea of *reactive* intentionality, which is contrasted with conceptions of strategic intentionality:

'SAF has reacted to a course of events beyond its control. The organisation has suffered a diminishing influence in agency boards and its decision to "say farewell to corporatism" is a *subsequent* reaction to this. The other possibility is that SAF acted strategically to increase its influence or even to avoid a decreased influence. The act then becomes *anticipative*. They wanted to attain or avoid something they saw coming in the future' (ibid, p. 46).

In R&B's conclusion, the hypothesis of reactive intentionality is articulated more precisely. The authors also believe that they have found empirical support for it.

'[T]he main cause for the SAF withdrawal from the government agency boards is that their influence had decreased. The possibility of influencing the implementation of policy had been reduced during the entire 1980s. The state had not fulfilled its part of the corporatist "contract", and in reality made it ever more unprofitable for SAF to participate in the boards of AMV. The relation between costs and benefits had become ever more unprofitable through the reform of the boards' (ibid, p. 82f).

The idea of a corporatist 'contract' is borrowed from PerOla Öberg, who applied Gudmund Hernes's power exchange model to corporatist arrangements in his doctoral thesis. Öberg regards corporatism as the result of an exchange of power resources between the state and interest organisations, whereby the state acquires legitimacy for its public policy in exchange for allowing organisations a degree of influence over the same. Important preconditions for the establishment of such a corporatist exchange are, first, that the interest organisation is representative and able to control opinion within the functional interest that it represents, and,

⁴ This question is the subject of the first part of the book. A second part then deals with issues touching upon the effects of decorporatisation, with a focus on the functions and influence of the new boards and consulting committees.

second, that the state really can guarantee the interest organisation in question a substantial influence over public policy (Öberg, 1994).

By arguing that the state failed to fulfil its part of the corporatist contract during the 1980s, R&B imply that the state has been a bad guarantor of SAF's influence over public policy on labour market issues. This could – if it really reflects SAF's reasoning – fundamentally mean one or both of two things: first, that the state failed to guarantee enough SAF influence vis-à-vis the trade union movement and other interest parties on government agency boards, given that there existed a real board influence to distribute; and/or second, that the state failed to guarantee the influence of the government agency boards over public policy in relation to other 'state actors', such as the parliament, the government, and officials in public administration.

Judging from the more narrowly defined hypothesis of R&B's investigation, their reaction thesis covers both of the above possibilities, which explain a decrease in SAF influence over the government agency boards (Rothstein and Bergström, 1999, p. 45f). At the same time, it is evident that R&B focus heavily on the idea that the government agency boards lost decision-making authority in relation to other institutions in the political system during the 1980s.

'Above all, the reduced power of government agency boards has benefited public officials, as decisional authority has been transferred to director-generals and province labour directors. Thus, the conditions of the corporatist exchange have changed. This picture is confirmed by SAF-official Redbrant, who is of the opinion that, in the boards, SAF could do little more than criticise decisions that were already taken. ... The only thing that contradicts the overall picture is SAF's declared motive of undermining the position of LO. Given the weight of the other motives, it is reasonable to assume that this argument indeed was a contributory cause to the organisation's decision, but that it carries *little weight when compared to those motives that are based on the reaction to government policy vis-à-vis the government agency boards*' [italics added] (ibid, p. 78ff).

According to R&B, altering the manner in which the government exercised political control caused a change in SAF's cost-benefit analysis, which – at the actor level – is seen as an explanation of the withdrawal from the government agency boards.

'Having made an efficiency analysis ... SAF, the organisation with the greatest doubts about the public sector and, accordingly, the lowest threshold of withdrawal, chooses to opt out of the cooperation in 1992. ... It is quite likely that if an organisation like SAF is forced to pay an increasingly higher price for an ever decreasing influence, it is just a matter of time before the organisation withdraws from the activity' (ibid, p. 150f).

R&B's null hypothesis of strategic intentionality as a motive explanation

There are many conflicting definitions of 'strategic intentionality' and 'strategic action' (Johansson, 2000, footnote, p. 50). However, given the purpose of this chapter, it is important to use R&B's definition; any conceptual clarifications should then fall within the definition of 'strategy' stipulated by R&B.

In their paper, R&B do not distinguish between the motives behind SAF's anti-corporatist position concerning government agency boards, and SAF's motives for a unilateral withdrawal from the same boards. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to make such a distinction in order subsequently to test whether evidence exists for SAF's strategic reasoning on one or several of these corporatist dimensions. A credible questioning of R&B's reaction thesis needs to include convincing evidence of the occurrence of strategic calculation, both concerning the issue of the declared attitude toward corporatist government agencies, and concerning the issue of withdrawal.

What does it then mean, in a strict sense, to argue that SAF's withdrawal from the government agency boards can be explained in terms of strategic, rather than reactive intentionality? In the most clear-cut case, it means that representative SAF officials saw withdrawal as motivated from the perspective of a long-term plan. This plan's objective was *to change the fundamental rules defining the conditions for the participation of labour market parties in labour market policy processes, and to strengthen the influence of SAF in relation to that of trade union organisations*.⁵

Proving the occurrence of such strategic intentionality, and arguing that it can function as a motive explanation for SAF's withdrawal from the government agency boards, requires convincing evidence on seven empirical assertions: (1) Central SAF actors regarded the government agency boards in the labour market sector as centres of political power; (2) Central SAF actors came to the conclusion that industry experienced an influence problem in the government agency boards; (3) Central SAF actors examined how the influence problem could be solved; (4) Given assertions 1-3 above – central SAF actors regarded an anti-corporatist position on the composition of labour market government agency boards as a rational decision from an influence perspective; (5) Central SAF actors considered how to bring about the exit of trade union organisations from labour market government agency boards; (6) Central SAF actors came to the conclusion that a unilateral SAF withdrawal from labour market government agency boards would make a reconstruction of the boards inevitable, leaving trade union organisations without the right to representation; (7) Given support for assertions 5-6 above – central SAF actors regarded the unilateral withdrawal of SAF from the labour market government agency boards as a rational decision.

⁵ Cf Tsebelis's (1990) reasoning concerning 'institutional design' of a 'redistributive' type.

The language used in the seven assertions above proves that the empirical test of R&B's thesis originates from something designated – possibly a little vaguely – as 'central SAF actors'.⁶ This group consisted primarily of individuals who, during the period in question, had influential formal positions in SAF, were members of the SAF board, displayed whole-hearted support for the withdrawal decision, and promoted wider internal support for it. Meeting these criteria were, in particular, the SAF chairman, Ulf Laurin, and the SAF president, Göran Tunhammar.⁷

Statements from the above persons have been complemented by statements from other individuals in SAF, namely Lars-Göran Redbrandt, Lennart Grafström and Janerik Larsson. Within the heterogenous SAF, they all belonged to the same activist minority culture,⁸ committed to decorporatisation as well as to

⁶ The term 'actors' is perhaps not the most appropriate. It may give the impression that the chapter in this volume emanates from a different kind of actor attribution than that of R&B. However, that is not the case, even though I have argued elsewhere that it is more fruitful to see the SAF of the 1980s and the early 1990s as a heterogeneous organisation composed of a number of different subcultures, or – if you want – different types of actors. See Johansson, 2000, Chapter 6; Johansson, 2003. Cf De Geer, 1989; 1992.

An alternative to the term 'central actors' would be the similar term 'central persons'. Still, the latter is problematic as it makes one think of *formal* positions in an organisation. Although looking at formal positions may be a good starting point for an empirical analysis of SAF motives, one must not misjudge the representativity of formal positions. For example, it is known that, concerning the question of a SAF withdrawal, there existed a great many individuals with formal positions in SAF who were sceptical, and in some cases, directly negative towards the policy that the organisation finally adopted (Johansson, 2000). In light of this, using statements from such individuals as evidence on the motives to withdraw from the boards seems ill-advised. Conversely, it is reasonable to assume that statements from persons in the organisation lacking formal positions – through informal connections to advocates of withdrawal having formal positions, and through the central role they potentially might have played in the early stages of SAF policy-making – could shed important light on the motives behind SAF's withdrawal.

Moreover, the memoranda written in connection with the internal investigation of the issue of corporatism, and with its hearing by the SAF board, contain the most substantial and developed arguments on the motives for a SAF withdrawal, whereas the board discussion, for obvious reasons, was of a much briefer and scantier nature. See Johansson, 2000. Cf De Geer, 1989, p. 14f.

⁷ For evidence of Laurin's and Tunhammar's engagement in the withdrawal issue and the important role played by them in pushing the withdrawal decision forward on the SAF board, see SAF's styrelse, 1990, p. 9ff.; SAF's styrelse, 1991, pp. 13-20; Laurin, 1990; Sydsvenska Dagbladet, 1989 (interview with Ulf Laurin); Svenska Dagbladet, 1990 (interview with Ulf Laurin); SAF-tidningen, 1990a (interview with Ulf Laurin); Svenska Dagbladet, 1991 (interview with Ulf Laurin); Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, 1989, p. 4 (contribution from Göran Tunhammar during the SAF-conference 'Gisslan eller motvikt?'); SAF-tidningen 1990b, p. 8f (interview with Göran Tunhammar). See also Johansson, 2000, p. 122ff and pp. 137-143. Cf Laurin, 1991a; b; SAF-tidningen 1989, p. 2; SAF-tidningen, 1994 (interview with Ulf Laurin); Tunhammar, 1991a; b; 1992; 2000; Redbrandt, 1999; Larsson, 2000.

⁸ About SAF and its subcultures – the negotiation culture, the expert/court of appeal culture and the activist culture – see Johansson, 2000, Chapter 6 (which gives a number of reasons for placing Laurin, Tunhammar, Larsson, Grafström and Redbrandt in the latter subculture),

the withdrawal policy; and, for an extended period of time, they actively pursued these issues.⁹ Further, Redbrandt and Grafström can, despite their lacking formal positions (they were mid-level administrators at the SAF secretariat), be designated as the ‘masterminds’ and main actors behind the shaping of SAF’s anti-corporatist policy concerning the government agency boards from 1985 and onwards (Johansson, 2000, Chapter 4; Johansson, 2003). Further, Redbrandt played an important role in promoting the issue of withdrawal on the SAF board in 1990; he also composed the material that functioned as a basis for the board’s withdrawal decisions in 1990 and 1991 (Redbrandt, 1990; 1991a; Johansson, 2000, pp. 117-132).¹⁰ After Tunhammar took office as president of the organisation in 1990, Larsson was designated as director of information. Together with Redbrandt, he formed a part of the special ‘decorporatisation group’, which consisted of four individuals in addition to the president. This group was assembled at the SAF secretariat by Tunhammar at the time of the 1991 board decision to depart from the government agency boards (Redbrandt, 1991b).

and also De Geer, 1989 and 1992. An interesting account of the internal tensions in SAF, from the insider perspective of an ex-SAF official, is Lundgren, 2001.

For specialist reading about the long dominance of the negotiation culture within SAF, its character and fundament, see De Geer, 1989, p. 343, p. 178, p. 155f and p. 324f, and also his writing on SAF history for the period 1930-1970 with the telling title of ‘*SAF i förhandlingar*’ (SAF in negotiation) (De Geer, 1986). See also Elvander, 1988, p. 358f. Cf SAF-tidningen 1980 (interview with Lars-Gunnar Albåge); SAF-tidningen 1981 (interview with Lars-Gunnar Albåge); Bresky et al., 1981, p. 116ff. (interview with Folke Haldén); Lundahl, 1997, p. 257f; Forsberg, 1996, p. 98f.

Recommended reading concerning the growth of an expert culture within SAF includes De Geer, 1986, Chapter 2, and also Söderpalm, 1980.

⁹ Expressions of this active commitment to decorporatisation that can be found in publicly accessible material are Grafström, 1985a; 1987a-b; 1989; 1990a-b; 1991; Larsson, 1984a-g; 1985; 1987. In the material from SAF discussions ‘behind closed doors’, the following are worth mentioning: Redbrandt, 1986; 1987; 1990; 1991a-c; Grafström, 1982a; 1984d; 1985b-c; 1986a-e; 1988a-b; Grafström and Redbrandt, 1985a-c. See also the policy papers that Redbrandt and Grafström wrote in the context of the SAMPOL project ‘Organisationernas Inflytande’ (The Influence of Organizations), 1984a-d, the remainders of the work within SAMPOL (eg SAMPOL, 1983a-c; SAMPOL, 1984a-g; SAMPOL, 1985), and from the so-called Genomförandegruppen (the Implementation Group) in which Grafström as well as Redbrandt took part during its active period in 1985-1987 (eg Genomförandegruppen, 1985a-f; 1986a-b; 1987) as well as Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen 1989, a debate following a speech by af Winklerfeld (contribution by Janerik Larsson). A more developed argument for the central roles played by Redbrandt and Grafström in developing SAF’s position on corporatism can be found in Johansson, 2000.

¹⁰ At a meeting in September 1990, the SAF board yet again articulated the organisation’s anti-corporatist stance on the issue of government agency boards, at the same time as the board commissioned the SAF secretariat to ‘present, at the next board meeting, a plan for the abolishing of SAF participation in decision-making government agency boards’ (SAF:s styrelse, 1990, p. 11). This was also done, but the final decision as to withdrawing came only at a later board meeting (SAF:s styrelse, 1991, p. 20), which is why there are, de facto, two board decisions on SAF’s withdrawal from government agency boards dating from the Laurin/Tunhammar regime.

Empirical evidence¹¹

Having found that decorporatisation of the government agency boards was an important SAF interest, what was the reasoning of the organisation's central actors?

Let us start by reflecting on the following question. To what extent were the government agency boards conceived of as centres of political power, the decisions of which were thus regarded as having important consequences for SAF's client companies? The following is Tunhammar's view:

[R]egulative government agencies are something we ... have in abundance. I want to call to attention that, every year, the governmental agencies that are authorised to promulgate regulations, which are about 40, produce about three times as many regulations as are produced by the government and Riksdag combined. I will provide an example concerning the field of work environment. The Work Environment Act is a typical so-called skeleton law. Based on this law, the government issued an ordinance and in turn delegated authority to the National Board of Occupational Safety and Health Authority to issue a lot of rules. The National Board of Occupational Safety and Health does that, and has been doing it in an orderly corporatist manner for a number of years, with the assistance of representatives of interest parties. Then, after a number of years, you find out that many of the rules issued by the Work Environment Authority are most probably unlawful, meaning that they go beyond the framework designated by the government. The Work Environment Authority replies that the interest parties have given their assent. And then everything is alright, even if it happens to be unlawful. *In this field – as in all others – the case is that the agency*

¹¹ The empirical basis for the examination of R&B's thesis consists mainly of studies of documentation from the SAF archive, to which I have largely had free access. I have thus examined the following material: all of the SAF board (SAF:s styrelse) records from 1979 to 1991; the AU and managerial group records over this period, when the question of the government agency boards and/or SAMPOL were dealt with; all of the accessible remains from the investigative work that was done within the framework of SAF's program for public policy (SAMPOL) 1983-1984, and the following-up of this, performed in the context of the Implementation Group (Genomförandegruppen) 1985-1988; some other documentation, such as the memoranda that functioned as basis for the board's decision on the withdrawal question in 1990 and 1991, material from the corporatism discussions in the managerial group (until 1980 designated as the 'Directorate') 1979-1981, and also the letters that were sent to the organisation's partners in connection to the withdrawal decision in 1991.

The above material is extensive. Still, I have found it justified, for various reasons, to supplement it with a read-through of the publicly accessible material: the partner magazine 'SAF-tidningen', congress material, opinion pieces from, and interviews with, SAF representatives in the daily press, and SAF books. To this should be added studies in the archive of the major SAF federation (Verkstadsföreningen), about ten interviews with SAF representatives (among others Ulf Laurin and Göran Tunhammar) and some other material. See Johansson (2000) for a more detailed account of the material analysed, and also motivations and considerations concerning the choice and usage of sources.

concerned is far better equipped than corresponding ministry in the governmental Offices [italics added]. This means, that if you turn to the governmental Offices, they say that it is an issue for the Work Environment Authority, and if the parties have agreed on it, everything is alright' (Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, 1989).¹²

In the quotation, there are two trains of thought, both aimed at articulating government agencies as central political power arenas. The first concerns the *scope* of decisions in regard to ordinances and company fees, which were seen as quite considerable, especially through the use of vague skeleton laws on the part of the government and the parliament – which gave plenty of leeway to government agencies in areas important to business interests (cf Waldenström, 1979, p. 52 and p. 101; Tarras-Wahlberg, 1980; Grafström, 1984e). Second, Tunhammar expresses a view of the government agencies as having a seemingly magic advantage over the governmental Offices in influencing an array of policies. Therefore, government agencies could also be expected to play an important role in *initiating* policies that were later accepted by the government and the parliament (cf Tarras-Wahlberg, 1979; Grafström, 1984e). In an article published in Dagens Industri in the summer of 1990, Laurin (1990) noted that

'[m]ore than 1/3 of the national budget is channelled through these [government agency] bodies. It is all about corporatism – the excessive influence of the interest organisations over the political sector'.

From the quotations above, it is not apparent what status and power Tunhammar and Laurin particularly ascribed to the *boards*. However, when other statements are studied, it becomes clear that they both viewed the boards as important power centres. The following is Laurin's view:

'Since 1985, we have tried to build public opinion in order to get the government, LO, and TCO to realise the ill-suited involvement of interest organisations in the running of fundamental elements of the state apparatus' (Laurin, 1991a, p. 17).

1985 was the year that SAF first officially declared its policy of abolishing interest organisations' representation on the government agency boards, something Laurin describes above as an issue of running fundamental elements of the state apparatus.

Tunhammar argued, for his part, that '[t]he issue of participation of organisations in government agencies has a more far-reaching significance than one might first believe' (Tunhammar, 1991b, p. 157), a state of affairs that, *inter alia*, was made apparent by the fact that '[o]ver a third of the Swedish national budget is managed by corporatist *boards*' [italics added] (ibid, p. 158).

¹² Debate following speech by Ingemar Ståhl, p. 4 (Göran Tunhammar).

‘[T]he *management* of government agencies must be overhauled. ... The corporatist system *preserves the organisation of government agencies* and as a result, necessary measures are delayed or prevented. In this way, the corporatist system contributes to legitimising the expansion and monopoly of the public sector’ [italics added] (ibid, p. 160) (see also Redbrandt, 1991a, p. 10).

Redbrandt also touched on the issue of the political power of the government agency boards. His dealing with the issue can be seen in a context of high importance, namely in the administrative memoranda that functioned as the basis for the SAF board’s withdrawal decision in the early 1990s. In one of these administrative memoranda, one can read the following:

‘The working-class movement is benefiting from the corporatist system. Even under non-socialist governments, the boards remain under socialist majority because of the representation of interest organisations. Through the government agencies, LO can also push through what they would not have managed via the [wage] negotiating route’ (Redbrandt, 1990, p. 2).

Here, the concept of government agency boards can be further defined as centres of political power from a *dynamic* temporal perspective. This ‘threat image’ articulates the trade union movement as willing to advance on several, if not all imaginable, fronts in their (as it was understood) unrelenting struggle to bring about unionised/political industrial management. Thus, the government agency boards were understood as conceivable arenas for radical union action, and consequently, they were something that SAF would be interested in controlling (cf Grafström, 1982b).

This idea is representative of the political context, and of the activist sub-cultural SAF context, from which ideas about decorporatisation grew in the mid-1980s. The trade union offensive of the 1970s and the ‘legislative rage’ at issues of co-determination and labour rights, had, as it was understood in some SAF quarters, not been enough. Through the employee investment funds¹³ and demands for increased co-determination,¹⁴ LO made an attempt – at least it was conceived as such – to strengthen union influence over Swedish companies. Individuals from the activist wing within SAF (which did not take charge before 1989-90) then posed the following question. What would come next, and through what channel? (See, eg, Grafström, 1982b; Bratt, 1982. Cf Ekegren, 1981; Lars-

¹³ The question of employee investment funds has been dealt with, from multiple perspectives, in a number of studies. See, eg, Åsard, 1978; 1985; Gilljam, 1988; Lewin, 1989, chapter 9; Bengtsson, 1991; Öberg, 1994. See also De Geer, 1989, pp. 316-321 and De Geer 1992, p. 156f and, p. 192ff.

¹⁴ The questions of co-determination have been thoroughly examined by, among others, Hadenius (1983) and Schiller (1988a, b). See also, De Geer 1989, pp. 297-316; Bengtsson, 1991; Öberg, 1994.

son, 1982c). Against this backdrop, some from this wing apparently saw it best to act before it was too late – ‘a stitch in time saves nine’. In 1984, they argued that ‘there is nothing to indicate that LO is planning to abandon their political ambition and their demands for unionised/political control of business’ (Organisationernas Inflytande, 1984d, p. 6):

‘We must balance our opponents, who do not hesitate to use the political and administrative tracks in parallel with the negotiation track’ (ibid, p. 4).

The conclusion was identical more than five years later.

Thus far, we have been able to support that, in the period leading up to the withdrawal decision, central SAF actors viewed the labour market government agency boards as centres of political power.

Then, did the same persons believe that SAF’s influence in the boards was weak enough to be considered a problem?

Laurin expressed his view in an interview in SAF-tidningen (SAF magazine) in the early September of 1990:

‘The role as “hostage” does not feel good and the question is whether we really do have an influence. Most often, we are outvoted’ (SAF-tidningen, 1990a, p. 4).

A short time later, when interviewed by Dagens Industri, the SAF chairman returned to the influence problem caused by corporatist arrangements in government agency boards:

‘We must constantly register dissenting opinions or make adjustments, and then we end up with a decision that de facto goes against the interests of our owners’ (Dagens Industri, 1990) (see also Laurin, 1990; Ulf Laurin quoted in Olivecrona, 1991, p. 97; Laurin 1991a, p. 17f; Laurin, 1991b).

At the 1991 January meeting of the SAF board, Tunhammar argued, in the same spirit as above, that having corporatism in the government agency boards was something that ‘LO and TCO had benefited from – it did not serve the interests of SAF’ (SAF Board, 1991, p. 19). And:

‘The rationale behind the withdrawal decision is making SAF a more efficient promoter of industrial interests and better at exerting influence’ (ibid, p. 13).

Further, Tunhammar argued that it was problematic for SAF to sit on the government agency boards while simultaneously working for ‘a calling into question of fundamental questions, “[as] the room of manoeuvre left for SAF representatives is restricted”’ (ibid, p. 18). According to the SAF president, this dilemma was evident concerning the National Board of Occupational Safety and Health. But concerning the National Labour Market Board, it was even more intricate,

‘because SAF was critical of large parts of Swedish labour market policy’ (cf Tunhammar, 1991b, p. 160 and p. 162; Tunhammar, 1992).

As is evident, Laurin and Tunhammar were adherents of a view that portrayed SAF representatives on government agency boards as *hostages*, constantly subdued by what can best be described as various pro-regulation coalitions, consisting of union representatives and officials who were more or less loyal to the working-class movement and to the policy of the Social Democratic government.

Such ideas should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon. They reflect an activist perspective characteristic of the period, which sharply criticised SAF’s participation in various corporatist bodies. The activist perspective had been articulated in different contexts since the early 1980s, and it is worth mentioning the representatives of the largest SAF association, the Federation of Engineering Industries, and Janerik Larsson during his time as editor-in-chief of *SAF-tidningen* (see, eg, Larsson, 1981; 1982c; 1983; 1984h; Alderin, 1984; Liljebladh, 1982; Idin, 1983; Gyllenhammar, 1983; De Geer, 1992, p. 160ff. Cf Lundqvist, 2000, pp. 97-102; Gyllenhammar, 1991, in particular pp. 214-220). Concerning the question of government agency boards, these ideas were brought forward during the 1980s, particularly by Lennart Grafström and Lars-Göran Redbrandt (see, eg, *Organisationernas Inflytande* 1984a-d. Cf also *SAMPOL* 1984f).

A linking of the idea of a ‘hostage situation’ to the idea of *agenda-setting privilege* was common in the early 1980s among those in SAF inclined toward activism.¹⁵ Such linkage was also made by the activists who pursued a policy of decorporatisation within the framework of a public policy investigation (*SAMPOL*) carried out under the auspices of SAF in 1983-84, which about a year later led the organisation officially to disassociate itself from the system of corporatist interest representation:

‘SAF representatives could be held hostage to a policy that fundamentally diverges from our clients’ wishes. The agenda-setting initiative is put at risk’ (*Organisationernas Inflytande*, 1984c, p. 3).¹⁶

The tendency of the hostage situation to shift agenda-setting power away from industry organisations to organisations representing sectors of the public sphere is emphasised:

‘The organisations risked becoming estranged from their members and getting difficulties in expressing urgent member interests. Instead, powerful sectoral interests are developed. Agenda-setting tends to be made by secto-

¹⁵ See, eg, Larsson 1982c; 1983; Westholm, 1981. Cf Ljunggren 1992, p. 323f. A general source of inspiration for these discussions, which also had an important influence on the terminological plane, was the ‘expert report’ by Lars Gustafsson to the SAF congress in 1980 (Gustafsson, 1979).

¹⁶ The background to *SAMPOL* and the activities it resulted in are thoroughly examined in Johansson (2000).

ral interests rather than by member interests. Since major interest organisations are in agreement, necessary structural changes are blocked, as is the liberty of action of individuals or companies' (ibid, p. 2).

The above theme was at the core of a 1984 text, 'Strategi, Aktion, Framgång – om SAF:s samhällspolitiska arbete' (Strategy, Action, Success – on SAF's engagement in public policy), the final report of one of SAMPOL's three subprojects, 'The Influence of Organisations':

'The first to ask a question or to present a proposal, and who succeeds in calling attention to it, has an advantage. He decides on the playing field and the tactics. People with a different understanding are taken by surprise, potentially giving ill-considered judgements under extortion, and end up as mere commentators. ... [In a corporatist context] there is a manifest risk of being forced into the agenda of others. Sectoral interests take over. As a result, we distance ourselves from member interests. We are sometimes forced to commit ourselves to a development that diverges from the preferences of our members. The organisation is tied up. There is a risk of becoming a hostage. ... Corporatism can be regarded as a blockage to development. Our participation is subject to conditions set by others and follows an agenda formulated by others' (Organisationernas Inflytande 1984d, p. 18f and p. 21f) (see also Organisationernas Inflytande a-b; Grafström, 1982a).

The linking together of the perceived hostage situation in government agency boards, and the kind of agenda-setting privilege that was thought of as reserved for coalitions among social democrats, the trade union movement, and administrative officials – above formulated as the 'sectoral interest' (within the labour market sphere) – was also evident in the material supporting the SAF board's stance on the withdrawal issue in the early 1990s.

'Corporatism prevents or complicates necessary reforms and preserves the structure of government agencies. The hostage situation implies that our representatives are sometimes forced to take part in decisions that are disliked by our partners. In effect, the corporatist system implies that business bestows legitimacy on the public sector's monopoly and expansion. ... An agency's basic outlook and its choice of issues leave a mark on business in its sector. The agency determines "the agenda". As a result, business is increasingly working with issues chosen by the agencies. This binds us to established systems and hampers new thinking, development, and our own agenda-setting' (Redbrandt, 1990, p. 2; cf Redbrandt 1991a).

To summarise, there is no doubt that central SAF actors had a fundamental problem with SAF's influence on labour market government agency boards. On this view, SAF representatives could only exert marginal influence on policy deci-

sions; they were described as being held hostage to a policy that was completely contrary to industrial interests. Policy was instead made by powerful pro-regulation coalitions, composed of union representatives and agency officials, with the backing of the Social Democratic government. Such alliances were seen as having the so-called agenda-setting privilege – something SAF wanted to break. This effort was seriously impeded by SAF’s very presence on the boards.

Then, did central SAF actors also examine how the perceived influence problem could be solved at the time? As we have seen, central SAF actors discussed the need to ‘formulate demands and proposals of our own’, as well as the need for a more offensive SAF strategy, which was

‘difficult to reconcile with traditional participation in government agencies, in which all important issues are managed according to the agenda and needs of the government agencies’ (Redbrandt, 1991a, p. 4).

Thus, a prerequisite for solving the influence problem was to release SAF from the constraints of participation on the government agency boards. This would make ‘the position of SAF ... stand out more clearly’, and also make possible a ‘gathering of forces around the issues [deemed] important by companies’ (ibid, p. 17).

However, this was by no means regarded as sufficient; it was also important, as is evident from the memorandum that formed the basis for the withdrawal decision in 1991, that ‘[t]he most efficient working methods are ... utilised’ (ibid, p. 17) to a greater extent than before.

‘Projects and policy are promoted by public opinion-building and direct contacts with decision-makers and government agencies’ (ibid, p. 17).¹⁷

Here, Redbrandt argues for a stronger focus on lobbying and public opinion-building in SAF activity relating to government agencies. Such a strategy was perceived to offer SAF the greatest influence on policy-making. Moreover, the memorandum makes it evident that the qualitative improvements expected to result from SAF’s acting more independently, without constraints from earlier board positions, were to be combined with other (both quantitative and qualitative) improvements to the lobbying operations.

‘Informal contacts between SAF and the government agencies are to be increased. Initiatives are to be taken by SAF. This holds for the managerial level as well as for the relationship between SAF experts and the government agencies. It is important to influence the central offices’ management of the government agencies on a regional and local level’ (ibid, p. 18).

¹⁷ See also p. 4, where it is made evident that ‘the interests of our partners ... should be pursued through, among other things, confidential contacts and the building of public opinion’.

It is also evident from the memorandum that increased ventures into lobbying and public opinion-building were also associated with economic re-dispositions and re-prioritisations in SAF's budget (ibid, p. 4).¹⁸

The memorandum both emphasises and supports lobbying and public opinion-building as efficient methods of influencing policy processes in government agencies. This must be understood within a wider context. During the 1970s, SAF had developed partially new working methods, aimed at exerting a greater influence over public decision-making. A special lobbying unit, called 'Riksdag and Secretariat contacts', was established in 1978. The same year, the organisation's division for public opinion-building was substantially strengthened, in part by the establishment of Timbro, a market-oriented think-tank, and by reactivating Näringslivets fond (the Swedish Industry Fund) (De Geer, 1992, p. 190f; 1989, p. 289f; Bresky et al., 1981, p. 203ff). However, the effort to improve the capacity for public opinion-building and to give it a more durable and coherent direction had been going on since the late 1960s, when Sture Eskilsson (then at the SAF Department of Social Contacts) began to air his famous memoranda on the SAF board (De Geer, 1989, p. 327-332; 1992, p. 190; Hansson and Lodenius, 1988, p. 9).¹⁹

It is notable that the invigorated venture into *informal* methods of influence, lobbying and public opinion-building were carried out without a corresponding deprioritisation of the more *formalised* and *institutionalised* methods of exerting influence. During the greater part of the 1980s there was still very strong support within SAF for a centralised negotiating system, and for participating in public commissions of inquiry, on government agency boards, and in the referral process, where reports from public commissions of inquiry are referred for consideration (see De Geer, 1989, p. 178, p. 287ff, p. 343 and p. 358. See also Johansson, 2000). New strategies were tested in order to break the political hegemony of the left without neglecting the traditional corporatist ways of exerting influence.

For a long time, until Laurin and Tunhammar took office, with strong backing for their reforms,²⁰ SAF management pursued a wait-and-see policy regarding this development, lacking clear priorities as to methods of exerting influence. This was partly due to the management's lack of clear visions for the future of SAF, and partly due to a wish to maintain a heterogeneous organisation, charac-

¹⁸ There was also a strategy for dealing with the scenario that probably would evolve in the wake of the anticipated decorporatisation: that at least some individuals with industry background would sit on the boards with personal mandates, rather than with organisational mandates. SAF would then develop special contacts with such board members: 'The SAF secretariat should stay in contact with entrepreneurs who are on the boards with personal mandates, and, at convenience, invite these to discussions' (p. 18).

¹⁹ About SAF's opinion formation activities from that time, see also Hansson, 1984; Boréus, 1994, pp. 111-128.

²⁰ About the mandate for reforms, see De Geer 1992, p. 167 and p. 179.

terised by strong subcultures within the secretariat, and overlapping these with marked differences in opinion amongst SAF's member federations and partners.

Redbrandt had strong backing when he composed his withdrawal plan, in the form of an activist-minded chairmanship. This made it possible to drop corporatist working methods in favour of what was seen in activist circles as a considerably more effective means to, if possible, break the working-class movement's dominance over the decision-making of government agencies. Judging by the records of the 1990-1991 SAF board discussions, the period leading up to the decision to wind up SAF's participation on the boards, there is no indication that Tunhammar and/or Laurin (chair) would have made a different assessment than Redbrandt concerning the efficiency of the different working methods. 'SAF would be able to exert greater influence on various issues through alternative working methods,' as the SAF chair put it in his argument for SAF's withdrawal from the government agency boards (SAF:s styrelse 1991, p. 16).

To summarise, it is possible to conclude that central SAF actors had considered how the influence problem could be solved on the part of SAF. The plan was to make it happen through abolition of interest representation on the boards, making it possible for SAF to act more freely and focus its efforts on questions of vital importance to the organisation's members. This would take place through an expansion of and focus on SAF's lobbying and public opinion-building, which were working methods judged to be considerably more effective than formal representation on the boards.

If viewed from an influence perspective, should SAF's decision to seek decorporatisation of the government agency boards be regarded as a *rational* choice?

This question is not as trivial as it might initially seem, even when the arguments of the central SAF actors are considered. First, a greater potential for SAF influence on government agency policy was no end in itself. Essentially, it was about accomplishing a fundamental change in the way labour market and economic policy was being made, aiming for far-reaching deregulations in areas relevant to private business (see, eg, Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen 1990; Redbrandt, 1991a, p. 4. Cf Laurin, 1991a, pp. 9-16). Second, there was a tradition within SAF, which was officially sanctioned in 1985, that operated in the same context as the anti-corporatism regarding the composition of the boards. Björn Tarras-Wahlberg, head of the division for Riksdag and Secretariat's contacts in the early 1980s, functioned as a pioneer of this tradition – seeking, with American neo-liberal inspiration, increased parliamentary direction, and control and revision of the government agencies, in order to bring about a 'regulation slaughter' in public administration (Organisationernas Inflytande, 1984d, p.26).²¹

²¹ Examples of early SAF arguments in support of increased parliamentary management, control and revision of the government agencies, with the aim of bringing about radical deregulations for the benefit of Swedish industry, include Tarras-Wahlberg, 1980, 1981, 1983. Cf Markstedt, 1982 and Sundberg, 1982.

We are then left with the paradoxical circumstance that central actors within SAF – specifically Grafström, Redbrandt and Tunhammar – who were involved in the moulding of SAF’s official policy in the mid-1980s, both concerning anti-corporatism and the recommendation for increased parliamentary control of government agencies – simultaneously experimented with two different, apparently contradictory, types of projects. These were aimed at steering the implementation of official policies in a direction more favourable to the members of SAF. The individuals who argued in favour of the idea of decorporatisation, and for an increase in the influence of industry over the government agencies, also wished to restrict and weaken the same agencies’ room for manoeuvre and decisional authority. How is this odd case to be understood?

To shed light on the circumstances, it seems necessary to return to some texts composed by Grafström and Redbrandt in 1984 as parts of SAMPOL. In these texts, we find the view that ‘SAF must design an apparatus for development and influence that can survive changes in political power’ (Organisationernas Inflytande, 1984a, p. 4. See also Organisationernas Inflytande 1984b, p. 2).

Placing full trust in increased parliamentary control of government agencies was seen as a very risky way for the organisation to accomplish ideologically motivated deregulation of Swedish industry. It assumed governmental and parliamentary decisions pointing in that direction, and a new way of thinking in the governing of social democracy, which was seen as rather unlikely.²² At the same time, an opportunity for stronger political control of the government agencies carried a certain risk, as the activists saw it. Who really knew what to expect from a state interventionist social democracy that did not hesitate to make a socialist thrust if the opportunity arose?

It is important to note that the activist wing of SAF and Swedish industry harboured clear doubts regarding the social democratic relationship to socialism, as well as a generally pessimistic view of the future direction of the social democratic government. The many cuts and changes in the question of employee investment funds during the 1970s and early 1980s – activist writing of such history does generally not stretch further back – offered ample evidence for such a sceptical attitude.

Considering the above, it is also possible to understand how, on the one hand, an increase in parliamentary control of government agencies, and on the other, a

The official SAF position was articulated in an interest paper (Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, 1985) concerning a report from the Public Commission on government Agency Management (Verksledningskommittén) but was preceded by internal discussions within the SAMPOL project ‘Organisationernas inflytande’. See Ander, 1984, p. 4; Redbrandt 1983, p. 4f; SAMPOL 1984b, p. 2. See also the interview with Göran Tunhammar in SAF-tidningen, 1985.

²² See, eg, Göran Tunhammar quoted in SAF-tidningen 1985: ‘Several cabinet members, including the Prime Minister, have spoken about the need for a cleansing of the rules. But I am doubtful as to whether we will see any real improvements’, p. 16.

decorporatisation of the same, were understood as two complementary plans to bring about desired policy outcomes on industrial and economic issues (see also Redbrandt 1991a, p. 4). The great advantage of the former was that, compared with the latter, it presumed to a much lesser extent that SAF and industrial organisations would use a considerable part of their resources in directing public policy towards industrial policy goals. Nevertheless, the main problem was that, when it came to the question of parliamentary control of public administration, the Swedish Parliament and the government had the initiative, whereas SAF became an onlooker. In light of an uncertain future, Swedish industry had to cultivate its own garden. This situation vouched for the continued vitality of the decorporatisation strategy, and for it to remain a *rational* choice from an influence perspective.

What about the assessment of the effects of a unilateral SAF withdrawal? Neither Laurin nor Tunhammar expressed themselves limpidly during the SAF board discussions. Laurin confined himself to asserting that ‘SAF’s withdrawal will be troublesome as far as the legitimacy of other parties is concerned’ (SAF:s styrelse 1991, p. 19), while Tunhammar stated ‘that there is a point ... in LO losing its legitimacy if SAF leaves’ (ibid, p. 19). Whether these statements are to be understood as empirical predictions of an anticipated cause of events, or as manifestations of personal normative notions of legitimacy, is impossible to decide without taking into consideration contexts other than the SAF board discussion.

It is clear that the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive, and if other statements from the same individuals are taken into account, strategic reasoning plays a part: ‘decorporatisation is an ... element that is especially advantageous to SAF, since we to a large extent control it ourselves’, Laurin (1991a, p. 17) argued in the pamphlet ‘Farväl till korporatism!’ (Goodbye to corporatism!), published briefly after the SAF decision to withdraw from the boards. The SAF chairman went on to describe the significance of the 1991 withdrawal decision: ‘Hence, the dismantling of yet another cornerstone of the old, centralistic Swedish model, is launched’ (ibid, p. 17). ‘With this momentous shift, we tear down old structures,’ Tunhammar (1991b, p. 165) stated in the same pamphlet.²³

Tunhammar’s mode of expression is similar to the one used by Janerik Larsson some years earlier:

‘If SAF decided to leave the National Labour Market Board (AMS) today, the construction of AMS would collapse like a house of cards. It is built on party representation. ... [T]he whole construction would go to rack and ruin’ (Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, 1989).²⁴

²³ Cf Tunhammar 1992: ‘SAF has started to tear down old constructions.’

²⁴ Debate following a presentation by af Winklerfeldt, p. 3.

Adding to the line of consequentialist metaphors is Redbrandt's (1999) stool metaphor:

'We [the advocates of a withdrawal] argued that, if we leave – and this is what was later happened – the model falls, so to speak. I have a saying; you can sit on a three-legged stool, but if you saw off one leg, you can sit and balance for a while, but not for very long.'

This interview statement ex-post is not to be seen as a rationalisation of motives; this is evident when the memoranda Redbrandt composed as material for the SAF board's considering of the question of withdrawal is taken into account:

'SAF has ... criticised corporatism and the representation of organisations on the boards for several years. It has not had the intended results. A continuation of public opinion-building of the kind we have been pursuing can't be expected to produce results within the foreseeable future. Hence, we ought to harden our approach' (Redbrandt, 1990, p. 3; cf Redbrandt, 1991a, p. 4).

The idea that representation of SAF on the boards constituted an empirical prerequisite for trade-union representation was mentioned by Redbrandt – together with Grafström – as far back as in the early 1980s, in connection with SAF's internal investigation, which is known by the acronym SAMPOL:

'Our participation in corporatist arrangements bestows legitimacy on our opponents. LO and TCO should also be included' (Organisationernas Inflytande, 1984d, p. 21).

'Through SAF's participation [on government agency boards], the participation of trade union is legitimised' (Organisationernas Inflytande, 1984c, p. 3).

In conclusion, the activist consequentialist reasoning regarded a unilateral SAF withdrawal from the boards as a *strategic* decision, aimed at undermining the prerequisites for a continued representation of trade unions. It was seen as both an important and the probable scenario in the wake of a unilateral SAF withdrawal.

The above should be supplemented by information about how the activists actually valued SAF's participation on the boards. They were – as has become clear from the hostage metaphor – of the understanding that the SAF board representatives rarely brought about any meaningful results, and that the conception of SAF as a counterbalance to trade union representation was a chimera. The general idea was that no appreciable influence would be lost, even in the short run, if SAF decided to withdraw unilaterally from the government agency boards. Such an idea was, of course, an important prerequisite for a unilateral withdrawal to be seen as a *rational* choice.

R&B's evidence²⁵

R&B's positive evidence of how SAF *reasoned* about government agency boards is built around two assertions presumed to convey something essential regarding SAF's motives. More precisely, the two statements are considered to constitute empirical evidence of SAF's conception of the agency boards – from a public policy perspective – as being insignificant arenas, void of meaningful political power.

The first assertion is based on what SAF stated in an interest paper (a comment on a proposal referred to for consideration by interest groups), in connection with the final report of the Committee on Management of government Agencies.

‘In its interest paper to the Committee on Management of government Agencies, SAF ... explicitly refers to the fact that political control over the boards is so far-reaching that there is no room for strategic decisions, which they consider a prerequisite for working effectively on the boards’ (Rothstein and Bergström, 1999, p. 78f).

It is true that SAF made this statement in its interest paper, but the same text also deals with many other things that are neither considered nor mentioned by R&B.

One example is the sizable amount of text devoted to SAF's argument for *greater* political control (from the Swedish Parliament and the government) over the government agencies. In this argument, one can find passages like the following:

‘The activity of companies is controlled by an increasingly troublesome amount of regulations. Nowadays, the majority of the regulations do not originate from the Riksdag and the government, but from various government agencies. This development is, among other things, a consequence of the increased popularity of so-called skeleton laws. ... The system of regulation has become too extensive, difficult to grasp and expensive. So far,

²⁵ The test of R&B's evidence takes as its starting point the so-called motive statements (‘motivations’ and ‘general motive statements’) that form the basis for conclusions about an actor's motives. Focusing on explicit statements from the actors themselves is not the only possible way of reaching conclusions about an actor's motives (see the procedure in Rothstein and Bergström, 1999; cf Hadenius, 1984). However, the criticism of alternative procedures is convincing enough. See Berman (1998) and Lewin (1994). In particular, Berman's apt criticism of the public-choice tradition can also be pointed at R&B's method of inferring motives from objective descriptions of the character, purpose and function of government agency boards: ‘Most political economy explanations ... do not distinguish between reality and actors' perceptions of it. Instead, they assume that actors have access, if not to perfect information, then at least to relatively full and accurate information. If this were not the case – if there were a large gap between reality and political actors' perceptions of it – then it would be impossible to predict the behaviour of political actors based solely on knowledge of their material interests and an examination of their economic environments, as most political economy analyses do’ (Berman 1998, p. 31).

what has been done to simplify the regulations has been entirely insufficient. Business is severely restrained' (Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen, 1985, p. 3; see also p. 3ff in this source).

It may seem paradoxical that the main part of SAF's interest paper indicates an understanding of the political influence over relevant government agencies as weak, given the quotation that R&B use as an illustration of the opposite. Nevertheless, SAF's comment becomes consistent and comprehensible if the ambiguity in some SAF language is taken into account.

It is by no means obvious that the meaning implied by SAF's wording, 'strategic decisions', is identical to R&B's *comprehensive* decisions. An alternative interpretation, consistent with both the comment as a whole and with SAF's plans for a radical change of the corporatist system, is that 'strategic decisions' *are such overall decisions that imply/make possible radical changes of the activity.*²⁶

The other piece of evidence referred to by R&B is an interview with Redbrandt. His understanding is commented upon by simply noting that

'the picture is confirmed by Redbrandt, who argues that the board representatives could do nothing more than criticise decisions already taken' (Rothstein and Bergström, 1999, p. 79).

In order to accept that R&B's thesis really is 'confirmed', the reader obviously wants to see statements from the respondent pointing in such a direction (evidently, this holds also in the case of a statement that is directly contrary to one's own thesis). The authors do not provide any such statement; Further, the statement given seems too vague and ambiguous to function as evidence for R&B's reaction hypotheses. An alternative interpretation of the statement, which also seems consistent with the respondent's known style of reasoning, is that Redbrandt argues that SAF board representatives were not particularly successful when it came to setting the agenda that determined the direction of the boards' activities.

Conclusions

The empirical evidence for R&B's reaction thesis as an explanation for SAF's withdrawal from labour market agency boards is, when scrutinised in detail, extremely weak. In contrast, there are a number of positive examples of what is rejected by the authors, namely that there existed a long-term and well-planned

²⁶ As an important element in this argument, the formulation is problematic in yet another respect, namely that the temporal discrepancy between the comment on the report from the Public Commission on government Agency Management (1985) and the withdrawal decisions (1990/1991) is so notable. From this perspective, using a 1985 statement as one of two *conclusive* pieces of evidence for how SAF reasoned in 1990-91 is ill-founded.

power-political design, a relatively sophisticated *strategy*, behind the withdrawal of SAF. By reference to these long-term and well-planned power-political considerations, it is possible to explain – in intentional terms – why SAF decided unilaterally to withdraw from bodies such as the board of AMS and the board of ASS in the early 1990s.

A part of SAF's objective was to set aside the conditions for continued representation of the trade unions on labour market government agency boards. This way, SAF would be able to open up a system of party participation where influence over important policy processes in AMS and ASS became dependent on access to organisational resources for lobbying and public opinion-building, to a much greater extent than in the corporatist system. In this aspect, SAF thought it had an advantage over the trade unions, an advantage linked to the withdrawal decision that would also be accentuated by the restructuring of SAF's working methods.

From a long-term perspective, it was a matter of making a recapturing of the agenda-setting initiative possible, regarded by many as having been, over several decades, in the hands of trade unions and administrative officials loyal to the Social Democratic government. Essentially, it was a question of paving the road for a change of system regarding labour market and industrial policies.

However, as I have shown in other contexts (Johansson, 2000; 2003), it is wrong to describe the withdrawal from the government agency boards, or even the anti-corporatist ideas, as projects with the support of all of SAF or all of Swedish industry. SAF was a heterogeneous organisation in the 1980s, as well as in the early 1990s, with wide-spread doubts, and in some cases even considerable opposition, to the ideas of anti-corporatism and unilateral SAF withdrawal, as discussed in the secretariat and SAF board.

The ideas of anti-corporatism and of a SAF withdrawal from the government agency boards are better described as projects of the activists. It is within this subculture we find the strongest support for a SAF acting more offensively on public-policy matters. Within the same group, we find the strongest backing for intensifying the organisation's capacity for lobbying and public opinion-building, together with a steadfast resistance to SAF's participation in corporatist arrangements. Within this subculture, we also find the most intense willingness to facilitate the abolition of all institutional arrangements that cemented the influence of LO over public policy.

It should be stated that the activist group was a minority within SAF in the 1980s. Therefore, there were many impediments to implementing the idea of far-reaching decorporatisation of the labour market sector. In light of this, the discrepancy between the organisation's official anti-corporatist position on interest representation on government agency boards adopted in 1985 and its position on the issue of withdrawal (implying a general withdrawal first in the early 1990s) is less remarkable. The remarkable thing was, by contrast, that the turning in 1985

of SAF's attitudes towards corporatism was possible at all, given the comparatively weak position of the activist culture. How this came to pass, and the central, if not spectacular, role played by a group of administrators at the SAF secretariat, despite their lacking formal positions, has been thoroughly examined in Johansson (2000) and Johansson (2003).

In conclusion, I have, in this chapter, as in other contexts, dealt with SAF sub-cultures. I have maintained that SAF's withdrawal from government agency boards can be explained by reference to a shifting of power relations between such organisational subcultures. What has been designated here as SAF activism would perhaps be described by some as applied neoliberalism, a reflection of a far greater, even world-wide, radical political movement, and by others as reflecting the victory of a corporate-friendly, customer-oriented culture over the bureaucratic culture within SAF. In my view, both approaches are relevant and contribute to understanding of SAF's withdrawal from the government agency boards. However, I argue that *activism* is a more appropriate term for describing this movement within SAF. It is a term that is more elucidating, with less normative connotations and greater validity and applicability when dealing with organisations with political aspirations.

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