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# Sweden's dockworkers and the right to strike in the context of international logistics.

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## Résumé

A work-in-progress screening and conversation of a documentary work-in-progress. (Ideally with some dockers in attendance)

When we think of Sweden, we think model state for workers rights and protections—a place Bernie Sanders thinks the US should most resemble. And yet, workers are now in an unprecedented struggle for their livelihoods as nearly all unions there have been stripped of their negotiating powers—essentially de-legitimized in the face of corporate behemoths like Amazon. And, if possible, the situation continues to grow more dire as the last significant independent labor union now finds itself struggling for its very survival.

On Wednesday, January 23, the Swedish Dockworkers Union (SDU), initiated industrial action against the employers' organization Ports of Sweden. More strikes will be called all across the country in the following days. Since the 2015, privatization of the Port of Gothenburg-Scandinavia's largest and busiest port by a subsidiary of Danish shipping behemoth Maersk, the dock workers' union has repeatedly cited unsafe working conditions and been denied a nationwide collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Still reeling from the fallout from the 2017's NotPetya cyber attack, the largest in history, Maersk has used the labor conflict to pressure Sweden's industrial representatives and largest unions to rewrite national labor laws and severely limit workers' right to strike. Against the backdrop of increasingly unsafe implementation of new automation and digital security measures, disinformation within the media regarding the nature of the conflict, and the pending passage of the anti-strike legislation, the union argues it has exhausted all other options.

I have been following this story for 5 months. Union members have granted me unprecedented video access (including archival footage going back to the 1970s when the union was founded) to the inner workings of their struggles and their plans to maintain their collective bargaining rights as well as their right to strike. I would like to make a 15-minute short documentary told from the perspective of the dockworkers, that asks: If shipping giants like Maersk can pressure Sweden into rewriting its laws, what might be in store for the rest of the world? If even Sweden—boasting the highest labor union membership of any country—cannot guarantee the safety and rights of workers today, what do these shifts tell us about the fate of organized labor in other western democracies like the US or UK, where corporations often aggressively resist workplace unionization campaigns?

This project has the cooperation and support of SDU executive committee and members in Gothenburg, including communications director Erik Helgeson, administrative directors

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\*Intervenant

Amanda Kappelmark and Karin Hallberg, as well as rank and file representatives from ports across Sweden.

About me: I am an award-winning artist and documentary filmmaker. My work has been seen in the US at venues such as the National Gallery of Art, Museum of the Moving Image, and New Museum, in Europe at Paris's Centre Pompidou and London's Tate Modern, and in festivals worldwide. I am based in Sweden for the winter and spring as a visiting professor at Stockholm's Royal Institute of Art.

**Mots-Clés:** Ports, Europe, Labor Law, Logistics, Maersk, Privatization, Militancy, Collective Bargaining.