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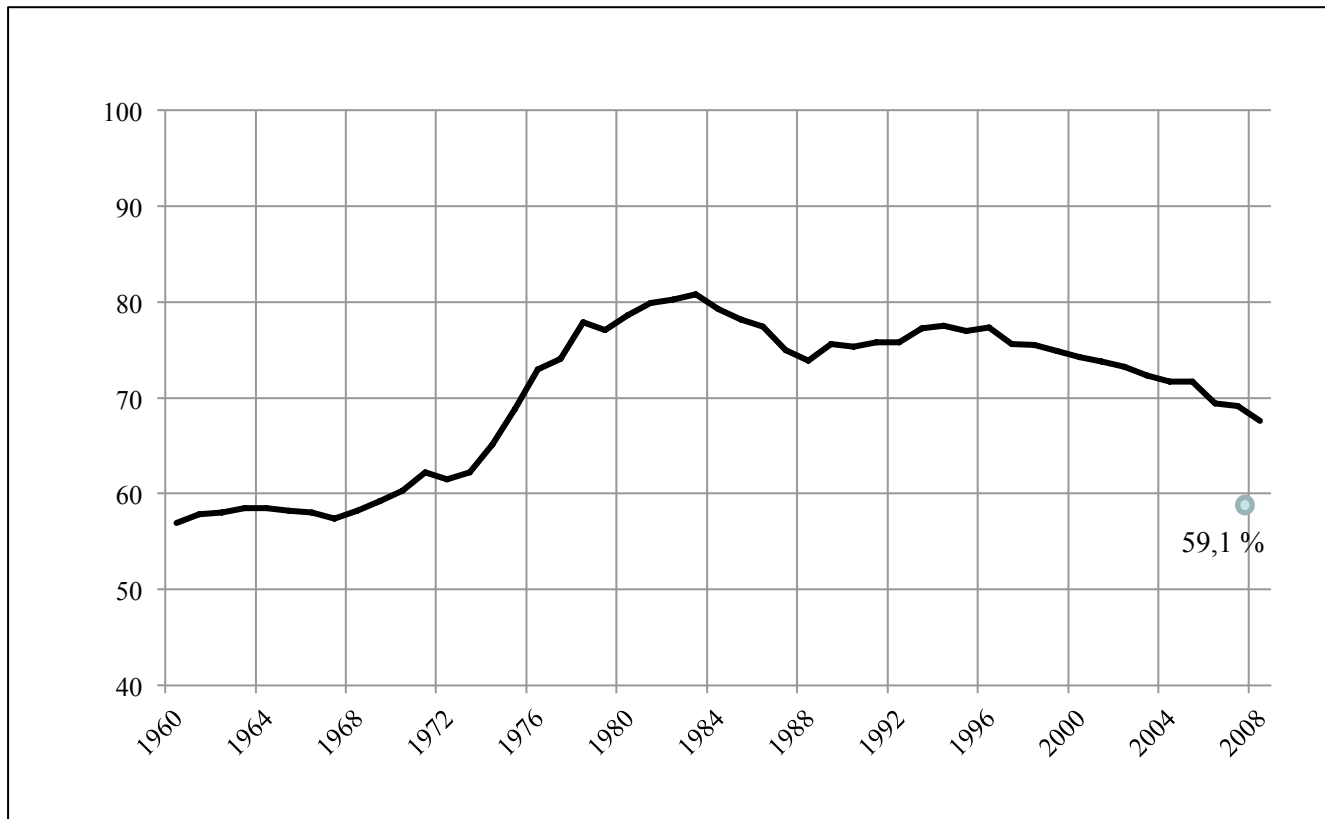
Importing Low Density Ideas to High Density Revitalization

The 'Organizing Model' in Denmark

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Union density in Denmark 1960 - 2010





Background and Motivation

Introduction of ‘Organizing Model’ to union revitalization since mid-2000s

Research question:

How was the model implemented into a Danish IR-context?

Why did union officials from a high-density country chose to adopt a model from low density countries?

Functional response vs. institutional change via import and translation?



Data and method

- **Process-tracing**
- **Snow-ball sampling of interviews**
- **20 interviews with key actors**
- **Documentary study of policy-documents and reports from unions**
- **Background statistics on union membership**



Import: Bringing in the model from UK and US

- **By chance: Language class becomes import of model**
- **LO-Copenhagen the hub for organizing network in early-mid 2000s**
- **A few key actors promoting course activity in organizing effective coupling of ‘Organizing Model’ to core values of active unionism = left wing approach**
- **A ready solution to an imminent problem – timing matters
Course activity catches on in a ‘fashionable’ way**



Import: The model meets internal politics

- **Organizing remains the resort of federate unions = organizing follows collective agreements**
- **Question of coordination: ‘Organizing Model’ at federate or branch level**
- **Uneven take-up at federate level and branch level, and no LO-coordination at enterprise level with multiple occupations**



Translation: Construction

Construction unions

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 3F | No national strategy – too expensive After merger with TIB, the organizing project is kept at least until 2013 |
| TIB | Organizing as a leadership tool to reconfigure union internally Targeting systematic important Empowering workers to self-organize |
| Plumbers Union | National strategy after election of vice-president Dual strategy of empowering workers, peer-to-peer recruitment through networks and appeals to vocational identity Not geared towards conflict with management |
| Electricians | Only at branch level in Copenhagen Organizing using mapping and local problems Emphasis on ‘organizing leaders’ |
| Painters Union | National strategy Organizing using mapping and local problems Emphasis on finding ‘organizing leaders’ |



Translation: CCWU

Clerical and Commercial Workers Union (HK)

| | |
|--|--|
| | No national federate strategy but up to four sections |
| | Model adopted in local branches – e.g. Copenhagen with 100.000 members |
| | Mix of model and traditional recruitment and retention strategy. |
| | Focus on young workers and creating self-organizing units at the workplace |



Conclusion

Not necessarily a functional response:

Process of active import and translation with distributional consequences for key union officials

Institutional misfit?

Collective bargaining coverage high: focus on second-order problems

Industry-level collective bargaining

Consensual systems for local negotiation and cooperation

Ghent-system 'automatic' membership logic

Cure for revitalization?

Survival of strategy related to career of organizing 'enthusiasts' at all levels
creating self-organizing workplaces?

will co-exist alongside other strategies, e.g. service and activist unionism

Jury is still out on the survival of the model

and the success of efforts being implemented at federate
level matters