

Organizing Matters

Two Logics of Trade Union Representation

ILERA Publication series

Guy Mundlak, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Organizing Matters demonstrates the interplay between two distinct logics of labour's collective action: on the one hand, workers coming together, usually at their place of work, entrusting the union to represent their interests and, on the other hand, social bargaining in which the trade union constructs labour's interests from the top down. The book investigates the tensions and potential complementarities between the two logics through the combination of a strong theoretical framework and an extensive qualitative case study of trade union organizing and recruitment in four countries – Austria, Germany, Israel and the Netherlands. These countries still utilize social-wide bargaining but find it necessary to draw and develop strategies transposed from Anglo-American countries in response to continuously declining membership.

'Mundlak's comprehensive, incisive and pathbreaking book comes at a critical time for the labor movement and for labor scholars. Especially for observers of US labor law and policy, the insights here could not be more important or more timely. As lawyers, scholars and advocates in the US begin to look abroad at models of sectoral bargaining, Mundlak's analysis equips us to answer the thorniest questions – including those concerning the relationship between coverage and membership, between thin and thick notions of membership, and between membership, legitimacy, and democracy more broadly. A highly welcome contribution.'

Benjamin I. Sachs, Harvard Law School, US

'Guy Mundlak's framing of the two logics of association and examination of the growing gap between trade union membership and the coverage by collective agreements in hybrid IR systems is illuminating. By focusing on the "liminal space" created by waning representative legitimacy the volume provides a compelling case for why organizing (and membership) matter if we are to address rising inequality and labour market insecurity at both a macro and enterprise level. The volume provides unique insights that will assist future scholars to better understand the paradoxes and tensions that exist between these two logics across different country contexts. It also provides a thought-provoking read to those designing trade union revitalization strategies.'

Susan Hayter, International Labour Office, Switzerland

'Guy Mundlak offers a powerful dissection of two "logics" of freedom of association in industrial relations, at the social and enterprise levels. His book draws on the experiences of trade union actors across four jurisdictions, while also considering the perspectives of employers and the state. In so doing, he offers rare insights into variants of "hybrid" collective bargaining systems. In particular, he exposes the ways in which organizing is about more than recruitment and explores how the two logics may be bridged by methods that transcend a focus on numerical membership. This is a timely analysis, given contemporary challenges faced by trade unions, prompting reflection on their purpose and operations.'

Tonia Novitz, University of Bristol Law School, UK

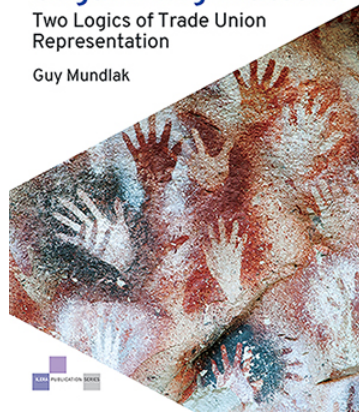
'Labour unions worldwide have had decades to experiment with different revitalization strategies to combat declining membership and political influence. In Organizing Matters, Guy Mundlak provides a uniquely comprehensive and engaging analysis of how these experiments have played out in four countries where unions are experiencing a growing gap between collective agreement coverage (high or stable) and union membership (low or declining). He



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draws on examples of organizing campaigns, rich with detail and quotes, to show the tensions that unions in these countries experience when they seek to mobilize and recruit members at enterprise level – as well as the potential for these strategies to complement traditional forms of “social bargaining” at sector or national level. The book’s findings give grounds for cautious hope that trade unions are forging new hybrid strategies that use workplace organizing to both strengthen employee voice and mobilize institutional power.’

Virginia Doellgast, Cornell University, US

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