An American solution to an Irish problem: a consideration of the material conditions that shape the architecture of union organizing

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Abstract
New models of union organizing have become an important instrument of union growth and renewal. We examine the transfer of US-developed organizing practices to Ireland. We enquire whether the practical experiences of SIPTU can be considered successful. In particular, we focus on the question: in what way is the architecture of union organizing shaped by the material conditions that affect workers’ power? We look at three campaigns across three sectors (hotels, red meat processing and contract cleaning). The campaigns share a number of common properties, but differ in respect of the power resources available to employees and the shape of their outcomes. Using a most similar systems comparative research design, we identify a variety of causes which help explain the success and shape of the different organizing campaigns. Finally, we make a number of arguments in respect of how our findings link to debates about the future of trade unionism.