

A Swedish Model of Employers in the International Arena? The Swedish Employers' Confederation in the International Organisation of Employers, 1920s-1990s

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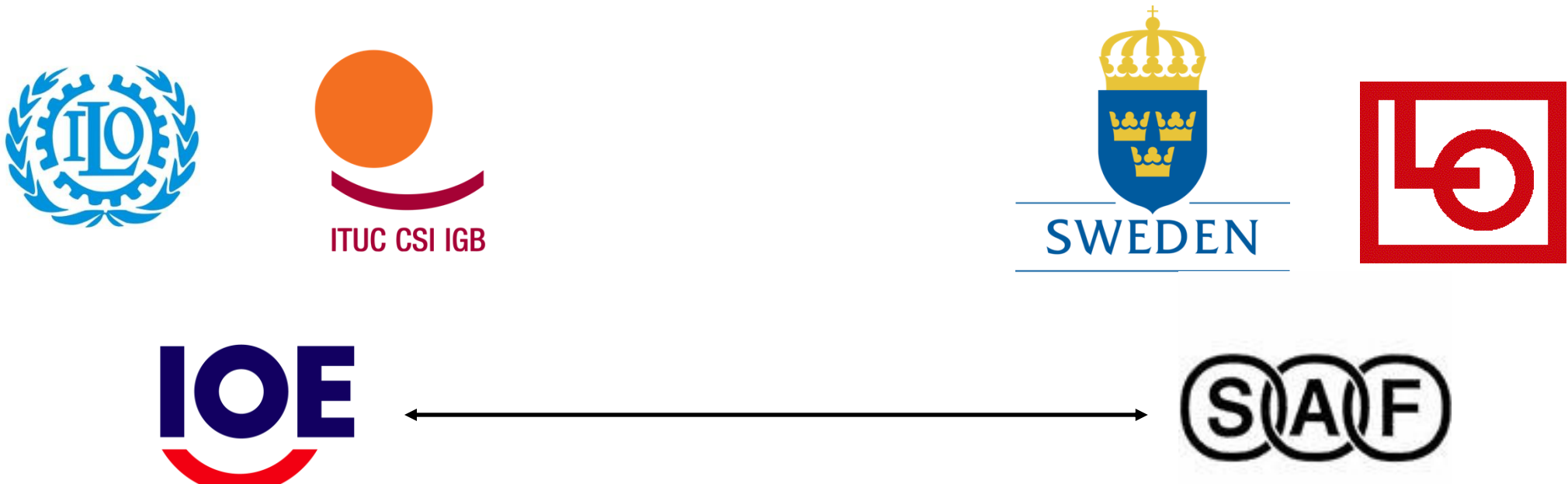
Introduction

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) was founded in 1920 in response to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) establishment in 1919, aiming to counterbalance trade union influence in international labour policy. However, this was not the first instance of employer organisation at the international level – such efforts had been underway since the early 20th century, driven by the need to counter an increasingly well-organised global labour movement.

The ILO has, from the beginning, been a tripartite organization consisting of employers, states, and workers. It is built on the idea that peace in the labour market, both internationally and nationally, is best maintained through a transnational tripartite system based on consensus, where all three parties hold equal power in managing labour market and social issues.

The Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF, founded in 1902) was often seen as a role model among international employer associations for its approach to labour market conflicts, relying on dialogue and consensus solutions with trade unions – an approach in which it often emerged victorious. This stood in contrast to many other European countries, where labour relations were more confrontational and costly. The SAF quickly became influential within the ILO, largely due to its experience with tripartite solutions in the Swedish labour market.

The Tripartite model in the ILO and in Sweden



Aim

- Ecolvement of the SAF's influence influence within the IOE 1920s-1990s.
- How and why their policy stances within the IOE shifted.
- How and why their relationships within and outside the IOE evolved.
- The elevation of the Swedish Model, with the SAF as one of its cornerstones, to the international level illuminates both the SAF's buy-in to the Swedish Model and its counterparts, as well as its buy-in to the other employer representatives within the IOE.

Contribution

- **Employer associations in the international arena.**
 - National business/employer associations in international business/employer associations.
 - Business associations in their role as employers internationally is little examined. To investigate employer associations in the international arena provides an understanding of the interplay between national and international labour market and social issues, and not “solemnly” and “pure” economic matters.
 - Tensions between national and international labour market and social matters.
 - The translation of national policies in the international arena, and vice versa.
 - *The interplay/tensions between the national and the international!*
- **Bring labour market parties into business history!**

Literature Review

- **The Swedish Employers' Confederation in the International Arena**
 - Scarce, close to non-existent. Mentioned in passing by.
 - De Geer (cf. 1992), without doubt the most prominent scholar on the matter of the SAF.
 - Dedicates six pages to the SAF's international activities, mentioning that the SAF was highly and have been increasingly active in the international arena, especially from the 1950s and onwards.
- **The International Organisation of Employers**
 - Eichenberger (2020)
 - The IOE and the rise of international cooperation of employer associations in Europe around World War I.
 - Highlights the international organisation of employer associations as a response to the labour movements international organisation.
 - How they sought inspiration from each other.
 - Kettunen (2013)
 - The Nordic Model and how it was practised by all three groups from the Nordic nations, and their ambivalent approach to the model.
 - Kott (2014)
 - The ILO policies in the interwar period focus on almost solemnly labour market and social issues but slowly came to move in a market liberal direction post World War II and where free trade come to be viewed as the root to prosperity
- **Relationships between national and transnational business association**
 - Rollings (2007), McKinlay, Mercer & Rollings (2000), and Rollings & Kipping (2008):
 - Focus on British business associations and their i.e. role in European integration and their relationships with transnational European business associations as well as business associations in other countries.

• De Geer, Hans. 1992. *Arbetsgivarna: SAF i tio decennier*. Stockholm: Kugel Tryckeri AB.

• Eichenberger, Pierre. 2021. "Employers of the world, unite!: The transnational mobilization of industrialists around World War I." In *Corporate Policing, yellow unionism, and strikebreaking*, ed. Matteo Millan and Alessandro Saluppo. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.: 97-114.

• Kettunen, Pauli. 2013. "The ILO as a Forum for Developing and Demonstrating a Nordic Model." In *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organization and Beyond*, ed. Sandrine Kott & Joëlle Droux. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 210-230.

• McKinlay, Alan, Helen Mercer & Neil Rollings. 2000. "Reluctant Europeans? The Federation of British Industries and European Integration, 1945-63." *Business History* 42(4): 91-116.

• Rollings, Neil. 2007. *British Business in the Formative Years of European Integration, 1945-1973*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

• Rollings, Neil, & Matthias Kipping. 2008. "Private Transnational Governance in the Heyday of the Nation-State: The Council of European Industrial Federations (CEIF)." *The Economic History Review* 61(2): 409-431.