



*Max Weber Programme
Multidisciplinary Research Workshop*

16 May 2012, 11.00-13.00, Villa La Fonte, Conference Room

**Changing Industrial relations: Societal responses
to market expansion at multiple levels?**

with

**Philippe C. Schmitter
Guglielmo Meardi
Evelyne Léonard**

Over recent decades, labour markets and their regulatory institutions in Europe have undergone profound changes. As a follow-up to the 6th Max-Weber-Programme Classics Revisited conference on Karl Polanyi, this multidisciplinary workshop addresses the broad question of the relationship between the economy and society by looking at the regulation and deregulation of labour markets. As we observe an intensification of political struggles accompanying the commodification and de-commodification of labour at various societal levels – supranational, transnational, national, and sectoral – the question of how society responds to markets in terms of politics, legislation, and more or less formalized types of collective action becomes even more relevant. Although the focus is on industrial relations and labour, insights gained at this workshop can potentially be transferred to other areas of (de-)regulation.

The workshop invites scholars from the fields of law, political science, sociology, economics and history to discuss processes of re- and de-commodification of labour. A focus on these dynamic processes in industrial relations requires an analysis of the interrelations between different levels of new forms of employment regulation, and tensions between what is regulated and what is not.

To what extent have structural and political changes led to an erosion of, or new possibilities for, the de-commodification of work at different levels? For instance, while it has been suggested that EU-level legislation poses a challenge to labour law and industrial relations at the national level, European integration has also been viewed as a potential source of de-commodification. At the transnational level, unions and multinational companies can be identified as agents struggling for influence on the shaping of labour relations between different regulatory regimes and between the company and the broader sector. In this context, transnational framework agreements not only solve local conflicts, but also have the potential to contribute to the development of international industrial relations at the company and sectoral levels. Furthermore, new forms of work, especially in the growing service industry, challenge traditional forms of worker representation at these levels: they tend to foster organisational forms and worker orientations which are less compatible with collective forms of representation and lead to a decline in membership and a shift from sectoral to company-level agreements. Yet new social movements and coalitions have emerged as new actors in the industrial relations field, and have challenged established systems while representing other interests which have hitherto tended to be neglected.

The presentations will be followed by general and open discussions.



- 11:00 **Welcome and chair: Birgit Apitzsch**
- 11:05 **Will the present crisis revive the neo-corporatist Sisyphus?**
Philippe C. Schmitter
Emeritus Professor
Department of Political and Social Sciences
European University Institute
- 11:25 **Sectors and Countries: The Changing Levels of European Industrial Relations**
- Guglielmo Meardi**
Associate Professor (Reader) of Industrial Relations
University of Warwick
Warwick Business School – Industrial Relations Research Unit
- 11:50 **Potential for joint regulation at EU level? The cases of transnational company agreements and the European sectoral social dialogue".**
- Evelyne Léonard**
Prof. ordinaire
Université catholique de Louvain
Louvain School of Management & Institut des Sciences du Travail
- 12:15 **Comments – Daniela Comandé and Birgit Apitzsch**
- 12:25 **Open Discussion**
- 13.00 Lunch

Organizers MWP Fellows EUI: Birgit Apitzsch and Daniela Comandé

Please register with Susan.Garvin@eui.eu