Introduction

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This book has two principal aims. The first is to describe and review current concerns in regard to the conditions of labour markets, production organizations, working conditions, and industrial and employment relations. Prominent among these concerns is the crisis in trade unions and in democratic labour market institutions, and the rise of what many critics regard as technocratic administrative powers in the displacement of democratic practices. These concerns, which may be seen as part of broader crisis in democracy, require careful evidence-based documentation and analysis. What are the principal factors of the crisis? How successful are current efforts in response? Has a recalibration of labour and capital relations set an institutional path dependency for a long time to come? What are the options for social and economic policies? These concerns stimulate, in addition to critique, a search for theoretical and practical responses for regenerative social paths. In particular, they stimulate efforts toward a rigorous search for socio-cultural innovation in the regulation of economic action, most especially at the level of labour markets, organizations and workplaces.

The second aim of the book, therefore, is to explore aspects of the search for socio-cultural innovation in wide areas of work, industrial, organizational, management, and employment relations. What are the prospects, and sources, of revitalising participatory democratic practices in the world of work and production? Are there prospects opening in recent policy initiatives at European Union level in regard to citizenship, social cohesion, wider participation in education and training? Are growing cultural interests in, for instance, identity, solidarity and non-market values, sources of socio-cultural innovation in the regulation of work and governance of economic action? These questions guide the enquiries and discussions presented in the various chapters of this book.

The context in which these questions and debates are explored in this book is that of the European Union and its member states. While shared concern for the questions outlined above is very much in evidence in other parts of the developed world, the particular relevance in the context of the European Union countries lies in the current course of development of the project of the European Union. The historical pattern of discussion of questions of industrial relations, industrial democracy, citizenship aspirations and behaviour has predominantly
been focussed on the level of particular nation states. The level of the nation state retains very much importance in setting the context in which people work and in which workplaces and industrial relations are governed. But the extensive developments in the sphere of economy, the mobility of capital, of transnational organizations and production networks, in multi-employer sites and extensive new and emerging institutions at the level of the supranational European Union raise a considerable field of problems, challenges and possibilities for the development and governance of European production and market relations and of its models of citizenship.

The cultural aspiration for participatory democratic society and more equitable social distribution of power continues to be formally highly valued in European, and many other societies. Yet, as a number of social analysts have observed, many aspects of democratic practices have seriously diminished in some key areas of social life in recent years. The world of work and employment, which since the mid-20th century has been regarded as a vital arena for the advancement of participatory democracy, appears at the present time powerfully influenced by forces and interests that weaken and undermine that social project. The aspiration for wide social participation in the regulation and governance of work and workplaces encounters a crisis. In comparison with two or three decades ago in many European countries many workplaces, including large and corporate ones, are less rather than more, conducive to the expansion of worker participation, the democratisation of systems of authority and control, and the expansion of democratic citizen rights to industrial practices. Current tendencies in the management of production organizations and industrial relations require workers’ integration not through democratic citizenship and representation, but through conformity to elite-established rules and systems.

The twelve chapters in this book endeavour to respond to these far-reaching concerns. Overall, the book, in which authors contribute perspectives from many different European countries, seeks a paradigm change of some key aspects of EU policy and direction. It seeks and explores possibilities for developing alternative policies. The authors offer contributions which also recognise the concerns expressed by diverse peoples across European societies of discontent and disappointment in current EU institutions and directions. All the contributions share broad social interests in a search for deep innovation in the practices of collective actors. They seek in particular innovation of socio-economic institutions that will enable a much wider and emancipatory vision and practice of Europe to flourish and be sustained.

Opening chapters trace the crisis in democracy and society. Francesco Garibaldo outlines the historical antecedents of the current crisis and the political paths taken by European governments in recent decades. The seeds of the current
crisis lie in policy deployment of neo-liberalised regulatory regimes which national governments have variously adopted. Roland Erne analyses the role of trade unions in the process of European democratization. After referring to the original international solidarity of trade unions movement, Erne critically addresses the contribution that trade unions can provide to the process of democratization. Erne finds that trade unions are caught between the pre-determined constraints of technocratic decision making at the EU level and the particular demands of national socio-economic processes. Trade unions are constrained to operate in very limited policy areas and to neglect their broader original values of economic, social and political emancipation. In order to enlarge the scope of social protection new actors should be integrated into the process of policy making and new pressure strategies should be devised in order to contest the consequences of neo-liberal ideology on employment.

Mirella Baglioni’s chapter addresses questions of institutional path dependency in the patterns of governance of capital and labour. The focus of her analysis is on the persisting differences among the national institutions of labour relations evident across member states. Path and past dependency which still shape industrial relations at the national level are increasingly challenged by globalization. The answers given by social partners vary from conflict to adaptive changes but do not express shared values leading to socio-cultural innovation in labour relations. In consequence Baglioni proposes a new research agenda that could better capture the indicators of these dispersed responses and, on this ground, open a better understanding of common trends of change for innovating the role of European trade unions.

Richard Hyman’s chapter looks more closely at governance in regard to labour market policies in the European Union. Following elaboration of salient ambiguities within the European social model, Hyman acknowledges the different degrees of influence exercised by unions and employers in shaping the policy functions of Europe and the implications of the constitutional asymmetry on the construction of social Europe. Against the difficulties faced by social Europe, Hyman invites trade unions to contribute by an innovative effort to the construction of social Europe and more specifically to consider a new strategy of social inclusion and to renew the identity of union as social movement.

Rainer Greca’s chapter takes up questions of the welfare state. Greca describes and analyses the regression, since the mid1970s, of the providential welfare state characteristic of the European model. The process can be understood as re-commodification. Greca argues that after processes of de-commodification of a range of social goods, the effects of the crisis of the traditional welfare regimes stimulate a process of re-commodification. An especially notable result of the comparison of different financial policies to fund the welfare activities is that
there is no significant shift within the countries, but there are remarkable differences between them. A way out of this trend can be found in new approaches for a common European welfare politics such as the recently developed concept of *ecowelfare* and *reflexive democracy* which Greca sketches out.

Kevin O’Kelly examines roles and avenues for worker participation in the European Union and critically assesses the effectiveness of Directives on information and consultation. O’Kelly analyses the role played by social dialogue in building the project of the European democracy. By recalling the phases of its evolution, the chapter highlights progresses and failures of the social partners’ contribution to the construction of the European democracy. O’Kelly considers the recent development of sectoral social dialogue as a positive and encouraging event, which together with the recasting Directive on EWC and the Framework Information and Consultation Directive could help the progress of workers’ participation at industry and workplace levels. That would also contribute, he argues, to improved competitiveness of European economies.

The chapter written by Isabel Da Costa and Udo Rehfeldt takes up questions for trade union organizations in the current institutional conditions. The authors trace historical developments in the structures and strategies of transnational union actors, from the early Internationals to the new ITUC, from the International Trade Secretariats to the current “Global Unions” and from the ETUC to European trade union federations. They analyze current institutional aspects of international unionism. They depict a continuous evolution towards a more unified and institutionalized voice of labour both at the global and the European level. That movement toward shared objectives may prove a more powerful political development in conditions of increasingly global markets.

Matteo Lucchese and Mario Pianta’s chapter then turn attention to European Union policies for industrial development and innovation. They critically address potential and problems within the EU’s new policy of *Europe 2020* which was introduced in 2010. Lucchese and Pianta point out that despite policy recognition of the failure of weak governance mechanisms to avert the financial crisis, *Europe 2020* still fails to recognise the deep crisis for labour incurred through continuing liberalisation and new austerity measures.

Peter Brödner’s chapter addresses underlying processes of economic globalisation and social processes which affect a fragmentation of the working class and re-commodification of labour. He points to the process of work organisation in post-industrial conditions in order to critically analyse the various and conflicting aspects of the knowledge economy production and particularly the working conditions of the innovative sectors. These conflicting trends seem to worsen when institutions do not contribute to create shared values on sustainable development of knowledge economies.
The final chapters of the book turn to look toward future prospects for social and cultural innovation. Volker Telljohann explores ways in which democratic practices can be revitalised at the level of the workplace. He looks at new tendencies with regard to evolving forms of participation processes. In a first step Telljohann looks at the role of the institutional context for participation. He argues that in various EU Member States the establishment of wider information and consultation rights by law is mainly due to the transposition of European directives. In a next step the author shows that the effectiveness of participation processes depends to a large extent on how direct and representative participation interact with one another. Another critical point for the company-level structures of interest representation is represented by the access to knowledge and competencies that may guarantee effective participation within the scope of change processes.

Valeria Pulignano’s chapter opens with an analysis of the process of re-commodification of labour under global market society and the project of European integration. Pulignano argues that it appears that a continuous process of market-based liberalization has accelerated the process of re-commodification. The high risks incurred in that process place in jeopardy basic conditions for the regulation of employment in the EU at the core of the European Social Model. Pulignano argues for a process of change in trade unions in order that they become more participative internally and within their political-economic contexts. Generating participative structures will revitalise their forces as a social democratic.

Catherine Casey draws critical demands for improved political and economic conditions for work and workers into a broader discussion of citizenship formation and effectiveness. She argues that European Union policy discourse places much emphasis on citizenship and participation, and on lifelong learning and social cohesion. These generally attractive goals are, however, contradicted and defeated by current labour market and industrial policies which subjugate workers and obstruct their full participation as citizens in expansive democratic societies. She argues for ways in which lifelong learning and worker education can forge innovative responses to the current situation. Revitalised worker education, utilising EU policy promotion for expanded education and training and citizenship action, can formulate vision and practical paths toward effective democratization of production organizations and society.

All contributions share concerns about the conditions of labour markets, production organizations, working conditions, and industrial and employment relations. The re-commodification of labour, the weakening of industrial citizenship, and of European welfare states, negatively impact on the process of European democratization. They call into serious question the future of the European So-
cial Model and the role of European social partners. All the chapters, however, address the need for socio-cultural innovation in these spheres. They formulate a number of proposals which contribute to a revitalisation of social Europe and its citizenship-based polity. And they call, from the vantage point of different member states and industry sectors, for active, collective participation in the rebuilding project of social Europe so evidently in crisis before us at the present time.