

Editorial

This issue opens with a paper by Linda Clarke, Eddy Donnelly, Richard Hyman, John Kelly, Sonia McKay, and Sian Moore providing an in-depth reflection on recent developments in the field of industrial relations in higher education, with particular reference to developments in Britain but with wider implications. The authors provide a critique of the attempt to replace industrial relations programmes with courses such as employment relations and human resources management. They argue that in light of the changing nature of work involving more complex relations among the actors, the academic study of industrial relations still provides a sound basis for developing critical analysis and gaining an in-depth understanding of labour market developments.

Guglielmo Meardi examines the Europeanization of industrial relations, providing a critical assessment of European employment policies with a particular emphasis on the European Employment Strategy and flexicurity objectives. He analyses the links between the implementation of European employment policies and national industrial relations traditions and poses a crucial question about how different countries can implement the same policies and whether flexicurity can have a similar impact in profoundly different contexts. He argues that the adaptation of national traditions to European policies has led mainly to increased flexibility and reduced security in almost all the countries concerned. Finally, the author argues in favour of a more dynamic interdisciplinary approach in order to analyse changes occurring in individual countries in a more comprehensive manner.

In the context of increased globalization, Reynald Bourque and Marc-Antoine Hennebert investigate International Framework Agreements (IFAs) within transnational corporations, arguing that they have mainly been adopted in connection with the development of corporate social responsibility and the transformation of international trade unionism. Moreover, the authors address the characteristics of international union action and transnational collective bargaining leading to agreements such as the one between UNI and Quebor World (2007). They compare bargaining processes at transnational, national, and local levels, pointing out the differences in negotiating structures and contexts, and attempt to critically assess the model of Walton and McKersie.

Monika Schlachter analyses tendencies in age discrimination legislation and some landmark decisions of the European Court of Justice following *Mangold*, such as *Palacios de la Villa* and *Rosenbladt*. The author draws attention to the ambiguous approach of the Court to the issue of age discrimination. In the author's view, the Court treats different aspects of age discrimination differently, leaving a margin of discretion for the Member States in connection with labour policies. She also poses a question about the limits of Member State discretion in using age as a legitimate criterion for differentiation in

employment, with particular attention to the compulsory retirement age that is at times in conflict with individual needs and preferences, and puts forward proposals for dealing with this dilemma.

Susan Bisom-Rapp and Malcolm Sargeant contribute to the discussion of the employment of older workers by analysing the situation in the USA and Europe against the backdrop of European objectives. They consider the employment situation of older workers from historical and predictive standpoints and discuss the obstacles to the continuing employment of older workers. Particular attention is paid to the situation of US workers in terms of discrimination and to the possible lessons that can be learnt from US experience, considering developments in a highly market-driven economy during a sustained economic crisis.

In the South African context, Nicola Smit and Letlhokwa George Mpedi cast light on the situation of (mainly female) domestic workers, underlining their extreme vulnerability in the labour market. These workers are normally not covered by employment protection legislation that is seen as weak also at the international level. The authors analyse the situation of this group in relation to four issues: the employment deficit, representation, rights, and social protection. They argue for caution in any assessment of the progress made so far and focus particular attention on the measures aimed at the extension of employment rights to this category, as well as to enforcement and control mechanisms to ensure the practical application of such policies.

Finally, as Managing Editors of the Journal, we wish to inform readers that Michele Tiraboschi has now moved on to new challenges, and we take this opportunity to thank him for his support for the Journal and its objectives over the years.

William BROMWICH

Olga RYMKEVICH