

WHAT FUTURE FOR EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ?

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OVERVIEW

- **before we can understand specific issues, we must understand broader context**
- **the hazards of prediction**
- **3 scenarios**
- **the challenge for industrial relations scholarship**
- **some implications for trainees and young workers**

THE HAZARDS OF PREDICTION

- **futurology involves extrapolation from past and current trends**
- **but history does not repeat itself**
- **trends are complex and contradictory**
- **hence alternative scenarios**

SCENARIO 1

FROM BAD TO WORSE

- **continued erosion of national employment regulation**
 - the challenge from above : globalisation and 'free movement'
 - the challenge from below: company-specific employment regimes and the 'informal economy'
- **end of Fordist compromise: overwork, no work, precarious work, indecent work**
- **growing inequality within and between countries (especially post-enlargement)**
- **the hegemony of neoliberalism (and EU-liberalism)**
 - from institutional regulation to re Commodification
 - austerity and the elimination of safety nets
- **the cancer stage of capitalism (McMurtry) :**
 - mutations of market anarchy, which attack social 'immune systems', by-passing actual production and excluding life from calculus
 - destroying social and political (but also economic) cohesion and ecological sustainability

SCENARIO 2

ELITE REFORM

- **a technocratic dream solution**
 - **new financial and economic architecture**
 - **new rules for effective labour standards**
 - **a green new deal**
 - **revitalised collective organisation and reinforced social partnership**
- **but is it a mirage ?**
 - **contradicted by market mindset**
 - **and powerful vested interests (not just 1%)**
 - **transnationally : collective actor problems and weak regulatory architecture**

SCENARIO 3

A NEW COUNTER-MOVEMENT

- **(humane) industrial relations can have a future only through mobilisation and struggle**
- **but who are the (potential) collective actors ?**
- **do trade unions dare to risk their institutional security by contesting elite consensus ?**
- **can the precariat be a progressive force ?**
- **issues of narrative, language, vision, hope ...**

THE CHALLENGE FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SCHOLARSHIP

- **the role of research(ers):**
 - **critical understanding of past and present**
 - **cautious assessment of causal dynamics (*rerum cognoscere causas*)**
 - **engagement in shaping future**
- **focus not only on 'realities' but also on possibilities**
- **spurious 'neutrality' endorses neoliberal hegemony**

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINEES AND YOUNG WORKERS

- **scenario 1: *génération précaire***
 - NEETs, workfare and exploitative internships
- **scenario 2: the optimistic face of Lisbon and EU 2020**
 - skills, flexicurity and labour market bridges
- **scenario 3: *indignados***
 - resistance to *contrat première embauche*
 - *Operation Übernahme*
- **the future is in your hands !**

