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Towards a European Labour Identity: The Case of the European Works Council.

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were written by non-economist social scientists, six times the percentage in counterpart Anglophone journals. Different disciplinary affiliations are reflected in differences in the German research agenda. Subjects that overwhelmingly dominated the Anglophone research agenda were practically absent from the German one: only one German article (out of 91) addressed a topic in human relations, and only six focused on labor market questions. German researchers also shunned Anglophone empiricism; only 41% of German articles were empirical, and fewer than 20% used the quantitative empiricism that marked almost all of the American research and was popular in Great Britain. Instead, German researchers favored theoretical work and “think pieces” or essays exploring the larger questions missing from much Anglophone research. German researchers view employment relations as a product of social structures, fundamentally *political* in cast, rather than as an epiphenomenon of market dynamics. Dismissing Anglophone claims to scientific neutrality, German research is openly political in the larger sense of the word; a “critical industrial sociology,” it critiques existing social arrangements by exposing underlying assumptions and hidden ideology. German scholars, Frege suggests, assume that workplace phenomena can be explained only within a wider system of society and ideology, and that changes in employment must be linked with broader social changes. German research, therefore, addresses questions about the possibility of greater “societal rationality” (in a Weberian sense), the organization of work, and the nature of social partnership among the various stakeholders in the employment relationship.

The words “stakeholders” and “social partnership” themselves signal how different German industrial and employment research is from the work done in the Anglophone world, especially the United States. This insight is so important, I believe, that even if it were the only contribution of *Employment Research and State Traditions*, the book would be of value. Differing national political histories—in particular, the strong social democratic movement in Germany, the late development of the Labour Party in Britain, and the lack of strong socialist institutions in the United States—are largely responsible, in Frege’s view, both for differences in patterns of unionization across these countries and for the different national research agendas. While vague, Frege’s historical analysis allows her to ground national differences and suggest that they are the products of path-dependent national development. This point of view is reasonable but, alas, like other simple materialist perspectives, it lends a curious futility

to just such exercises as the one Frege undertakes in this book. If the crisis in Anglophone IR is due to the exhaustion of a path-dependent research agenda, then what cure can we expect from a work of scholarship, however well researched and cogently argued?

I suspect that Carola Frege is less certain of path dependency and even simple materialism than she suggests in the historical sections of this book. Instead, she thinks that the work people do can change the world because it becomes part of the material reality that shapes human consciousness; and that is why she bothered to write this generally excellent book. Seen in this way, her discussion of the forces shaping German versus British versus American research should have included more about the actors shaping the fields, including not only the most influential scholars (John Bates Clark versus Max Weber and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, for example) but also the relevant national institutions (such as university systems and their funding sources). The book would also have been better had Frege recognized the systems of power that have shaped the university systems in these three countries and the national research projects that she describes.

That said, this is an excellent book. Carola Frege has done much more than describe the decline of industrial and employment relations; she has helped us to understand it. I would urge everyone to read her book and to think about the important questions she raises.

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Towards a European Labour Identity: The Case of the European Works Council. Edited by Michael Whittall, Herman Knudsen, and Fred Huijgen. Abingdon, U.K., and New York: Routledge, 2007. 256 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-40396-2, \$140.00 (cloth).

Those who are unfamiliar with the European integration process may react with anything from indifference to keen curiosity to the European debate on transnational governance, identity, and solidarity. To the parties directly involved, however, this debate is very much in earnest, and mirrors the actual situation of the European Union (EU). Europe’s economy is to a very large extent denationalized due to the common market and the single currency. Slowly but surely, the nation

states participating in economic integration are seeing their traditional sovereign rights devolving partially or completely to the supranational EU level. The EU tends to set off centripetal forces and diminish the political and economic leeway of the member nations. Nevertheless, the clash between intergovernmentalists and federalists is not yet resolved. The former argue for an EU in which decision-making is primarily defined by international cooperation between governments, who rely on the retention of national sovereignty rights; the latter, for a federalist EU network in which supranational decision-making coexists with subsidiary national and local rights. The federalists point out that the EU has already developed into something far beyond a mere free trade zone, having acquired many features of a super-state, and that most of the member states share the conviction that only a united Europe can play a significant role in an emerging multi-polar world system. The intergovernmentalists maintain that a European demos does not exist, and that a spirit of patriotic nationalism still dominates the mindset of member nations' citizens.

Toward a European Labour Identity, a collection of essays focusing on European labor identity-building, is situated exactly at this bifurcation of opinion. The pivotal question investigated by the editors and contributors is whether trade unions and workers will be able to forge international solidarity to countervail transnational capital. To assess hindrances to and opportunities for the creation of such solidarity, they focus on the European Works Councils (EWCs). By the terms of the so-called EWC Directive (EWCD, an EU legal framework) a democratically legitimized body representing the work force can be set up in counterpoint to any multinational corporation that is economically active in at least two EU member states. These EWCs have information and consultation rights in the multinationals' cross-border social and economic business affairs. Currently around 850 EWCs composed of 20,000 individual members (elected by the work forces of the national subsidiaries of multinationals) are established, representing 15 million employees. The trade unions regard these EWCs as milestones on the path to a European Social Model.

The editors and contributors represented in this book, all of them highly respected members of a transnational research network, employ theory-guided empirical fieldwork to evaluate the likely ability of the trade unions to use EWCs as "windows of opportunity" for cross-national interest representation. The 13 essays provide an impressive spectrum of critical intellectual thinking on transnational identity-building. Readers

should be forewarned, however, that this book does not offer basic information on EWCs and does not contain detailed case studies. To get the most out of these essays, readers should come to them equipped with appropriate background knowledge.

The contributors place particular emphasis on obstacles that hinder the emergence of EWCs as transnational workers' interest bodies. Most important are (a) linguistic barriers, (b) diverging trade union cultures (a result of the broad variety of national industrial relations systems), and (c) competing interests between the regional work forces within the framework of multinationals. These are deeply rooted hindrances that are at odds with the traditional trade unions' creed of international solidarity. The central question the contributors address is whether European labor's multiple identities can be reconciled.

Both the editors and contributors perceive such obstacles as serious but not insurmountable; finding solutions to them is their central concern. Many obstacles, they argue, can be overcome by trade union training programs aimed at closing language deficits and narrowing cultural gaps. These are vehicles to defeat mutual prejudices and build up social capital via mutual trust. Particularly complex and challenging is internecine competition among work forces in cases of industry restructuring and relocations. Neutralizing national parochialism requires the ability of trade unions and EWCs to develop a socially balanced cross-border alternative to the model established by multinationals. The EWCs and their counterpart unions must have two complementary resources at their disposal: on one hand, factual and strategic knowledge, and on the other, the authority to convince the work forces to take part in cross-border actions in solidarity.

Several contributors to this volume remark, with surprise that sometimes borders on astonishment, the frequency with which barriers to cooperation between workers' representatives from different countries at the EWC level give way to learning processes that favor transnational identity. Diverse research findings, including, in particular, those reported by Helen Bicknell in one of this book's essays, suggest that EWCs have the potential to transform themselves in any of various ways—from channeling ethnocentrism to championing Eurocentrism, for example; from playing a symbolic role to fostering participation; from serving purely as information-gatherer to coordinating bargaining; or from promoting a nation-based collective identity to spreading transnational consciousness.

Critical to prospects for a sea change of the

kind favored by the editors and contributors to *Toward a European Labour Identity* is a matter much-discussed among philosophers and political scientists concerned with theories of democracy: the relation between “hard” and “soft” law. In view of the politico-cultural and socio-economic diversity among EU member states, detailed, uniform regulatory provisions are often too inflexible, and therefore inferior to intelligent soft law regulations that provide leeway for negotiations and minimum standards. The editors perceive the EWCD as a “soft legislative approach” (p. 8) to non-state actors. In their view, negotiations between EWCs and managers of multinationals, which fill a regulatory void of the EWCD, amount to a variant form of democracy. Other authors regard institutions like EWCs as an “aspect of new complex interactions between supranational regulation and evolving international labor structures” (Martinez Lucio and Syd Weston, p. 182).

The field observations presented in this book illustrate the arduousness of the path to transnational labor solidarity. The editors and authors agree that postwar Europe, not yet “complete,” remains in a developmental stage, and that the EWCs are playing a prominent role in this stage as a vehicle for the renegotiation of capital-labor relations at the supranational level. Although they are well aware that the EWCs are not yet fully mature (p. 226), they nevertheless see these institutions as pioneers clearing the way for a transnational labor movement.

This intellectually demanding, politically charged anthology contains a plethora of theoretical insights and strategic guidelines. It is a cornucopia for scholars and policy-makers interested in labor developments in the EU.

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History

Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers. By Dennis Gaffney. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. x, 273 pp. ISBN 978-0-7914-7191-3, \$25.00 (hardcover).

In the 1973 movie *Sleeper*, the character played by Woody Allen relates, upon being awakened in the future, that his world came to an end when

a madman named Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear device. Dennis Gaffney’s *Teachers United* tells the story of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) during the 1970s and the role of Albert Shanker and others in the union’s birth and growth. Shanker worked tirelessly to merge the many New York State K–12 teacher groups and wanted the resulting union to become a major political player; he saw his role in such a game as a power broker. Woody Allen may have been prescient in 1973: Shanker and NYSUT gained and wielded a great deal of power, even if it fell short of apocalyptic.

The author, a professional writer and an adjunct faculty at SUNY Albany’s Journalism Program, apparently used the NYSUT documents in the Kheel Center of Cornell’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations Catherwood Library, principally NYSUT’s presidential and vice-presidential papers, and the oral histories of NYSUT collected at SUNY Albany, as the book’s main sources. Distilling such rich troves of material into a 273-page book is a task fraught not only with difficulty, but also with risk. Indeed, although Gaffney calls this book a history, it is better described as a peripatetic collection of quotes and stories, concentrating especially on the biographical aspects of many union leaders. The book’s themes are often hard to discern. Although the dustcover promises lessons for other unions, the only two messages I am able to identify are that (a) unions must grow, or else they will shrink, and (b) unions need bold leaders with vision. These are platitudes, not insights that could be expected to help the labor movement.

The reader should be aware that *Teachers United* tells its story without placing it in either economic or social context; yet we know that the period covered by the book, 1960–2005, was one of immense change in both arenas. The author does not even allude to the changes going on in New York City (except for its 1970 budget problems), New York State, the financing of local school districts, other unions, or family life; nor does he mention the Catholic Church (a major player in K12 education) or the health or decline of its various parishes. Shanker’s accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses, the problems he saw and those he chose to address, must all have been influenced by these changes.

Also useful would have been a discussion of NYSUT’s rigid position toward school vouchers, the changing demands of higher education, and the curriculum changes over the 45-year period. The reaction to the combination of small teachers’ unions that took place in the 1950s and 1960s was the professionalization of school districts’ administrators with respect to negotiations and