

Work and Equalities Institute

The future of work relationships: resistance, regulation and voice

Power and voice in the new economy

As the shape of work and employment relationships continue to change, WEI researchers have addressed important issues not only about what we mean by good-quality work, but also what are the dimensions affecting the future of work relationships. Evidence charts a distinct shift in the balance of power towards employers and away from workers (Dundon et al., 2017a). However, we also show there are pockets of resilience and innovation among workers and their unions, in public and privatised sectors (see box 1). Workers in the gig-economy face insecurity and zero hours, yet have also managed to develop union representation from the ground up (Dundon and Inversi, 2017). NGOs and other agencies external to the employment relationship are influencing managers and organisational policies around equalities, such as Age UK relating to older workers and Stonewall promoting LGBT employee rights (Dundon et al., 2017a). In some organisations efforts may be made to use social dialogue can to address inequalities (Grimshaw et al., 2017). However, power and influence remain contestable spaces and where employees have a diminished capacity to influence the decisions affecting their working lives, the result can mean stress, uncertainty and growing precariousness for workers (Dundon et al. 2017b).

Dundon, T. and Inversi, C. (2017). 'Worse than zero hours contracts: work, pay and inequalities in the gig-economy', policy@manchester, July. Manchester: The University of Manchester (<http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/inclusivegrowth/2017/07/worse-than-zero-hours-contracts-work-pay-and-inequalities-in-the-gig-economy/>).

Dundon, T., Martinez Lucio, M., Howcroft, D., Hughes, E., Keizer, A. and Walden, R. (2017a). 'Power Dynamics in Work and Employment Relationships: the capacity for employee influence'. CIPD Thematic Report, November. London: CIPD (<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/job-quality-value-creation/power-employee-influence>)

Dundon, T., Cullinane, N and Wilkinson, A (2017b). *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Employment Relations* London: Sage

Grimshaw, D., Koukiadaki, A. and Tavora, I. (2017). 'Social Dialogue and Economic Performance: What matters for business – A review', Conditions of Work and Employment Series, No. 89. Geneva: International Labour Organisation (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_571914.pdf)



Social Dialogue
and Economic Performance
What matters for business - A review

Grimshaw, D., Johnson, M., Marino, S., and Rubery, J. (2017). 'Towards more disorganised decentralisation? Collective bargaining in the public sector under pay restraint'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 48(1), pp. 22–41.

Mustchin, S. (2017). 'Public sector restructuring and the re-regulation of industrial relations: the three-decade project of privatisation, liberalisation and marketisation in Royal Mail'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 48(4), pp. 294–309.

Box 1. Public sector restructuring and employment relations

The public sector has been at the centre of both long term reform agendas and more recent austerity policies. WEI research focused on collective bargaining in local government in the UK in the 2010–13 austerity period, drawn from a wider cross-national European project, conducted between 2010–13 under conditions of austerity and pay freezes, demonstrates how national level collective bargaining can be undermined through the use of localised agreements and the decoupling of national and more decentralised bargaining processes (Grimshaw et al., 2017). Qualitative research

by the WEI in Royal Mail from projects that commenced in the late 1990s highlights a range of commercialising influences from the 1990s onwards including the introduction of private sector-style management practices and marketization, and ultimately culminating in privatisation in 2013. Despite this state-driven restructuring, strong union organisation and mobilising capacity have supported resilient forms of employee representation that have led to notable gains through collective bargaining (Mustchin, 2017).

The changing governance of employment relations

Changes in the form of capitalism in terms of its reach and complexity present major challenges to the agenda of equality and fairness at work. There is a need to create new ways of ensuring that labour standards at work are complied with and enforced. WEI researchers have made the case that the reach of the state and systems of regulation linked to such labour standards are being stretched (Martinez Lucio and MacKenzie, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2017) and that traditional and nationally-based systems are being isolated and limited in terms of their regulatory scope (Alford and Phillips, 2018). Furthermore, there is a growing concern over interest in the de-regulation of collective bargaining and trade union rights that are further undermining the way social and economic actors can raise employment standards (Koukiadaki et al., 2016). However, there are various discussions and developments that point to new ethical and socially responsible approaches to issues of business behaviour (Rafferty and Jelley, 2018) as well as new approaches to organisational

accounting and transparency (McPhail and Ferguson, 2016). To what extent these are robust and capable of ensuring some degree of worker rights at work is a matter of debate. Some argue that much may depend on the extent to which international agreements between workers and employers, or international labour standards, continue to develop and shape the political space of labour rights more generally and set a series of minimum standards (Whittall et al., 2017): although much also depends on the ability of workers and organisations on the ground to link into these international developments and enact in them in their local struggles for good working conditions (see Box 2).

Alford, M. and Phillips, N. (2018). 'The Political Economy of State Governance in Global Production Networks: Change, Crisis and Contestation in the South African Fruit Sector'. *Review of International Political Economy*, 25(1), pp. 98–121.

Koukiadaki, A., Tavora, I. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2016). 'Continuity and Change in Joint Regulation in Europe: Structural Reforms and Collective Bargaining in Manufacturing'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22(3), pp. 189–203.

Martinez Lucio, M., and MacKenzie, R. (2017). 'The State and the Regulation of Work and Employment: Theoretical contributions, forgotten lessons and new forms of engagement'. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(21), pp. 2983–3002.

McPhail, K. and Ferguson, J. (2016). 'The past, the present and the future of accounting for human rights'. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, 29(4), pp. 526–541.

Rafferty, A. and Jelly, R. (2018). 'Promoting inclusive growth through responsible business in Greater Manchester'. Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit Policy Briefing, No. 8. Manchester: The University of Manchester (<http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/mui/igau/briefings/IGAU-Briefing-8-Responsible-Business.pdf>).

Rodriguez, J.K., Johnstone, S. and Procter, S. (2017). 'Regulation of work and employment: Advances, tensions and future directions in research in International and Comparative HRM'. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(21), pp. 2957–2982.

Whittall, M., Martinez Lucio, M., Mustchin, S., Rocha, F. and Teljohann, V. (2017). 'Workplace Trade Union Engagement with European Works Councils and Transnational Agreements: The case of Volkswagen Europe'. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 23(4), pp. 397–414.



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Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit

Promoting inclusive growth through responsible business in Greater Manchester

Anthony Rafferty and Robyn Jelley

Key points

- Responsible business activity is central to achieving inclusive growth, so engaging with businesses must be at the heart of inclusive growth strategies.
- Existing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks are useful but need to be developed to reflect inclusive growth objectives.
- Greater attention must also be given to how Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can be supported to contribute to inclusive growth.
- There are many activities to support firms on different aspects of inclusive growth but they need to be better coordinated locally.

Power dynamics in work
and **employment**
relationships: the capacity
for employee influence

New ways of organising and regulating

The role of trade unions has been challenged by various developments related to the greater fragmentation and change within the labour market. The emergence of more precarious and vulnerable work has forced trade unions to engage in a more innovative and inclusive manner (Martinez Lucio et al., 2017). Research by WEI has found that the organising and representation of non-regular workers has taken the form of many strategies from focusing on the needs of such workers and developing new forms of representation although how effective these may be is a matter

for discussion (Marino, 2015; Keizer, 2018). The space of training and development has been used to link trade unions into the needs of migrant workers in various contexts, allowing for labour market access and the establishment of an awareness of worker rights, in some cases. In addition, various campaigns based on creating support networks and alliances between trade unions and broader social organisations are becoming more common. Many of these initiatives depend on the national context; this includes not only the role of the state, the political position of trade unions and the nature of national employment regulation and welfare systems (Marino et al., 2017) but may also extend to how languages and traditions of solidarity - and class politics - have been framed historically and underpinned the way trade unions view and support vulnerable or migrant workers (Connolly et al., 2017). What is more, the international dimension of the economy and the role of alliances and interventions by various actors are becoming key to this dimension of organising and action (Alford et al., 2017).

Alford, M., Barrientos, S. and Visser, M. (2017). 'Multi-scalar Labour Agency in Global Production Networks: Contestation and Crisis in the South African Fruit Sector', *Development and Change*, 48(8), pp. 721-745.

Connolly, H., Marino, S. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2017). 'Justice for Janitors' goes Dutch: The Limits and Possibilities of Unions' Adoption of Organising in a Context of Regulated Social Partnership', *Work, Employment and Society*, 31(2), pp. 319-335.

Keizer, A. (2018). 'The inclusion of 'outsiders' by Japanese unions? The organizing of non-regular workers in retail', *Work, Employment and Society* (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0950017018759205>).

Marino, S. (2015). 'Trade unions, special structures and the inclusion of migrant workers: on the role of union democracy', *Work, Employment and Society*, 29(5), pp. 826-842.

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Mustchin, S. and Martinez Lucio, M. (2017). 'Transnational collective agreements and the development of new spaces for union action: the formal and informal uses of International and European Framework agreements in the UK', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55(3), pp. 577-601.

Box 2. The role of Transnational Collective Agreements

WEI researchers have been engaged in various studies of the emergence of Transnational Collective Agreements including as part of a European project EURACTA2. These agreements attempt to establish a series of minimum standards on issues related to the conduct of industrial relations and employment conditions within multinational corporations that have developed them. They constitute a global dimension of management-union relations which tries to use the internal decision-making spaces of

the firm as a basis for establishing common approaches to activities such as outsourcing or the use of employment agencies. However, they can be tokenistic on occasions or unable to influence employment standards along complex supply chains. They may also depend on whether local trade union organisations are aware of these agreements and how they use them as a resource in their local activism and negotiations (Mustchin and Martinez Lucio, 2017).

Work and Equalities Institute

Identifying and promoting the conditions for more inclusive and fair work and employment arrangements

New thinking on how to address the challenges posed by changes in work, employment and equalities is urgently needed. Inequalities – from health and education to poverty and exclusion – are influenced by labour market factors, but employment conditions are also shaped by patterns of inequality. The Institute brings together two internationally-recognised Alliance Manchester Business School research centres (European Work and Employment Research Centre and Fairness at Work Research Centre) with expertise across human resource management, industrial relations, labour economics, organisational psychology, employment law, technology, organisation studies, sociology and social statistics.

Our research is being used in knowledge exchange, dialogue and debate with key stakeholders and policy makers, and makes informed contributions to policy formation and practice. To achieve this, the Institute draws on input from an advisory board of policy makers and practitioners with local, national and international expertise. The Institute's research ranges from the local to the global, and builds on the already strong connections with national and international policy bodies. Our approach to research includes the use of international institutional and comparative analysis, organisational case studies and qualitative interviews, and surveys and quantitative data analysis.

Our work is central to the debate on inequality in society

The team has a track record, built over more than twenty five years, of informing the evidence-base and policy agenda of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the United Nations' International Labour Organisation, as well as national organisations such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Trades Union Congress. They have also helped launch many doctoral students and early career researchers onto successful careers as academics, researchers and policy makers in various sectors and countries.

WEI has an active PhD community of over 20 students

Our research students are working on a range of issues concerned with the changing nature of regulation and work including: new forms of worker voice and conflict in the gig economy, migrant networks and the emergence of independent worker networks, regulation and HRM in SMEs, union revitalisation in South America, CSR and labour standards in West Africa, precarious work and women's employment, technostress and well-being, the impact of automation on women's work in the retail sector, the experience and/or the regulation of precarious employment, UK pension reforms, bystander behaviour in workplace bullying, and women stepping away from high level careers, to name but a few. The group of students actively present at conferences and organise a range of seminars and research networks within the institute. They build on long traditions of work on labour market segmentation and inequalities, comparative employment research, regulation and representation issues in employment relations, human resource management, stress and well-being and technology and work organisation. There are a number of AMBS scholarships available each year to support new PhD students as well as studentships from the ESRC's North West Doctoral College.

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