

Preface

This book is the first volume in a new series by Springer on *Industrial Relations & Conflict Management*.

Traditionally, the field of industrial relations has primarily been a research domain of sociologists and lawyers. It has mainly focused on macro-economic issues of negotiation between employer organizations, unions, and governments, as well as on structural arrangements and legal frameworks of these industrial relations. Conflict management in organizations has dealt with a wide variety of issues, often focusing on organizational behavior at different levels, based on theories of psychology and organizational and management sciences.

Worldwide we see a clear trend of de-centralization of industrial relations towards the organizational level. Especially in Europe, more and more framework agreements between unions, employer organizations and governments are made. These negotiations take place within the organizations, both at a formal level—between works council and management—and at an informal level—between individual employees and their managers or HR departments. At the same time, conflict management has become one of the core elements of the formal social dialogue in organizations, for example on topics such as how to promote social relations and health in the workplace, how to prevent exclusion, discrimination and bullying, and how to manage labor, interpersonal and group conflicts constructively.

So, we see Industrial Relations and Conflict Management in organizations crossing and partly overlapping with each other. In the meantime, the academic fields of Industrial Relations (IR) and Conflict Management in organizations (CM) have developed quite independently. As a result, the academic networks of industrial relations, conflict management and bullying in the workplace, are quite independent, showing only weak ties.

The new series *Industrial Relations & Conflict Management* intends to build an interdisciplinary bridge between these fields. This will be done through the dissemination of cutting edge theories and empirical research in the field of industrial relations and conflict management. The series takes an interdisciplinary approach, however it is firmly based on theories about human behavior in relation to work and organizations.

More specifically, the series integrates theories and research from industrial relations (sociology, business, law and psychology), with those of conflict management, mediation and well-being and productive behavior in the workplace.

The aim of the series is to contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge to promote cooperative and constructive relations in organizations at three levels: organizational level, team level and interpersonal level.

This first volume illustrates the new series perfectly. The volume presents the results of an interdisciplinary study in 11 European countries on social dialogue in organizations. The study focuses on the experiences and expectations of employers towards the employee representatives in their organizations. The study highlights structural as well interpersonal and group aspects of this social dialogue. The theoretical framework is based both on structural and on behavioral theories.

The core message of this first volume is three fold: 1. Social dialogue is an important instrument for innovative and healthy organizations, however needs a cooperative climate to blossom; 2. Employers in Europe want to invest in constructive and innovative social relations at the organizational level; 3. Employers have many ideas about how to promote and innovate social dialogue.

This innovation of social dialogue is highly needed. Not only in Europe, where the EC promotes such a social dialogue based on the shared values of cooperation between management and employers, however also globally. The quest for sustainable forms of organizing, with a focus on people, profit and planet, requires a constructive dialogue between 'capital' and 'human capital'.

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Promoting Social Dialogue in European Organizations
Human Resources Management and Constructive
Conflict Management

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