

**Original citation:**

Meardi, Guglielmo, Donaghey, Jimmy and Dean, Deborah. (2016) The strange non-retreat of the state : implications for the sociology of work. *Work, Employment and Society*.

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/77350>

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Publisher's statement:**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0950017016638993>

**A note on versions:**

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP URL' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk)

## **The Strange Non-Retreat of the State: Implications for the Sociology of Work**

**Guglielmo Meardi, University of Warwick**

**Jimmy Donagjhey, University of Warwick**

**Deborah Dean, University of Warwick**

### **Abstract**

The article critically reviews the reasons for the decline in the engagement with the state in the sociology of work after the 1970s, and for its resurgence after the financial crisis of 2008. It assesses three separate streams of literature (sociology of work, political sociology and welfare state sociology), and argues for the benefits of their integration. Papers in this special section of *Work, Employment and Society* provide examples of the mutual utility of such integration. This introduction concludes by identifying some important avenues for future research on the state and work.

**Keywords:** state – sociology of work – welfare state – politics

Corresponding author: Guglielmo Meardi, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. Email: [Guglielmo.Meardi@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:Guglielmo.Meardi@wbs.ac.uk)

### **Introduction**

In a recent retrospective appraisal of labour process theory, Smith (2015) notes that the state is the one aspect of that theory that has been most neglected by later elaborations. The relationship of work with the state and with macro structures was an important aspect in Braverman's (1974) elaboration as well as subsequently by Burawoy (1979, 1985), but it did not occur in an intellectual void. That was a period when social science had just been marked by lively theoretical debates on the state, as demonstrated by those between Laclau (1975), Miliband (1970) and Poulantzas (1976), and when conceptualisation and empirical research were being launched on the welfare state (Korpi 1978) and on corporatism (Schmitter 1974). Yet, the preoccupation with the state and with work organisation soon diverged. In a period of expansion in academia and the social sciences, interest politics, industrial relations, work organisation and the welfare state could be considered as distinct and essentially self-contained areas.

By the time *Work, Employment and Society* was launched in 1987, a time when the restructuring of the post-war state and its relationship to civil society was well under way, the state had become very much a background issue for the sociology of work. This has continued throughout much of the life of the journal. In the period up to 2010, only 14 articles mentioned the state in the title, while 23 mentioned it in the abstract in a substantive sense.

It was after the western financial crisis that the role of the state made a major comeback. In the period between 2011 and 2015 the frequency and prominence of the state increased significantly with the word featuring seven times in the title and 14 in the abstract over just five years. Among the emerging issues in this latest period were state capitalism in China (Peng 2011; Swider 2015), the role of the state in financial capitalism (Walby 2013; Daguerre 2014) and the implications of 'austerity' (Conley 2012; Rubery and Rafferty 2013). An increasing share of workplace and industrial relations research now focuses on public sector employment or issues in which the state is an important player such as globalisation, labour market reforms, work-life balance, the family. Yet, curiously while much attention is placed on the changing nature of the work relationship, little has been said of the changing nature of the state itself. By involving first an unprecedented state intervention in the economy through stimulus packages and bank rescues, and subsequently radical reform plans for the public sector, the crisis of 2008 has seen the welfare state and employment relations raising new, urgent research priorities. The state itself has also influenced the shift in focus as a regulator and sponsor of research. The inclusion of 'impact' as a criterion for funding in evaluation processes such as the British Research Excellence Framework was pushing researchers towards more directly policy-relevant – and therefore, state-relevant – topics.

It is in this context of revived interest that the Work, Employment and Society conference of 2013 (from which most of the articles in this special section originate) chose the state as its central theme under the title of 'States of Work'. The emerging empirical issues also required a reflection on conceptualisations of the state. The rising model of 'state capitalism' of the Chinese kind, the talk of 'competitive' and 'developmental' states, and fast-growing comparative research on national institutions such as in the 'Varieties of Capitalism' debates were all relevant for the sociology of work, but could not be simply be adopted as ad hoc concepts. Rather, their place in the study of work has had to be adequately theorised.

This article introduces a journal special section on the state by reviewing debates in the sociology of work, in political sociology, and in the sociology of the welfare state and gender. It points towards new directions of research that, by bringing together these three areas and by deepening theoretical conceptualisations, can revitalise, and politicise, the sociological study of work, employment and society.

### **Sociology of work and state**

Sociologically, from Weber, the modern state has been conceptualised as a *political* apparatus ruling over a given territory, whose authority is backed by a legal system, by the capacity to use force and the monopoly over it. The stress and distinctive element from other organisations is on the 'political'. Therefore, including the state into the analysis of work automatically 'politicises' the subject.

Two aspects of this can be emphasised. One is relational, and based on power. In Poggi's synthesis, the state is 'social power in its political form' (Poggi 1990: 3). This aspect has been central in debates on the functions of the state, i.e. for what the state uses power. The state could be seen as an instrument (a sort of armed hand supporting the 'invisible' one), either directly for the domination of one class, as conceived by a line of Marxist thinkers including Miliband, or, in more nuanced ways for the defence of existing social order, compensating and controlling internal tensions, as in Poulantzas' structural functionalism, or

in the elaborations of Altvater (1973). Or it could be seen as autonomous: as a contested field, as in Esping-Andersen's (1985) interpretation of social-democratic experiences, or, in a more Weberian way, as a distinctive form of domination, as enunciated by Offe (1984). This latter sense focuses on the second sociologically crucial aspect of the state, i.e. its structure. In Weber's work, this was in relation to bureaucracy and legal rationality, aspects that have an immense influence on the understanding of labour processes, but for Offe it was more politically related to protection of rules and structure, legitimation and pacification. The Frankfurt school elaborated most on state structure by eclectically integrating Weber and Marx. The modern state was seen as combining bureaucratic repression and bourgeois individualism, and resulting in the colonisation of life-world and the incorporation of the working class, but also into new a legitimation crisis due to an inevitable gap between raised expectations and results (Habermas 1976).

A problem of these debates on state power and structure was that its generally high level of abstraction went at the cost of historical precision and empirical operationalisation. The 'new class struggle' approach (Clarke 1990) tried to compensate by placing class and state at different levels of abstraction, as respectively general and historical forms of domination, while holding that social democracy and the welfare state were means to fragment and demobilise class struggle. Jessop (2002), in particular, stressed how the Keynesian welfare state secured Fordism as a system of production and organisation, through reliance on vertical integration, centralisation and standardisation. Burawoy (1985) grounded the state even further, highlighting the potential of comparative research for the understanding of both state and work, as well as, crucially, their variation over time and space, through the 'extended case method' linking micro and macro levels. In his earlier work he had also drawn another link between workplace and state as structure through the concept of the 'internal state' (Burawoy 1979). The internal state, later defined as 'the political and ideological apparatus of production' or 'the regime of production' (Burawoy 1985) was the set of formal workplace rules that, by imitating a democratic legal system, hid exploitation and facilitate workers' consent, or, in Gramscian terms, built hegemony at work. The isomorphic relation between state structures and work organisation that was identified by Weber a century ago remains however understudied, despite some remarkable efforts especially on the public sector (e.g. Harney 2002) and on state policies on work (e.g. Kalev et al. 2008).

The articles in this special section show how these sociological insights can be applied to contemporary study of work, and, at the same time, how the sociology of work can contribute to the understanding of the state. Cunningham (2016) addresses the link between state and work organisation in a context that appears so different from that of Weberian bureaucracies and of Keynesian welfare states: the personalisation and outsourcing of social services by the Scottish government under conditions of austerity. His study shows how fecund the theoretical exchange between state theory and sociology of work can be. On one side, Cunningham employs Jessop's 'hollowing out' and 'destatisation' concepts to make sense of Scottish policies but also, uses Korczynski's work-sociology concept of 'customer-oriented bureaucracy' (Korczynski et al. 2000) to explain why, as his findings indicate, work restructuring towards customer orientation raises unavoidable contradictions.

Howell's (2016) article sheds new lights on the previously mentioned classic debates on the relationship between state and capitalism. Drawing on Polanyi, the Regulation School and Jessop, he argues that the state's role in France and Sweden has been that of facilitating

neoliberal change in countries previously characterised by social democratic compromises. Here, the contribution is from an employment relations perspective that looks not just at institutions, but at *how* those institutions are utilised by the actors. Through this approach, the author identifies, under the semblance of institutional continuity, a major process of liberalisation in the sense of an increase of managerial discretionary power. The possibility of apparently progressive state institutions actually promoting marketization (Greer 2015) is an emerging issue that will deserve more research across countries.

Barron and colleagues (2016) discuss another function of the state: that of defining a legal status for citizens that precedes the status of employees by determining individuals' availability for employment. This function had been long taken for granted but has recently acquired new prominence. Research on migrant workers has already identified how different migration statuses result in different functions for employers (MacKenzie and Forde 2009), and research in China has highlighted the relevance of internal migrants' status (Peng 2011). Barron and colleagues look in more detail at the status of undocumented migrants, a state-created category of growing policy importance. The case of the strikes by the 'sans papiers' in France in 2008-10 is looked at through the theoretical lens of categories as developed by Bourdieu and Boltanski. The analysis shows how, at the same time as the state tried to define worker statuses, social processes in the workplace can contest state categories – as in the case of union-issued 'strike cards' accepted by the police as grounds for migrant regularisation. At the same time, the article suggests, despite the decline of trade union power identified in Howell's piece, the relationship between states and unions remain very important. As Touraine argued in the 1980s, the decline of the labour movement as a class actor actually increases the policy involvement of trade unions (Touraine et al. 1987); and in the case studies by Barron and colleagues, this involvement can also lead to unexpected successes.

### **Inputs from political sociology**

As Kalleberg noted in his authoritative assessment of the issue of precarious work, 'in recent years, sociologists have tended to take the employment relationship for granted and instead focused on topics related to specific work structures (...) [and] have thus failed to consider the bigger picture' (Kalleberg 2009: 11). The fragmentation of the study of precariousness into the narrow analysis of minority situations is in fact a telling example of how sociology can fail itself by losing sight of the micro-macro link. In the same place, Kalleberg advocates in particular the integration of political sociology, alongside other approaches, into the framing of the precariousness issue.

Political sociology and political science had offered important application of state theory to the problem of work. A clear case was that of corporatist theory, which filled the space open between the polar ends of pluralism and Marxism by problematizing the relationship between associations, individual interests and the state (Schmitter 1974; Crouch 1977; Streeck and Schmitter 1985). Accordingly, the state has the autonomy to establish class compromises. The regulation of work in European economies has generally been viewed as a tripartite model with the state granting special public status to the representatives of producer goods within the economy. This was most evident in the corporatism practised throughout much of democratic Europe. Corporatist debates in the 1970s and early 1980s allowed the creation

of distinctions on the basis of the nature of the state, such as between the non-democratic experiences of the inter-war period (Italy, Portugal, Romania) and the more numerous ones of north and western Europe in the 1970s (Schmitter 1974). The equilibrium between state and civil society, and the delegation and assumption of state roles by producer groups became relevant objects of analysis that explained, for instance, the otherwise counterintuitive behaviours of large, 'encompassing' trade unions such as in Austria (Olson, 1965).

Yet, similar to the sociology of work approach, following much debate in the 1970s and early 1980s, in recent years many of the developments in political economy literature have been remarkably quiet on the role of the state. The Varieties of Capitalism approach, as developed by Hall and Soskice (2001), is an instructive case of the withering attention to the role of the state as an actor but where clearly defined territorial entities are examined as being a key analytical variable. It was explicitly framed as firm-centric, in contrast to the traditional union and/or state-led approaches, to explaining differences amongst capitalist economies. In fact, some of the most trenchant criticisms of the original formulation of the approach were for its lack of analysis of the state (Schmidt 2007).

Theoretical neglect notwithstanding, the roles of the state in the regulation of work have been expanding and developing. Three overlapping but often contradictory roles of the state are central to the employment relationship as labelled by Traxler (1999): the state as employer; the substantive role; and the procedural role. The state plays a key role in employment relations as an employer. At one end, this involves stimulating aggregate demand through its employment function under Keynesianism. However, in many ways, under neo-liberalism there has been a shift in the thinking about the substance of the role of the state as employer. Beaumont and Leopold (1985) argued that the state acted as "model" employer due to the high levels of job security, collective bargaining, an equality approach and trade union recognition. As the 'model', it set the highest example for other employers in the economy to emulate. Yet, as Farnham and Horton (1992) highlighted during the 1980s, this was reversed to the extent that the public sector was expected to reduce costs through the importation of market-based private sector methods in the form of 'New Public Management'. In the substantive role, the focus is on how the state acts in terms of shaping areas of government policy such as the definition of health and safety regulations and of working time which was historically the first area of legal regulation of work after the industrial revolution. A procedural role involves the definition of the 'rules of the game' and of the legal status of employment contracts and collective agreements, as well as mediation roles. Over the past twenty-five years, an example of this function that has attracted extensive research is the role that states played in formulating social pacts in the run up to Economic and Monetary Union in the European Union. Researchers have disagreed on whether these were substantive state interventions involving meaningful exchanges between labour and employer sides, or merely procedural ones that eased the 'legitimation' of neoliberal reforms (Meardi 2014).

Neo-liberalism, with Chicago school-inspired preference for minimal levels of state intervention has been problematised by the Regulation School as corresponding with a shift in the model of accumulation (Hollingsworth and Boyer 1997). With shifts away from the Fordist model of accumulation, different models of social regulation are necessary. While Fordism is often viewed as just a model of production, it involved an active role for the state in terms of maintaining social cohesion through managing aggregate demand and the

welfare state. The neoliberal model challenges this approach. As Howell (2005) highlights, neo-liberalism does not mean a lack of state intervention but a shift in state intervention in the direction of liberalising markets and reducing the capacity for collective non-market actions.

This shift brings about changes in the three core functions of the state in employment relations. First, with the state as employer, there has clearly been a retreat in state activity in many areas. In particular, while many states are still actively involved in providing public services, this role has shifted from being direct providers to being the procurer of services often from the for-profit or voluntary sectors. A shift in this area has been the fetishisation of using private sector management methods through New Public Management and the harmful effect it may have on the quality of working life, as in the example analysed by Cunningham (2016) in this issue.

In terms of the substantive role of government, the development has been more change than retreat. Similarly, Cerny (1997; 1999) highlighted nearly twenty years ago the shift in state functions away from internal management of issues like aggregate demand towards what he labelled the 'Competition State'. As such, the state was playing a central role in two domains of competition. First, internally states increasingly play a central role in the marketization of all areas of economic life, including through actions such as introducing competitiveness into the provision of public and social services. Second, externally through mechanisms designed to increase international competitiveness states become locked into an international race to the bottom in an effort to engage in internationally competitive markets. In this special section, two papers pick up the theme of the "competition state". First, Howell (2016) argues that states have been an essential part of the liberalisation process by facilitating moves between regimes of accumulation. Second, Forde and Slater (2016) highlight how the Temporary Agency Work Directive, which was largely aimed at increasing regulation and equality within labour markets, was used by the UK state to embed increased competition. A common element of both arguments is that state's actions in the neoliberal context are adapting to and driving forward processes of liberalisation.

In terms of its procedural role, the state is also shifting its focus. In the immediate post-war period, the state was seen as legitimising collective actions of employer and worker interest groups through the granting of a privileged public status. Howell (2005) also highlights how the Fordist period was underpinned by strong state support for collectivism. However, in recent times, in contexts such as both the US and the UK, the state has taken a much more active role in the decollectivisation of social relations but through procedural means. For instance, at time of writing, the UK government in its Trade Union Bill was pushing through the legislative process a series of procedural restrictions on the rights of unions to take collective action. Similarly, in the US, 'right to work' laws in individual states have been used to play an active role in undermining union organising attempts. This was particularly the case in the recent example of Volkswagen at its plant in Tennessee. At this plant, VW was thwarted in its efforts to establish a works council-type model through the use of right to work laws. Barron et al (2016) highlight that in the right mix, restrictive state approaches can be used to bring about changes in categorisation by labour movement actors but that such changes may be a temporary affair.

## **Inputs from welfare state and gender studies**

Less central for the study of sociology of work has been the development of theories relating to the role of the state in employment through welfare policies, either directly or via effects on gender relations. The neglect of the welfare state, in particular in industrial relations, has resulted in a number of shortcomings, not least the inattention to gender issues, on which industrial relations interact most closely with legislation and welfare policies (O'Reilly and Spee 1998). If at the peak of trade union power, industrial relations and social policy tended to be studied and discussed separately, the more recent shift of social policies towards activation and risk governance call for their closer integration (Crouch 2015). In terms of state roles, the partial 'decommodification' of class relations through social citizenship (Esping-Andersen 1990), the removal of issues such as pensions and health insurance from the table of collective bargaining, and compensatory effects on inequality among workforce groups are of enormous importance for the sociology of work and deserve much more attention.

Daly and Rake (2003: 11) summarise the insights of social policy, political economy and feminist literatures as positioning the welfare state as 'the social face of the state'. This makes welfare state research central to analysis of the state, if we accept its above-mentioned conceptualisation as 'social power in its political form' (Poggi 1990). It points to developing an understanding of the state as a site of co-production of class, gender and racialized inequalities.

The starting point has been debates provoked by Esping-Andersen's (1990, 1999) influential theory of social policy regimes and development of comparative typologies of welfare states (Orloff 1993; Lewis 1992; Arts and Gelissen 2002). The strength and value of Esping-Andersen's decommodification approach is reflected in its extensive research application. However, its implicit promise of explaining variation and/or similarity in state policies and outcomes has been critiqued for its androcentric universalism and limited recognition of gender dynamics in the politics that configure policies. This inability to capture the significance of gender relations to the construction and operation of welfare regimes (Lewis 1992; Duncan 1995) constrains understanding of state intercession in its nation's class system. As Duncan puts it, the 'pre-existing theoretical core' of the regime model has as its dynamic centre 'capital-labour divisions...based around the relationship of (male, standard) workers to the market, as modified by the welfare state.' The crucial misdirection in this core dynamic is made visible in Pateman's (1988) reconceptualization of the social contract as sexual contract, which incorporates women into civil society as women rather than as person (man). For example, Daly and Rake's (2003: 17) consideration of gender and the welfare state cites Pateman's argument that equal citizenship for women would involve 'attaching rights' to care and that this is 'impossible to achieve within the confines of a patriarchal welfare state'. While the explanatory power of patriarchy has also been extensively critiqued (see for example Pollert 1996; O'Reilly 1996) Pateman's argument that unequal citizenship is the outcome of relations of subordination which enable exploitation, is a direction of causation effectively followed by Brown (2013) and Quadagno (2000) in their discussions of race and the welfare state. Quadagno's closing remarks on the significance of race/ethnicity to a holistic understanding of social citizenship seem particularly apposite in light of current controversy in nation states over material help for refugees: 'ascribed characteristics may be increasingly important in resource allocation' (2000: 235).

However, multiple and ever-finer divisions of academic work have on balance not led to greater integration - and thus explanatory power - of this greater breadth of knowledge.



Rather, it has been intermittent or additive. An example is Jessop's (2004) paper on the gender selectivities of the state, an approach not incorporated into his subsequent analyses. In the field of industrial relations, Danieli (2006: 332) argued strategies of 'acknowledgement and abdication' were deployed in relation to the analytical significance of gender. That is, acknowledging the (often, empirical) general importance of gender while simultaneously positing its lack of immediate (often, conceptual) significance. This echoes explicit and implicit calls for integrated analyses of the state by O'Reilly (2006) and which can be seen in Dickens's (1998, 2000, 2007) work on interconnected state/legal, employer and trade union effects on equality issues.

O'Reilly (2006: 745) argues that restructuring of economies, labour markets and welfare programmes means typologies focused on past (industrial) forms of work organisation are no longer plausible approaches to capturing complex non-standard employment and workforce diversity issues. As her evaluation of un-gendered cross-national comparative research notes: 'When women enter the picture it disturbs the results about the prominent characteristics of each employment system.' (2006: 733). This critique of ascribed neutrality is of course methodologically significant. It points to the necessity of a consideration of gender being integrated into research decisions, but also, it has implications for comparative research by pointing to the interdependencies between work relations, gender (and care) relations and welfare policies. Rubery (2009: 193) refines theorising of political economy in her argument that the Varieties of Capitalism framework fails to account for the fact that complementary institutional arrangements can produce instability as well as stability. Thus the interrelation of production, welfare and family systems means that although each is 'shaped by different agendas... changes in one sphere create ripple or domino effects within another'. Therefore, extending O'Reilly's (2006) analysis, sets of typologies that focus on one dimension of the socio-economic system - the firm-orientation approach of 'Varieties of Capitalism' or Esping-Andersen's (1990) original focus on welfare - are not usefully sustainable.

Sensitivity to the realities of social relations can help explain welfare state development and in particular, as Daly and Rake (2003: 18) argue, 'care can be employed to trace patterns across spheres.' Effects of motherhood have been the traditional focus of gendered welfare regime studies (see discussion in Brush 2002). However, Naldini, Pavolini and Solera (2016) in this issue focus on a relatively under-explored area that will increasingly dominate national discussions, that of care of older citizens. Many debates on typologies of the state's welfare activities have directly or implicitly focused on the explanatory gaps left by failure to integrate macro and micro analyses. Naldini et al. engage with this issue through their multilevel analysis of Eurobarometer micro-data across 21 countries. This surfaces the role of mid-life women in care of frail elderly parents, its effects on employment decisions taken by mid-life women, and the analytical relevance to these decisions of interrelation of institutional and cultural dimensions of states. The paper draws attention to important internal categories of those dimensions, exploring policies in relation to services and cash transfers; culture in relation to norms of gender and intergenerational relations; and the dynamics of their interrelation. As Naldini et al. note, analytical separation of these policy and culture influences is difficult and requires longitudinal research focus, but is necessary to understand the importance of context in a more holistic and therefore explanatory way. Their work contributes to scholarship that recognises the heterogeneous specificities of women's

experiences, while tracing their commonalities to gender relations and thus a more coherent picture of the form and impact of the state.

## **Conclusion**

Twenty years ago, in her sociologically and in particular Weberian-inspired approach to international political economy, Strange (1996) theorised the 'retreat of the state'. A few financial and currency crises later, and with many border fences and walls erected, the talk is now more about state resurgence. With regard to shaping the processes and outcomes of work, the state remains without doubt an important player. Yet, it is clear that a number of discontinuities have taken place in all of its three main roles, that its influence on the way people conceive work is different from the Weberian bureaucratic one, and that its contribution to the perpetuation or removal of inequality is ever changing.

The state is a fertile ground for research in the intersection of the arenas of work, employment and society. Without any presumption to exhaustiveness, this review of traditions and new developments points to a few particularly promising directions for future research.

First, over the past fifteen years, a key observation has been the shift in terms of rights at work from the collective to the individual level (Dickens and Hall, 2006; Colling, 2006). Much of this research has focussed on union and organisational consequences of this shift. However, there are important state-level implications that also need to be developed in more detail. While Howell (2015) sees this development as essentially instrumental legitimisation of neo-liberalism, many of these developments, including non-discrimination rights and higher minimum wages, are also both a product and a factor of renewed politicisation of work issues. As such, they are themselves, sociologically speaking, a contested field that cannot be easily reduced to functionalist accounts. The fact that some of these individual rights are introduced by governments with a neoliberal flavour does not automatically produce a neoliberal outcome, not least because the labour market remains too socially embedded to correspond passively to neoliberal design. New forms of aggregation, mobilisation and communication of workers around individual rights, whether in competition, indifference or collaboration with established forms of labour movements, are emerging social processes that call for both sociological sensitivity and attention to the state. The rights of agency workers, one of the extreme forms of precarisation examined by Forde and Slater in this section, are one interesting example that points to both opportunities from below and constraints from state institutions (Pulignano et al. 2015).

Secondly, the interaction of the state with the internationalisation of both capital and labour is a problematic issue with important theory and policy implications, as particularly visible in the European Union (Meardi 2012). Multinational corporations have become omnipresent across the globe. While 'regime competition' has been a key feature of research, both at national and regional levels (Cremers et al, 2007; Monaghan et al, 2015) in terms of attracting investment, the understanding of how states manage these relationships is rather under-developed. For instance, the relationship between state governance and the rise of 'private governance' in global supply chains (Hassel 2008; Donaghey et al, 2014) is only just emerging and therefore still to be studied, possibly with the contribution of multilevel global

governance lenses (Meardi and Marginson 2014). New approaches are emerging which may explicitly avoid states (Reinecke and Donaghey 2015) but this itself raises important issues about the nature of the state in these circumstances. Thirdly, at the same time, the internationalisation of labour supply through not only migration, but also the cross-border provision of services, calls not only for new forms of regulation but also reassembling of state borders. As Ferrera (2006), following Rokkan and thereby Weber, has argued, migrants are a sort of acid test for the definition of social solidarity. Current debates on the rights of refugees, of mobile EU workers and of the undocumented migrants analysed by Barron et al. in this issue point at the possibility of a state-led redefinition of workers' hierarchies that may have enormous implications for organisations as well as society.

Fourthly, the reformulation of both welfare state policies and public sector work under the simultaneous conditions of ageing populations and of fiscal crisis (including so-called 'austerity' policies) should be studied with simultaneous attention to effects on active and inactive population, as in the article by Naldini and colleagues in this section. The shifting of debt from private to public and back to private hands as with the collapse of 'privatised Keynesianism' and reforms of pension systems (Crouch 2015) is evidence of the role of the state for social compromises not only between classes, but also between generations and genders – and also, of the intrinsic instability of those compromises. One tendency may well be the old one Braverman focussed on: work intensification, deskilling of care work, and more state-supported accumulation, but it is up to sociologists to investigate to what extent, with what effects, and with what contradictions the state may go down that route.

## Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to Melanie Simms, Mark Stuart, Michel Goyer, Phil Mizen, Ashley Roberts and Carol Wolkowitz for their help in the preparation of this special section and of the Work, Employment and Society conference of 2013.

## References

- Altvater, E (1973) Some problems of state interventionism. *Kapitaliststate* 1: 96-116.
- Arts, W. and Gelissen, J. (2002) Three worlds of welfare capitalism or more? A state-of-the-art report *Journal of European Social Policy*, 12(2): 137–158.
- Barron, P, Bory, A, Chauvin, S, Jounin, N and Tourette, L (2016) State categories and labour protest: Migrant workers and the fight for legal status in France. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4)
- Beaumont, P and Leopold, J (1985) Public sector industrial relations: recent developments. *Employee Relations* 7(4): 1-44.
- Hollingsworth, J. R., & Boyer, R. (1997). Coordination of economic actors and social systems of production. Contemporary capitalism: the embeddedness of institutions, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Braverman, H (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Brown, H.E. (2013) Racialized Conflict and Policy Spillover Effects: The Role of Race in the Contemporary U.S. Welfare State, *American Journal of Sociology*, 119 (2), 394-443.

- Brush, L.D. (2002) Changing the Subject: Gender and Welfare Regime Studies, *Social Politics*, 161-186.
- Burawoy, M (1979) *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Burawoy, M (1985) *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism*. London: Verso.
- Cerny, P. G. (1997) Paradoxes of the competition state: the dynamics of political globalization. *Government and opposition*, 32(02), 251-274.
- Cerny, P. G. (1999) Globalization and the Erosion of Democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 36(1), 1-26.
- Clarke, S (ed) (1991) *The State Debate*. London: Macmillan.
- Colling, T (2006) What space for unions on the floor of rights? Trade unions and the enforcement of statutory individual employment rights. *Industrial Law Journal*, 35(2), 140-160
- Conley, H (2012) Using equality to challenge austerity: New actors, old problems. *Work, Employment & Society* 26(2): 349-359.
- Cremers, J, Dølvik, J-E and Bosch, G (2007). Posting of workers in the single market: attempts to prevent social dumping and regime competition in the EU. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 38(6): 524-541.
- Crouch, C (1977) *Class Conflict and the Industrial Relations Crisis*. London: Heinemann.
- Crouch, C (2015) *Governing Social Risks in Post-Crisis Europe*. Cheltenham: E Elgar.
- Cunningham, I (2016) Non-profits and the 'hollowed out' state: The transformation of working conditions through personalising social care services during an era of austerity. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4)
- Daguerre, A (2014) New corporate elites and the erosion of the Keynesian social compact. *Work, Employment and Society* 28(2): 323-334
- Daly, M and Rake, K (2003) *Gender and the Welfare State*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Danieli, A (2006) Gender, the missing link in industrial relations. *Industrial Relations Journal* 37(4): 329-43.
- Dickens, L (1998) *Equal Opportunities and Collective Bargaining in Europe*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Dickens, L (2000) Collective bargaining and the promotion of gender equality at work: opportunities and challenges for trade unions. *Transfer* 6 (2): 193-208.
- Dickens, L (2007) The road is long: Thirty years of equality legislation in Britain. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 45(3): 463-494.
- Dickens, L and Hall M (2006) Fairness-up to a point. Assessing the impact of New Labour's employment legislation. *Human Resource Management Journal* 16(4): 338-356.
- Donaghey, J, Reinecke, J, Niforou, C, and Lawson, B (2014) From employment relations to consumption relations: Balancing labor governance in global supply chains. *Human Resource Management*, 53(2): 229-252.
- Duncan, S (1995) Theorizing European gender systems. *Journal of European Social Policy* 5(4): 263-284.
- Esping-Andersen, G (1985) *Politics against Market*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G (1999) *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Farnham, D., & Horton, S. (1992). Human resources management in the new public sector: leading or following private employer practice?. *Public Policy and Administration*, 7(3), 42-55

Ferrera, M (2006) *The Boundaries of Welfare. European Integration and the New Spatial Politics of Social Solidarity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Forde, C and Slater G (2016) Labour market regulation and the 'competition state': An analysis of the implementation of the Agency Working Regulations in the UK. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4)

Greer, I (2015) Welfare reform, precarity and the re-commodification of labour. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(1): 162-173

Habermas, J (1976) *Legitimation Crisis*. Cambridge: CUP.

Hall, P. A. and Soskice, D. (2001). "An introduction to Varieties of Capitalism" in Hall and Soskice (Ed) *Varieties of capitalism*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc

Harney, S (2002) *State Work*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Hassel, A (2008) The evolution of a global labor governance regime. *Governance*, 21(2): 231-251.

Howell, C (2005) *Trade unions and the state: The construction of industrial relations institutions in Britain, 1890-2000*. Princeton University Press.

Howell, C (2015) The changing relationship between labor and the state in contemporary capitalism. *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 11(1): 6-16

Howell, C (2016) Regulating class in the neoliberal era: The role of the state in the restructuring of work and employment relations. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4)

Jessop, B (2002) *The Future of the Capitalist Debate*. Cambridge: Polity.

Jessop, B (2004) The gender selectivities of the state: a critical realist analysis, *Journal of Critical Realism*,

Kalev, A, Shenhav, Y and De Vries, D (2008) The state, the labor process, and the diffusion of managerial models. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 53(1): 1-28.

Kalleberg, A (2009) Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review* 74: 1-22.

Korczynski, M, Shire, K, Frenkel, S and Tam, M (2000) Service work in consumer capitalism: Customers, control and contradictions. *Work, Employment and Society* 14(4): 669-87.

Korpi, W (1978) *The Working Class in Welfare Capitalism*. London: Routledge.

Laclau, E (1975) The Specificity of the Political. *Economy and Society* 4(1): 87-111

Lewis, J (1992) Gender and the development of welfare regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy* 2(3): 159-73.

MacKenzie, R and Forde, C (2009) The rhetoric of the 'Good Worker' versus the realities of employers' use and the experiences of migrant workers. *Work Employment & Society* 23(1): 142-159.

Meardi, G (2012) Industrial relations after European state traditions? In L Burroni, M Keune and G Meardi (eds) *Economy and Society in Europe*. Cheltenham: E. Elgar, pp.100-23

Meardi, G (2014) The state. In A Wilkinson, G Wood and R Deeg (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Employment Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 617-636

Meardi, G and Marginson, P (2014) Global labour governance: potential and limits of an emerging perspective. *Work, Employment and Society* 28(4): 651-662

Miliband, R (1970) The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas. *New Left Review* 59:53-60.

- Monaghan, S, Gunnigle, P, & Lavelle, J (2013). Courting the multinational: Subnational institutional capacity and foreign market insidership. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 45(2), 131-150.
- Naldini, M, Pavolini, E and Solera C (2016) Female employment and elderly care: the role of care policies and culture in 21 European Countries. *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4)
- Offe, C (1984) *Contradictions of the Welfare State*. London: Hutchinson.
- Olson, M (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- O'Reilly, J (1996) Theoretical considerations in cross-national employment research. WZB Discussion Paper, No. FS I 96-203.
- O'Reilly J and Spee C (1998) The future regulation of work and welfare: Time for a revised social and gender contract? *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 4(3): 259-81.
- O'Reilly, J (2006) Framing comparisons: gendering perspectives on cross-national comparative research on work and welfare, *Work, employment and society*, 20(4), 731–750.
- Orloff, A (1993) Gender and the social rights of citizenship: the comparative analysis of gender relations and welfare states. *American Sociological Review* 58(3): 303-328.
- Pateman, C 1988: *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Peng, T (2011) The Impact of Citizenship on Labour Process: State, Capital and Labour Control in South China. *Work, Employment & Society* 25(4): 726-741.
- Poggi, G (1990) *The State. Its Nature, Development and Prospects*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Pollert, A (1996) Gender and class revisited; or, the poverty of 'patriarchy', *Sociology*, 30(4): 639–59.
- Poulantzas, N (1976) The capitalist state; A reply to Miliband and Laclau. *New Left Review* 95: 63-83.
- Pulignano, V, Meardi G and Doerflinger, N (2015) Trade unions and labour market dualisation: A comparison of policies and attitudes towards agency and migrant workers in Germany and Belgium. *Work, Employment and Society* 29(5): 808-825
- Quadagno, J (2000) Another face of inequality: Racial and ethnic exclusion in the welfare state, *Social Politics*, 229-237.
- Reinecke, J and Donaghey, J (2015) After Rana Plaza: Building coalitional power for labour rights between unions and (consumption-based) social movement organisations. *Organization* 22(5): 720-740.
- Rubery, J (2009) How Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism Requires a Wider Lens. *Social Politics* 16(2): 192-203.
- Rubery, J and Rafferty, A (2013) Women and recession revisited. *Work, Employment & Society* 27(3): 414-432.
- Schmidt, V. (2007). Bringing the state back into the varieties of capitalism and discourse back into the explanation of change. *Center for European Studies Program for the Study of Germany and Europe Working Paper Series*, 7.
- Schmitter, P (1974) Still the century of corporatism? *Review of Politics* 36(1): 85-131.
- Smith, C (2015) Continuity and change in labor process analysis forty years after *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. *Labour Studies Journal* 40(3): 222-242.
- Strange, S (1996) *The Retreat of the State. The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Streeck, W and Schmitter, P (1985) Community, market, state-and associations? The prospective contribution of interest governance to social order. *European Sociological Review* 1(2): 119-138.

Swider, S (2015) Building China: Precarious employment among migrant construction workers. *Work, Employment & Society* 29(1): 41-59.

Touraine A, Wieviorka, M, Dubet, F (1987) *The Workers' Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Original published in 1984).

Traxler, F (1999) The state in industrial relations: A cross-national analysis of developments and socioeconomic effects. *European Journal of Political Research*, 36(1): 55-85

Walby, S (2013) Finance versus Democracy? Theorizing finance in society. *Work, Employment & Society* 27(3): 489-507.

Weber, M (1968) *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. New York: Bedminster Press (Original published in 1922).

Guglielmo Meardi is Professor of Industrial Relations and Director of the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick. He has held visiting positions in Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. His research focuses on the employment implications of multinational companies, the EU, and migration.

Jimmy Donaghey is Professor of Industrial Relations in the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick. He is also the Academic Lead for the University of Warwick's interdisciplinary Global Research Priority: Global Governance. Prior to joining Warwick in 2010, he was lecturer at Queen's University Belfast. His research interests focus on global labour governance, employee voice and social pacts.

Deborah Dean is Associate Professor of Industrial Relations in the Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick. Her research interests centre on the interrelation of social, legal and cultural regulation, equality and diversity issues in work and contingent employment.