Social Partnership and Institutions

Book launch: “Hard work in new jobs. The quality of work and life in European growth sectors”
Tuesday, 17 November 2015, 12h30-14h00
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The service sector and the clients

• Dynamics of the service and public sector in shaping the quality of hard work.

• Companies and sectors offering services depend on their clients, who may be public institutions, businesses or private end customers.

• In some sectors that are partly publicly funded or subsidised, the ‘service triangle’ (Leidner, 1996) turns into a quadrangle as municipalities or social services pay for services that are delivered to citizens or end customers.
How clients shape quality of work?

- Clients and customers contribute to the shaping of working conditions by negotiating contracts, making ad hoc demands on flexibility, and controlling and monitoring the production and labour process. Cost pressure and quality considerations by both clients and employers have a fundamental impact on working conditions.

- Impact on quality of ‘hard work’ is not in a linear way.

- Contingency upon the institutional environment.
Voice and institutions?

- Low-wage and poor quality work - critical case for the investigation of institutional shaping power, as for these workers other sources of power and protection, such as skill and voice, are limited.

- Workers’ voice and interest representation - a central part both formally and informally (cf. Holtgrewe and Hohnen, Chapter 15) even – and especially – in those sectors that generally suffer from low unionisation.

- Lehndorff (Chapter 7) argues that the institutions of industrial relations may need to be complemented by state regulations where social partnership is weak.
Policy implications

• It is possible to shape ‘hard work’ in problematic sectors in a favourable way, and good practices are observable in Europe.

• Inclusive employment regimes, welfare state provisions, and a functioning social partnership and worker voice can and do provide ‘institutional anchors for job quality’ (Jaehrling, Lehndorff, 2012).

• In the pursuit of a ‘high road’ of quality work and employment, institutional contexts are complemented, and can indeed be initiated, by action on the company level.