



## **FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS**

# **Employee Representation in the New World of Work: The Dynamics of Rights, Voice, Performance and Power**

**47th Annual CIRA Conference / International CRIMT Conference  
June 16 – 18 2010, Université Laval, Québec, Canada**

The world of work is changing and this has tremendous implications for employee representation. Workplaces are continuously reconfigured through new information technologies and the transnational organization of production and services, economic globalization and financial crisis. Women's labour market participation, labour migration and greater ethnic diversity are all changing the composition of workforces. New values regarding the relationships between work and career alter expectations about the balance between work and family life. The proliferation of different forms of employment is altering individuals' relationships to their work and their life chances, increasing disparities between so-called "winners" and "losers", with important repercussions for equality and opportunity in our societies. The search for competitive advantage through flexibilization and high-performance practices prompts some firms to enhance employee engagement, social dialogue and forms of partnership with their workforce while others seek to re-engineer or dispense entirely with employee representation.

These new realities are a challenge to traditional notions of employee representation. Crafted for the most part in the decades leading to the zenith of the industrial era (and 2010 will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wagner Act, which established some of the core tenets of employee representation in the United States and Canada), employee representation systems in the most industrialized countries were constructed on conceptions of paid full-time male employment, through the prism of Fordist work organization, in which collective representation at work, most often through unions and collective bargaining, would give yield some blend of employee voice and organizational efficiency, and thereby enrich the quality of democracy in industrializing societies. There are increasing questions about the access to and efficacy of existing forms of workplace representation, about the nature and affinity of the groups to be represented, about the possibility and coherence of grafting new rights onto older systems of representation, about disparities in voice regimes between public services and the private sector, about achieving both social and economic performance, and about the capacity of existing and emerging collective

actors to negotiate these transitions, to deal with the challenges they face and to reconstruct systems of employee representation for this new world of work.

This diagnostic raises important questions for our understanding of the transformations of employee representation in comparative perspective.

- *What are the founding principles that contributed to the construction of different representative systems? Are the conditions that gave rise to them still relevant?*
- *How do different types of employee representation regimes deal with key issues facing the contemporary workplace? What are the results for workers and their families, firms and their managers, governments and other societal stakeholders?*
- *What are the emerging models and actors for employee rights, voice and representation? What are the coherence, efficacy and potential power of these contending sources and systems? What are the actor strategies for dealing with them?*
- *What kinds of public policy, actors, experimentation, strategies, capabilities, and research are necessary to rethink employee representation for this new world of work?*

These and all other questions relevant to our understanding of the current and future dynamics of employee representation will be the focus of an international conference to be held in from June 16th to 18th 2010 in Québec City, Canada. This conference is a special collaboration between the Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT) and the Canadian Industrial Relations Association (CIRA-ACRI). CRIMT is committed to organize an “open architecture” international conference on employee representation in the new world of work as part of its Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Canada Major Collaborative Research Initiatives project (“Building Institutions and Capabilities for Work and Employment in a Global Era: The Social Dynamics of Labour Regulation”). Since CIRA organizes an annual conference, it was decided that this special thematic conference will be its 47<sup>th</sup> annual CIRA conference. Other partners will also join this initiative.

The conference will take place at Laval University in the beautiful environment of Québec City. Presentations will be made in both English and French. Participants include researchers in various social science disciplines, those in charge of developing public policies and representatives of social actors and labour market partners including management, unions, legal advisers and other representative organizations. The conference is now open to multidisciplinary academic and practitioner proposals from industrial and employment relations, human resource management, labour and social law, labour studies, sociology of work and social science and other disciplines relevant to the study of work and employment.

Scholars interested in one or more of these questions (see the detailed identification of themes and questions at the end of this Call for Papers) are invited to submit an original paper proposal in English or French. The papers can be theoretical, analytical, empirical or policy-oriented. Priority will be given to studies which significantly contribute to the understanding of employee representation, either in a specific national context or from a comparative perspective.

All proposals for this thematic call for papers should be submitted by **October 30th, 2009** and will be subject to a competitive review by the Scientific Committee. Paper proposals should be a maximum of 2 pages and should outline the nature of the study, the methodological approach, and the main lines of analysis to be developed. The selected authors should submit a first draft of the full version of their paper by **May 1, 2010**, which will be made available at the time of the conference on a special Web site for participants. The paper proposal should be sent by electronic mail to: Nicolas Roby, CRIMT Scientific Coordinator at the following address: [Nicolas.Roby@umontreal.ca](mailto:Nicolas.Roby@umontreal.ca). For further updates on the conference organization, check [www.crimt.org](http://www.crimt.org) or <http://www.cira-acri.ca/>.

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The *Canadian Industrial Relations Association (CIRA-ACRI)* is a national network promoting discussion, research and education in the field of work and industrial relations. CIRA is open to any individual interested in industrial relations, work and employment, including union-management relations, labour law, human resources management, unionism, etc. CIRA brings together industrial relations specialists from both labour and management, as well as from government and universities. For further information, please visit the CIRAWeb site at: [www.cira-acri.ca/](http://www.cira-acri.ca/).

The *Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT)* is an interdisciplinary and interuniversity research centre focused on the theoretical and practical challenges of institutional and organizational renewal in the areas of work and employment in the global era. Drawing on more than seventy-five researchers from sixteen Canadian universities and more than twenty-five research institutes and universities in a dozen other countries, its three founding institutions are Université de Montréal, Université Laval and HEC Montreal. For further information, please visit CRIMT's Web site at: [www.crimt.org](http://www.crimt.org).

## Conference Themes and Questions:

### 1. Assessing different representation systems: their construction, their core principles and their evolution.

**Question: What are the founding principles that contributed to the construction of the different representative systems? Are the conditions that gave rise to them still relevant?**

- What is the historical evolution of different employee representation regimes and what are the legacies of that evolution?
- Assessments of founding principles: union or non-union; monopoly or pluralistic representation; collective bargaining versus consultation; the dynamics between individual and collective rights in different representative systems and whether these rights are statutory constitutionalized; the protection of the freedom of association; worker choice; the rights attached to representation, such as the right to strike, the duty of fair representation, access to economic information; the articulation between national and international rights for representation at work; the link with core labour standards and fundamental labour rights; the case for a differential treatment of employee representation in public and private sectors, and in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.
- Comparative perspectives on representation, rights, voice and power at work?

### 2. Assessing the response of collective actors to wider changes at work and in their societies and the impact of different representative systems on their ability to respond to those issues.

**Question: How do different types of employee representation regimes deal with key issues facing the contemporary workplace? What are the results for workers and their families, firms, governments and other societal stakeholders?**

- What is the extent of coverage of collective bargaining and other voice mechanisms? Who has access to and is included in different forms of representation (including precarious workers, independent workers, professional and white-collar workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, informal workers)? Are existing actors such as unions and their structures able to give effective voice to a diversity of groups and interests?
- What is the role of collective bargaining, social dialogue and employee voice in dealing with a wide range of issues confronting the workplace (for example, restructuring and bankruptcy, pensions, vocational training, and employment equity)? How have changing power relations affected outcomes?
- Do existing systems of representation provide access to effective levels of decision-making?

- Are traditional methods of collective action (strikes, lockouts) an effective tool for ensuring employee voice and power (in both the private sector and public services)?
- What is the impact of human resource management and employer organization and strategies on employee representation and what is the impact of employee representation on human resource management, employer organization and strategies?
- Does collective representation matter? What is the impact of employee representation, collective bargaining and/or social dialogue on organizational and social performance at the level of the workplace (new work practices, productivity, extent of conflict, resolution of grievances, worker well-being and dignity, work-family balance, health and safety at work, employment security)? What is the larger impact on economic and social performance in societies as a whole?

### 3. Assessing new actors, emerging models, strategies for change and the resulting architecture.

**Question: Who are the emerging actors and what are the new models for employee rights, voice and representation? What are the coherence, efficacy and potential power of these contending sources and systems? What are the actor strategies for dealing with them?**

- Where is change and innovation taking place (for example, in new sectors or traditional sectors) and why? What are the consequences for new types of workers, excluded workers, professional employees, etc.?
- What are the projects and strategies for the reform of worker voice regimes in different national and industry contexts (for example, *Employee Free Choice Act* in the U.S.) and what are the factors contributing to and the consequences of their success or failure?
- What are the links between different types of representation regimes as, for example, in health and safety, pensions, pay equity, and collective bargaining? What are the links between general and special regimes, for example those created for particular sectors or types of worker? Do multiple regimes detract from or reinforce employee voice?
- Does representation cross borders to attain the scope of the firm? What is the articulation between different levels of representation (workplace, regional territory, company, branch, international region, global company) and what contributes to a community of interest or not?
- What are worker voice regimes in other types of economies and social systems, especially those in the emerging economies of the Global South, and how are they being constructed?
- Comparative studies of different types and forms of employee representation (for example, single-, dual- or multi-channel representation, monopolistic or pluralistic representation, union and non-union representation)?
- What is the role of expanding notions and instruments of fundamental rights at work and of the overall evolution of broader legal regimes on existing forms of representation at work?

- What is the link between different forms of employee representation and corporate governance?
- 4. **Identifying and assessing alternatives: exploring possible solutions to problems and issues identified; research agenda and methodologies on representation, rights, voice, performance and power at work.**

**Question: What kinds of public policy, actors, experimentation, strategies, capabilities and research are necessary to rethink employee representation for this new world of work?**