

# **EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: PRACTICE AND THEORY**

**Richard Hyman  
London School of Economics**

**LSE**

# OVERVIEW

- **what do we mean by industrial relations ?**
- **human resource management *versus* industrial relations**
- **varieties of capitalism and varieties of industrial relations**
- **studying industrial relations in Europe: can we find a common language ?**

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS' ?

- an Anglo-American invention
- uneasy mix of analysis and prescription
- inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or what ?
- eclectic combination of themes and foci
- central concern: collective regulation (governance) of work and employment
- is it possible to translate 'industrial relations' ?

# HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT *VERSUS* INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

## HRM

- prescriptive
- company-based
- employee relations
- control as managerial strategy

## IR

- critical/analytical
- economy and society
- employment relationship
- regulation as multi-level interaction

# THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM

MARKET FORCES



SOCIAL REGULATION

LEGAL  
PRESCRIPTION

COLLECTIVE  
AGREEMENT

SOCIAL NORMS

# VARIETIES OF CAPITALISM, VARIETIES OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

- 'liberal market economies': primacy of market regulation
- 'coordinated market economies': primacy of social regulation
- but diversity:
  - property regime (ownership concentration, corporate governance)
  - production regime ('Fordism' and 'post-Fordism', high- and low-road competitive strategies)
  - state traditions (balance between law and collective bargaining, strength of collective actors)
  - welfare regime (extent of decommodification, articulation with employment relations)
  - gender regime (segmentation *versus* exclusion in work and welfare)

# **EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: CAN WE FIND A COMMON LANGUAGE ?**

- **words and things: descriptors are context-bound**
- **different disciplinary foundations, and segmentation between disciplines**
- **variables or differences — competing models of social science**
- **we must be open to inconsistency, contradiction and the unexpected**
- **to communicate across boundaries, we must understand our failures to communicate**