

*Paper prepared for the  
Second Euroacademia Global Forum of Critical Studies  
Asking Big Questions Again*

*Prague, 21 – 22 February 2014*

*This paper is a draft  
Please do not cite*

# Shedding critical light on Italy's labour market reform 2012

## A Historical-Materialist Policy Analysis

Daniela Caterina  
University of Hamburg

### Abstract

The paper is concerned with the controversial nature of Italy's labour market reform 2012, which is conceived as a concrete political project instrumental to the (re-)production of hegemony in the Italian context. It aims at shedding first light on the discursive-material dynamic at the heart of the reform by merging cultural political economy with a historical-materialist policy analysis. As part of a broader research project, the study draws on previous research work investigating the political and economic objects of intervention at stake in the reform debate as well as the discursive chains supporting them. The underlying aim is to move beyond actors' shared agreement on the necessity to reform Italy's labour market by asking whether their political project of reform and the related hegemony-projects actually differ and to what extent. Main findings point out three competing projects with strong divergences concerning the reform strategy, the actors supporting them and the material resources at their disposal.

Keywords: historical-materialist policy analysis, cultural political economy, hegemony, labour market reform, Italy.

### 1. Introduction

Europe and the world started to look with concern at the situation in Italy in summer 2011, when the country was struck by the sovereign debt crisis with wide-ranging effects: a new phase of recession, an uncontrolled increase in unemployment as well as an escalation of political tensions, culminated in the fall of Berlusconi's government and the appointment of Mario Monti as Prime Minister. The arrival of a new "technical" government opened a season of comprehensive reforms in the desperate attempt to rescue Italy from the crisis and restore a balance between the imperative of fiscal consolidation and the need to restore growth. Thus, after years, also the labour market became again the object of main debates regarding the necessity to reform it.

The paper builds on previous research work on the political and economic objects of interventions at stake in the debate on Italy's latest labour market reform and on the discursive chains of actors supporting them. The aim is to shed first light on the particularity of the reform as a specific political project instrumental to the (re-)production of hegemony in Italy's crisis context by answering the following research question: Which competing political projects have been struggling in the debate on Italy's labour market reform 2012?

As part of a broader research project, the present paper offers a preliminary answer to this question by integrating a cultural political economy perspective with a historical-materialist policy analysis. To this aim, this contribution is structured in three main blocks. The first section outlines the theoretical premises of the work and their operationalization; the second block presents the analysis of the competing political projects of labour market reform; finally, the major findings are resumed and put in the context of future research work.

### 2. Framework of analysis

#### 2.1 Cultural political economy

The cultural political economy (hereafter CPE) approach developed by Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum highlights the importance of the 'cultural turn' in political economy research (Jessop 2004; Sum and Jessop 2014). The authors stress the interplay of the intersubjective production of meaning (semiosis) with the material features of selective structuration (extra-semiotic factors) in reducing the complexity of political and, more broadly, social practices. CPE studies the economy in terms of economic imaginaries – where they originate, how they are translated into hegemonic projects and how they become institutionalized in specific structures (Sum 2005, 1). Economic imaginaries with their related subjects (who have to intervene) and objects (which kind of intervention is needed) are thus seen as co-evolutions of discursive and material aspects, as they are discursively construed but also embedded in social relations and institutions with their strategic-selective structures.

CPE is concerned with the study of crises and crisis management as interesting moments to explore how the complexity of social and political practices is reduced. In times of crisis, CPE argues, actors' view of the world is

challenged by the recognition that existing structures do not work adequately anymore and this undermines the kind of complexity reduction which had been considered to be satisfying up to that point. Pushed by such disorientation, so the claim, social phenomena are interpreted in different ways and social agents accordingly develop different strategies to steer the transformation of existing structures (*variation*). However, only some strategies, i.e. some crisis interpretations with their attached economic and political objects of intervention, are privileged (*selection*) and operationalized (*retention*). As put by Sum, “success in these struggles typically depends on the capacity to articulate compelling visions that combine political, intellectual and moral leadership with a flow of material rewards” (Sum 2005, 1).

Thus, on the one hand, to focus on semiosis underlines that in times of crisis there is a urgent need to reduce complexity through a discursive definition of social, political and economic subjects and objects of intervention. This gives rise to discursive struggles among the involved actors, as in the case of the Italian labour market reform 2012. On the other hand, a CPE perspective also sheds light on the role of materiality, since strategic selectivities are seen to structure both actors’ interests and their power to favour a given crisis interpretation with its attached economic imaginaries.

Drawing on these principles, the present paper is concerned with a specific aspect in Italy’s discursive construction of the crisis and related crisis management, i.e. the discursive-material dialectic at the core of the labour market reform 2012. To this aim, it focuses on three mediating arenas in which economic, political and intellectual actors compete to construct (hegemonic) objects of governance both discursively and materially, i.e. the arena of international organizations and institutions, the arena of (supra- and sub-)states and the arena of (trans-)national civil society (ibid., 10). Great importance in the analysis is attached to the building of *discursive chains* (Fairclough 2003) across these arenas in support of different objects of governance and subject positions (Sum 2005, 13).

## 2.2 Historical-materialist policy analysis

Drawing on the interest of CPE for the interaction of discursive and material elements, the reform of the Italian labour market is conceptualized as a concrete political project instrumental to the (re)production of a related hegemony-project. This concept has been developed by the research group State Project Europe (Buckel 2011; Buckel et al. 2012; Kannankulam and Georgi 2012). Their analysis of social forces in the process of European integration reconstructs the tendentially unlimited strategies and tactics of conflicting actors and interests and brings them together in broad societal projects which they term “hegemony-projects” (*Hegemonieprojekte*) (Buckel et al. 2012, 17).

A hegemony-project is an analytical abstraction. The concept draws on Jessop’s distinction between accumulation strategies, hegemonic projects and state projects (Jessop 1990). However, hegemony-projects are distinguished from actually hegemonic projects, since they strive for hegemony but have not achieved it yet. In order to reach this status, a given hegemony-project must succeed in the realization of a series of specific political projects offering the “political-strategic ‘terrain’ on which a hegemonic project can consolidate” (Kannankulam and Georgi 2012, 35, own translation). The concept of “political projects” is borrowed from Bieling and Steinhilber, who define them as “specific, concrete political initiatives representing the solution to urgent social, economic and political problems” (2000, 106, own translation).

Hegemony-projects and their related political projects are conceptualized as something dynamic – both spatially and historically – thus differing according to country and policy field. Because of this specificity, the authors suggest to use the concept “hegemony-projects” to analyse conflict constellations of societal forces in relation to specific, concrete conflicts. Studies of this sort are defined “historical-materialist policy analyses” (hereafter HMPA) and can be traced back to the attempt to make recent debates in the field of materialistic state theory useful for empirical analyses (Brand 2013).

Summing up, the present paper seeks to integrate the two theoretical perspectives presented above. Following CPE, the analysis aims at studying an example of complexity reduction in Italy’s crisis management. This implies, among others, to investigate the economic and political objects of interventions entailed in the debate on Italy’s labour market reform as well as the actors supporting them. The concurring political projects of reform are then reconstructed by means of a HMPA, which is used as a first attempt to investigate the hegemony-projects competing in crisis-ridden Italy. How these two perspectives are combined is dealt with in the following section.

## 2.3 Integrating CPE and HMPA

First attempts to operationalize a HMPA suggest proceeding in three steps: context, actors’ and process analysis (Buckel et al. 2012, 23; Kannankulam and Georgi 2012, 36-40). The *context analysis* should point out key material

and historical dynamics at the basis of the analysed conflict, thus working out those aspects of the historical situation to which the observed actors react in different ways. The aim of the second step, the *actors' analysis*, is to identify the competing constellations of societal forces involved in the observed conflict, i.e. the various hegemony-projects striving to become hegemonic. This implies to reconstruct three main aspects: the strategy at the heart of the hegemony-project, the actors supporting it as well as the material resources a given project has at its disposal. Building on this, the *process analysis* aims at reconstructing the historical dynamics of the observed conflict throughout its chronological development. More precisely, the process is to reconstruct starting

"from the (different) problem definitions by the key actors, through the political projects proposed to solve them and the related societal conflicts concerning a given policy, up to the specification of a temporary balance of power and finally to its material consolidation into institutions, laws and state apparatuses." (Kannankulam and Georgi 2012, 40, own translation).

Given the limited scope of this paper, it is not possible to develop all mentioned steps at length. The context of the reform is briefly outlined by presenting the main features of the Italian labour market in the light of past reforms (section 3.1). However, the bulk of attention is on the actors' analysis, which is re-interpreted as follows. The paper focuses on the actors concerned with the reform of the Italian labour market across the three mediating arenas in the (re)production of hegemony dealt with above in section 2.1 (see table 1). The political and economic objects of intervention at stake in the reform debate and the discursive chains supporting them are investigated by taking following aspects into account:

- The crisis – How is it interpreted and which is the perception of ensuing challenges?
- The Italian labour market – Which are the perceived problems and why is a reform necessary?
- Which basic principles should guide the reform activity?
- Which should be the concrete aims of the reform?

Drawing on these data, the paper reconstructs the competing visions of labour market reform as a specific political project supporting the realization of different hegemony-projects – each with its specific strategy, pool of actors and material resources (section 3.2).

Arenas	Actors and sources
International organizations/institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– International Monetary Fund (IMF): country-reports, policy analyses, press conferences</li> <li>– Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): country-reports, policy analyses, press conferences</li> </ul>
(Supra-/sub-) states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– EU-Council, Commission (decisions, recommendations, documents on Italy's national reform plan)</li> <li>– Italian government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prime Minister Monti (speeches)</li> <li>○ Minister of Labour and Social Policy Fornero (speeches)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Head of State Napolitano (speeches)</li> </ul>
(Trans-)national civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Trade Unions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Italian Confederation of Labour (CGIL): press releases</li> <li>○ Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Union (CISL): policy analyses, communications to the Parliament</li> <li>○ European Trade Union Institute (ETUI): policy analyses</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Italian Employers' Confederation (Confindustria): policy analyses, Parliament auditions, press releases</li> <li>– Bank of Italy: (speeches by Governor Visco)</li> <li>– Italian Banking Association (ABI): policy analyses, Parliament auditions, press releases</li> </ul>

Table 1: Arenas, actors and sources considered in the analysis. Time span of observation: duration of Monti's government (16 November 2011 - 21 December 2012).

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1 The Italian labour market in the context of past reforms

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the reform activity of the Italian government in the field of labour law accelerated (Schlemmer 2010, 69). It is not possible here to go into the details of all adopted policy measures; however, one among them revolutionised the Italian labour market. It is the so-called "Treu package" of 1997, named after the Minister who initiated the bill. The Treu reform represents a milestone in the process of flexibilisation of Italy's labour market. It aimed at improving workers' employability through increased possibilities for education and vocational training as well as to increasing the number of working places. This allowed the widespread of part-time contracts,

temporary contracts and other atypical contracts to facilitate the entry of new workers. Deregulation was intended to be the one side of the medal, since the left-centre government actually planned to strengthen workers' safety and their compensation for the risks of such a more flexible labour market. This second part of the reform, however, has never been completed (Schlemmer 2010, 70; Trivellato 2010, 86). This determined a paradigmatic shift in a labour market which, up to that point, had been mainly concerned with the guarantee of a secure workplace for people with open-ended contracts. The reform, on the contrary, introduced the idea that many job opportunities were equally important as secure jobs (Schlemmer 2010, 71). With the European Employment Strategy of 1997 and its re-contextualization in the Lisbon Strategy at the beginning of the 2000s, the keyword "flexicurity" entered the Italian political scenario. It was followed by the constitution of a huge expert-bureaucratic complex aimed at a re-conceptualization of the Italian welfare state, which has been operating with continuous reference to the maxims of the European Employment Strategy (*ibid.*, 72-73).

Against this background, after the electoral victory of 2001, Berlusconi seemed to have best chances to develop a labour market policy in line with the neoliberal principles of his party. However, the insistence on the reform of Article 18 of the Workers' Statute let the situation in the country escalate, up to the assassination in 2002 of the labour expert Marco Biagi who had been leading the works on the so-called 'white book' on labour. The defensive attitude of Berlusconi's government forced the Prime Minister to conceive a new strategy and he tried – with success – to divide Italy's trade unions, as the 'Pact for Italy' of 2002 confirms (*ibid.*, 73-75).

The main elements of the pact, which had not been signed by the trade union CGIL, became law and continued the changes introduced by the Treu reform. Yet the provisions in matter of social security and activation policies entailed in Biagi's white book just disappeared from the reform proposal (Trivellato 2010, 87). This conscious abandonment of any flanking measures has led experts to adapt the buzzword "flexicurity" to the Italian context by transforming it in "flex-insecurity" (Schlemmer 2010, 82).

The following Prodi government did not manage to adopt any of the renewed impulses of the left agenda to strengthen the model of flexicurity. On the other hand, the comeback of Berlusconi in 2008 had to face the outbreak of the economic and financial crisis. This motivated the choice of short-term measures against the crisis and the justification that no time was left for reforms like the one of the labour market (Trivellato 2010, 91). However, some labour provisions were adopted, for example in matter of internship and collective bargaining at the level of the workplace (Clauwaert and Schömann 2013). Nevertheless, no main plans for a comprehensive reform of the labour market were expressed up to the appointment of Monti's government, which had to face a highly deregulated and segmented labour market with high unemployment rates and low labour participation.

### 3.2 Three competing political projects of reform

The reform debate has been analysed in previous research work (Caterina 2013) by answering the questions presented in section 2.3: How is the crisis interpreted and which is the perception of ensuing challenges? Which are the perceived problems in the Italian labour market and why is a reform necessary? Which basic principles should guide the reform activity? Which should be the concrete aims of the reform? This helped to point out the political and economic objects of interventions dealt with in the reform debate as well as the discursive chains behind them. The analysis has shown that the observed actors mainly focus on the consequences of the crisis in Italy and on their interplay with the country's long-standing structural weaknesses. Moreover, they all share a basic awareness of the economic problems oppressing the country and its labour market. As a consequence, the findings indicate a general agreement on the need to reform Italy's system of labour relations. The underlying risk, however, is to downplay the relevant differences among the various discursive chains, whose general structure can be resumed as follows. First, most objects of interventions with their attached principles and values are proposed at the international (IMF, OECD) and supra-national (EU) level but enjoy the relevant support of the national capital fraction (Bank of Italy, ABI, Confindustria). Second, most of these political and economic objects are advocated – either independently from the previous actors or as an own re-contextualization – by the main governmental actors (Monti, Fornero, Napolitano). Finally, these discursive chains are often partially reinforced, wittingly or unwittingly, by the trade unions (CGIL, CISL), which, however, often adopt a critical stance (especially CGIL and ETUI).

Summing up, there is a widespread call for action in the reform debate concerning following policy measures: increase in labour participation; fight against duality, segmentation, tax evasion and undeclared work; shift of the tax burden away from capital and labour as well as a stronger link between wages and productivity. However, despite these similarities, the observed actors turn out to advocate at least three different political projects to reform the Italian labour market. Drawing on these findings, this section thus seeks to reconstruct these competing projects in the context of their respective diverging hegemony-projects – each with its own strategy, supporters and available material resources.

### 3.2.1 Neoliberal hegemony-project

With reference to the process of European integration, the strategy pursued by the neoliberal hegemony-project is basically centred on the political project of the European Single Market. Its political guidelines range from the downsizing of state regulation and an increasing financialization of the economy up to a progressive flexibilization of production and labour relations. Key to the project is therefore the internationalization of capital, production and commerce as well as an ever increasing mobility of labour as factor of production (Buckel et al. 2012, 25).

Against this background, the reform of the Italian labour market is seen as a political project contributing to a tripartite *strategy*: the pursuit of fiscal consolidation, the strengthening of the Italian banking system and the introduction of structural reforms. The focus on neoliberal austerity measures is seen as unavoidable and structural reforms, such as the one of the labour market, represent a necessary corollary to realize the three basic principles put forward by this project: productivity, competitiveness and growth. The details of the labour policy agenda follow from this basic stance as well as from the recognition of the troubled situation in crisis-ridden Italy and, more specifically, in its labour market. They range from the fight against low labour participation, low mobility, early school leaving, segmentation, tax evasion and undeclared work up to a stronger link between wages and productivity and a shift of the tax burden away from capital and labour. On the whole, the principle of flexibility plays a crucial role in this political project of reform. Restrictions of flexibility in entering the labour market are accepted only if a substantial degree of exit flexibility is guaranteed.

The *social basis* of the neoliberal hegemony-project in general is mainly composed by powerful actors in the sector of financial economy and multinational corporations. Among the observed actors, the related political project concerning Italy's labour market is supported first of all by IMF, EU, Bank of Italy, ABI and Confindustria. OECD's position, on the other hand, is not straightforward. The organization is actually a powerful actor in supporting the discursive chains started, for example, by the IMF. However, it also tends to introduce its own social agenda, which recalls many aspects of the social hegemony-project, at least theoretically (see section 3.2.2). The EU Commission, in turn, is also concerned with broad social issues, both in its Europe 2020 Strategy and in the Employment Package. However, behind the endorsement of objectives such as the fight against unemployment and the pursue of active labour market policies (ALMPs) as essential for growth, there still is the belief that, in order to get more dynamism, it is necessary to reduce social protection and make job relations and dismissals more flexible – which is exactly the contrary of the stance taken by the social hegemony-project dealt with below.

On the whole, it is thus evident that the political project of labour market reform put forward by the neoliberal hegemony-project can count on substantive material *resources*. For sure, this is due to the fact that its supporters belong to the international financial and commercial field of economic activity. On the other hand, a further strength of this political project is its capillarity also at the national and local level thanks to the presence of actors like Bank of Italy, ABI and Confindustria.

### 3.2.2 (National/pro-European) social hegemony-project

The core strategy of the social hegemony-project is the basic quest for social redistribution and the achievement of a stable social balance. Depending on its attitude towards the dynamic of European integration, it can be defined as national or pro-European. In the first case, its strategy is not based on a refusal of the European integration project, but rather on the conviction that it does not represent an adequate platform to the achievements of the mentioned goals. The pro-European option, on the other hand, is firmly convinced that the crisis of the welfare state in the wake of globalization pressures can only be counterbalanced by an Europeanization of social and economic policies (Buckel et al. 2012, 26-29).

As for the present analysis, the *strategy* pursued by this project aims at massive policies of redistribution, it is adverse to the neoliberal imperative of financial austerity and has a quite critical stance on labour market reforms in general as an antidote against the crisis. More precisely, the attempt to reform the labour market is appreciated and supported; yet the emphasis is on the fact that such a reform cannot solve Italy's growth problem. It is thus pleaded for more fiscal equity and a new industrial policy. Concrete policy recommendations concerning the reform are focused first of all on the fight against precariousness in the labour market and the defence of employment protection law. Also in this case, however, the refusal of an increase in employers' freedom to dismiss is considered only as something marginal. The real problem and priority of the country is identified in the need for a proper growth policy with public and private investments to support the small and medium enterprises.

The *social basis* behind this political project of reform is mainly composed by CGIL, the less moderate among Italy's biggest trade unions. Its position, in turn, shares much of the arguments put forward by the ETUI in Brussels. CISL,

the other observed trade union, basically shares the strategy of this project but is more incline to compromise with the other two hegemony-projects.

The material *resources* of this hegemony-project cannot compete with the neoliberal one. The ties with other trade unions at European level are scarcely effective; moreover, also the national unity of the Italian trade unions is continuously under pressure, given the mentioned split between CGIL and the more moderate CISL (see section 3.1). However, thanks to its capillary presence in the country, CGIL still retains a not negligible bargaining power, which has often lead to blockades during government's consultations with the social partners.

	<b>Neoliberal HP</b>	<b>(National/pro-European) social HP</b>	<b>(Social) strategy of peripheral governors</b>
<b>General strategy</b>	Downsizing of state regulation, financialisation of the economy, flexibilisation of production and labour relations.	Social redistribution, achievement of stable social balance (either through Europeanization of social/economic policy or not).	Political activity caught in neoliberal logic independently from political belonging + integration of cornerstones of the social HP.
<b>Strategy behind labour market reform</b>	- Reform instrumental to tripartite strategy (fiscal consolidation, stronger bank system, structural reforms). Necessary corollary to achieve productivity, competitiveness and growth. - Flexibility: key in labour market entry/exit.	- Policies of redistribution, opposition to financial austerity, fight vs precariousness, defence of employment protection law. - Disillusionment concerning the labour market reforms as a (sufficient) antidote against the crisis.	- National re-contextualization of neoliberal imperatives (fiscal consolidation, flexibility, dynamism), attempt to partially meet the demands of the social HP and to solve urgent socio/economic problems. - Paradigm shift: from the protection of the workplace to the protection of the worker.
<b>Social basis</b>	IMF, (OECD), EU, Bank of Italy, Confindustria. Possible compromise with CISL.	CGIL, ETUI, (CISL).	Monti, Fornero, Napolitano. Possible compromise with CISL. Positive influence of OECD.
<b>Resources</b>	Considerable due to international relevance and local capillarity.	Scarce Europe-wide connection worsened by lacking unity at national level. Yet strong bargaining power due to CGIL's capillarity/resources.	Mainly political leverage due to gravity of the situation/technical nature of the government. Yet emergency character = also most relevant weakness.

Table 2:Overview of the competing hegemony-projects (HP)and related political projects to reform the Italian labour market.

### 3.2.3 (Social) strategy of peripheral governors

The third perspective on the labour market reform as a specific political project cannot be ascribed to a completely new hegemony-project but rather to a sort of adaptation of the neoliberal project in the aftermath of the economic, financial and sovereign debt crisis (Buckel et al. 2012, 30-36). This political project of reform, in fact, can be traced back to a so-called “strategy of peripheral governors” (*ibid.*). According to this strategy, the governments of the member states in the European periphery like Italy are caught in a necessarily neoliberal logic which, independently from their belonging to a given political party, prevents them from coming up with political measures diverging from the neoliberal path.

However, the situation turns out to be more complicated. This political project of reform, in fact, also adopts elements from the pro-European social hegemony-project by combining, for example, the typically neoliberal concern for flexibility with the promotion of a social agenda based on principles like social inclusion. This third *strategy* thus relies on its ambiguous nature at the edge between the influences of the neoliberal project and the need to re-contextualize them at national level in the attempt to solve the intermeshing of economic and social problems afflicting the country. Consequently, its policy agenda focuses on the fight against “bad flexibility” leading to precariousness but defends the principle of dynamism and “good flexibility”. The search for a balance between the attention for both economic and social issues is best translated in the call for a paradigm shift from the protection of the workplace to the protection of the worker in the Italian system of labour relations.

The Prime Minister Monti, the Minister of Labour Fornero and the Head of State Napolitano constitute the main *social basis* supporting this strategy. Among them, however, Fornero is the most involved in an active re-contextualization of the neoliberal project and in its ensuing integration with some of the priorities put forward by the pro-European social one. At the international level, OECD's position tends to strengthen this strategy, too. As for the national level, on the other hand, this political project of reform often succeeds in getting the support of more moderate trade unions like CISL.

The *resources* of this project are of a mainly political nature; they reside first of all in the gravity of Italy's crisis situation and in the extraordinary "technical" nature of its government which has been strongly supported by the Head of State Napolitano. However, such emergency character does not only represent the (relative) political strength of this strategy but also, and especially, its weakness.

## 4 Conclusion and outlook

Starting from a seeming general acknowledgment of the necessity to reform Italy's labour market, the paper aimed at shedding critical light on the diverging political projects of reform advocated by the involved actors. The analysis pointed out three main competing political projects with their corresponding hegemony-projects (see table 2). First, a neoliberal project focused on workers' flexibility and on the necessity of structural reforms to integrate the imperative of fiscal consolidation. Second, a (national/pro-European) social project concerned about the issues of precariousness and employment protection and, at the same time, critical of the mantra of financial austerity as well as of the efficacy of a labour market reform in overcoming Italy's crisis. Finally, a strategy of peripheral governors with strong pro-European social influences, whose call for a paradigm shift from the protection of the workplace to the protection of the worker attempts at re-contextualizing key neoliberal objectives like flexibility, dynamism and fiscal consolidation and reconciling them with social objectives.

These findings represent a very first step in the attempt to fully exploit the potential of merging CPE and HMPA. The focus on the discursive dimension of the reform debate and the building of discursive chains needs to be integrated by a more thorough analysis of the extra-semiotic factors involved in the reform process. This, in turn, can be achieved by going through *all* the steps of a HMPA, i.e. by integrating the actors' analysis presented in this paper with an in-depth context and process analysis. Moreover, further research work is planned to enlarge the plethora of observed actors by focusing on the main Italian political parties and newspapers concerned with the labour market reform 2012.

---

*Daniela Caterina is PhD student at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Hamburg, Germany, and scholarship holder of the Cusanuswerk foundation. She holds a M.A. degree in European Studies from the same university, where she has been lecturer in political science since 2011.*

## References

- Bieling, Hans-Jürgen, and Jochen Steinhilber. 2000. "Hegemoniale Projekte im Prozess der europäischen Integration." In *Die Konfiguration Europas. Dimensionen einer kritischen Integrationstheorie*, edited by Hans-Jürgen Bieling and Jochen Steinhilber, 102–130. Münster: WestfälischesDampfboot.
- Brand, Ulrich. 2013. "State, context and correspondence. Contours of a historical-materialist policy analysis." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 42(4): 425–442.
- Buckel, Sonja. 2011. "Staatsprojekt Europa." *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 52(4): 636–662.
- Buckel, Sonja, Fabian Georgi, John Kannankulam, and Jens Wissel. 2012. "...wenn das Alte nicht stirbt und das Neue nicht zur Welt kommen kann.' Kräfteverhältnisse in der europäischen Krise." In *Die EU in der Krise*, edited by Forschungsgruppe Staatsprojekt Europa, 12–47. Münster: WestfälischesDampfboot.
- Caterina, Daniela. 2013. "First attempts at restoring growth: A cultural political economy perspective on Italy's labour market reform 2012". Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual conference of the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI) "Beyond Austerity vs Growth: The Future of the European Political Economy", Sheffield, UK, 1–3 July.
- Clauwaert, Stefan, and Isabelle Schömann. 2013. "The crisis and national labour law reforms: a mapping exercise. Country report: Italy". *ETUI Working Paper 2012.04*. Accessed January 31, 2014.  
<http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Working-Papers/The-crisis-and-national-labour-law-reforms-a-mapping-exercise>.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analyzing Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Jessop, Bob. 1990. *State Theory. Putting Capitalist States in their Place*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Jessop, Bob. 2004. "Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy." *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(2): 159–174.
- Kannankulam, John, and Fabian Georgi. 2012. "Die europäische Integration als materielle Verdichtung von Kräfteverhältnissen." *Working Paper of the research group European Integration at the Philipps University Marburg*. Accessed January 31, 2014.  
<http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/politikwissenschaft/eipoe/publikationen/publikationen/a30.pdf>
- Schlemmer, Thomas. 2010. "Berlusconis Jobwunder? Arbeitspolitik zwischen pfadabhängiger Kontinuität und neoliberaler Reform." In *Berlusconi an der Macht: Die Politik der italienischen Mitte-Rechts-Regierungen in vergleichender Perspektive*, edited by Gian Enrico Rusconi et al., 63–82. München: OldenbourgWissenschaftsverlag.
- Sum, Ngai-Ling. 2005. "Towards a Cultural Political Economy: Discourses, Material Power and (Counter-)Hegemony". *EU Framework 6 Demologos Spot Paper*.
- Sum, Ngai-Ling, and Bob Jessop. 2014. *Towards a Cultural Political Economy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Trivellato, Ugo. 2010. "Arbeitsbeziehungen nach Gutsherrenart: Flexibilisierung und Unsicherheit in der Ära Berlusconi." In *Berlusconi an der Macht: Die Politik der italienischen Mitte-Rechts-Regierungen in vergleichender Perspektive*, edited by Gian Enrico Rusconi et al., 83–98. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag.