

Preface

Globalization is one of the key words in current political and economic debates, conveying the impression that the world will never be the same again. But globalization, whatever it means exactly, may also represent a challenge to existing scientific theories in the fields of labour law and industrial relations – two fields that certainly do not remain untouched by political and economic developments. The question may be raised whether these theories are still able to perform their distinct and vital tasks: to grasp the meaning and impact of changes in the world of work, organization and law, and to offer a conceptual basis and guideline for both new research and new policies. One may indeed argue that, as society advances, so too must theory.

On behalf of the organizers I wish to acknowledge the Royal Netherlands Academy of the Arts and Sciences for giving us the opportunity to bring together foreign and Dutch experts to report and reflect on the theme *Advancing Theory in Labour Law and Industrial Relations in a Global Context*. This International Colloquium took place in Amsterdam at the Academy on 18 and 19 April 1996. I would also like to express our gratitude to two co-sponsors: the Netherlands School for Social and Economic Policy Research (AWSB) and the Hugo Sinzheimer Institute of the University of Amsterdam. The Organizing Committee consisted of colleagues from both organizations: Dr. Peter Leisink, Professor Frans van Waarden, Professor Paul van der Heijden and Professor Teun Jaspers. I thank them for their engagement and for performing various intellectual and physical tasks both in preparing for and during the Colloquium. The Colloquium would not have been a success without the active participation of the key speakers and the other participants.

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Dr. Ton Wilthagen
Initiator of the Colloquium

