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Abstract:

The conditions framing employment relationships have enormously changed in the last decades. In answer to the internationalization of markets firms implement new management concepts and foster work flexibilization. Simultaneously, employee's careers' expectations have dramatically altered due to a broader societal change of values. As a consequence of this new dynamic, the relationship between employer-employee changes as well. In the case of highly-trained employees it conventionally included a relative security of employment and career perspectives in exchange for the willingness to high-commitment and high performance. This exchange pattern has come under considerable pressure.. This employment dynamics based on mutual expectations can be explained through the construction of an implied contract (also known as psychological or implicit contract). Specially in what concerns the organizational psychology, but also in relation to the sociology of work, the formation of implied contracts normally takes place on the level of individuals. Dissenting from this approach, the present dissertation analyses systematically the correlation between institutional conditions framing the arrangement of the employer-employee relationship, as well as the formation of the implied contracts of high-qualified employees in industrial companies. Under this perspective implied contracts can be understood as institutionalized patterns of social integration in the company. Primarily based on secondary analyses the dissertation develops a historical perspective on the subject. It reasons that in this historical perspective the so called 'traditional' contract (also known as 'old' contract) of highly-trained employees has maintained a surprising continuity in the face of highly differing socioeconomic basic conditions. This continuity is explained by the specific demands to the control of complex tasks in the labor process as well as by the need to secure the necessary human resources. Societal and economic environment changes actually taking place undermine the conventional mode of social integration in the company. They stimulate the destabilization of employment relationships and have led to a situation in which the traditional career pattern of hierarchical progression has become dysfunctional. At the same time such changes leave the specific social integration needs of these employees unchanged. Different from what some authors diagnose as the emergence of a 'new' employer-employee contract rather confined to an economic exchange relationship, this dissertation brings forward the following argument: Though the expectations subject to the old contract cannot abide, its characteristics in regards to long-term orientation and loyalty-based exchange could persist. New exchange offers – especially on the side of companies – are certainly a

requirement for that. Those offers must take into account changed occupational conditions as well as plural(ized) occupational expectations of a highly-qualified workforce.