Macroeconomic policies and the alternatives to stagnation

The recession in the European Union is officially at an end but in many countries employment and real wages are below pre-crisis levels, in some cases disastrously so. Even according to official projections there is no prospect of any significant improvement in the near future. Deeply reactionary monetary and fiscal policies are constraining any recovery but also contributing to a process of restructuring in Europe. Although some sectors are expanding, notably in the euro area core countries, economic and social polarization is deepening both between and within countries. This workshop will be concerned to analyse the impact of the policies promoted by the dominant member states, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, and to develop alternative proposals which aim to establish greater democratic control over economic policy and to reverse the widening social and economic divide in Europe through promoting a sustainable model of economic development.

Finance and the banking union

According to the European Commission, ‘The EU banking sector has faced several problems in the run-up and during the crisis: moral hazard, high leverage and balance sheet expansion, lack of market discipline, lack of bank resolvability, implicit bail-out expectations and competition distortions. Arguably, pre-crisis regulation and supervision were also inadequate.’ (European Financial Stability & Integration Report 2013, p. 64) Does the newly introduced banking union face these problems? Further, can it deliver a banking sector that addresses the needs of the economy and of society, rather than of finance?

Industrial policy and the reshaping of the economy

The crisis has led to the disappearance of a large part of productive capacities in countries of Europe's periphery in the South and East, while at the same time diminishing reproductive capabilities and public sector capacities for regulatory intervention. Europe's economy cannot develop by returning to previous economic activities and their established patterns of regional distribution. The present recovery is an opportunity for reshaping the economic structure in directions that are socially and ecologically desirable, moving toward activities capable of providing good, meaningful jobs and high wages. In this context, the transition to ecological sustainability and the reduction of energy use is a major challenge. This workshop will focus on these processes, on the need for a new public intervention in shaping Europe's economies and on the specific forms that new Europe-wide industrial policies may take

Social policy and combating inequality

The social policies associated with European construction were once very ambitious and enjoyed equal status with economic objectives. Since the launch of the Delors plan European social policy has
gradually been narrowed and weakened. Recently there have been aggressive moves against national social models, both from the Court of Justice and in draft directives on such issues as takeovers and service market deregulation. And now the Troika has launched a frontal assault on the social models of some of the most vulnerable member states. We invite papers which examine the problems of the EU’s present social policies and/or which develop alternative social policy strategies and the contribution that these alternatives could make to the resolution of the crisis in the eurozone and in the EU as a whole. Papers looking at the gender impact of austerity policies are especially welcome.

**EU international trade and investment policy**

The EU is currently negotiating a number of free trade agreements, in particular the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the US, and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) within the framework of the WTO. These agreements are both very comprehensive in scope and ambitious in terms of the liberalization agenda they pursue. In particular, they include a variety of sensitive regulatory issues and expand the domain of trade policy into key sectors of public policy, like for instance health and safety regulations, consumer protection or environmental regulations. In the workshop we aim at a critical assessment of the economic, social and environmental effects of these agreements, as well as their impacts on democracy and the conduct of public policy. We invite submissions of papers from economics, (international) political economy, and legal perspectives. We are particularly interested in contributions that employ an inter-disciplinary approach and which in addition to providing a critical analysis make proposals for alternative policies to the current EU trade agenda.