

IREC Conference 2019

“Transnational Labour Markets and Industrial Relations”

at Bielefeld University

ZiF – Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung

Center for Interdisciplinary Research

Germany

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Call for Papers

Today's globalized capitalism is not only characterized by mobile capital, global value chains, and a global financial system, but more and more also by cross-border labour mobility and emergent transnational labour markets. While national labour markets have never been entirely closed, in the current period of globalisation enterprises seek locations for investment in new production facilities globally (*mobility of capital*), and employees, in turn, prospect job offers beyond the borders of their place of residence or citizenship (*mobility of labour force*) on a voluntary basis, due to economic pressures, or even to escape war and violence as in the case of refugees. The cross-border placement of care workers, the staffing of ships and airplanes with international crews, cross-border sub-contracting, e.g. in construction or meat processing, are examples in case. Transnational labour markets can be observed for labour at all different skill levels: from academics and medical doctors, care and construction workers, to domestic workers. They are also not confined to legal employment based on employment contracts, but can also be observed for all kinds of bonded and trafficked labour.

Given these examples, it is not surprising that transnational labour markets are taken for granted by the media, consulting agencies and other economic actors. At the same time, however, there has been very little research done on transnational labour markets as phenomena sui generis. In fact, the vast majority of labour market research today still applies a national frame of reference, and investigates specific national labour markets. At the center of this research are national institutions and policies regulating labour markets. Yet, it is questionable if this national frame-of-reference is able to capture the emergence of transnational labour markets, their structures and outcomes for labourers.

The 2019 IREC Conference will, therefore, discuss the emergence of transnational labour markets as a multi-layered phenomenon. Special emphasis will be put on the questions about whether and to what extent the institutions governing the employer-employee relationship have become transnational in response to capital and labour mobility, how transnational employment relations are embedded at multiple-levels of governance, extending from the national to the world regional, international and global level.

Industrial relations belong to the most important institutional settings in which labour markets are embedded. Therefore, research on inter- and supra-national industrial relations and the respective collective actors represents a key contribution for the understanding of transnational labour markets. Hence, the 2019 IREC Conference will analyse regulatory actors and transnational social policies which seek to de-commodify

labour and are embedded in labour markets (ILO-conventions, international labour unions, international framework agreements, etc.).

Contributions may address empirical and theoretical issues relating to industrial relations and transnational labour markets, such as

- Nation- state, inter-state, supra-national and inter-regional regulatory regimes regulating cross-border labour exchanges;
- The role and perspective of employers and employer organisations and of trade unions, both within the countries affected and through sub-regional, regional and international organisations and networks regarding negotiating fundamental labour standards and their implementation at the transnational level;
- The role of labour market intermediaries (such as employment agencies, transport providers and sub-contractors), of technology, and of qualifications in shaping transnational labour markets and their outcomes for labourors;
- Theoretical issues such as different 'scales' and 'scapes' from the local to the sub-regional, national, inter-regional and international levels, or the differences between labour markets at the national and supra-national level;
- The cross-border mobility of 'free' and 'unfree' labour and the different border and mobility regimes governing them;
- Different skill levels
- The Role of different regulatory bodies (ILO; EU (NAFTA; ASEAN?); international trade union bodies; international trade agreements; MNCs).
- The role of private regulation

Especially welcome are contributions that adopt a comparative approach.

Please send abstracts to Ursula Mense-Petermann

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Deadline: April, 30th 2019