



Global Production Networks Centre

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Centre on Labour and Global Production

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Workshop on Conceptualising Labour Regimes and Global Production

7-8 January 2019

Organisers:

Elena Baglioni, School of Business and Management, QMUL

Liam Campling, School of Business and Management, QMUL

Neil Coe, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

Adrian Smith, School of Geography, QMUL

Venue: Anomalous Space, 34 Pentonville Rd, N1 9HF (nearest Underground station is Angel)

CONCEPT NOTE

This two day closed workshop is designed to develop and deepen debate on the current scope and potential of labour regime analysis in understanding dynamics of global production in contemporary capitalism. It stems from existing individual and collective work among several of the participants that explicitly seeks to theorise labour regimes or labour control regimes (e.g. Coe and Kelly 2002; Mezzadri 2016; Pattenden 2016; Baglioni 2018a; Campling et al. 2018; Smith et al. 2018; Taylor and Rioux 2018). It also advances two prior public workshops organised by the Centre on Labour and Global Production at QMUL: 'Chinese labour regimes: mutations, expansions, resistance' (June 2017) and 'The Labour of Logistics: Workers and resistance across global supply chains' (June 2018).

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the theorisation of labour regimes in critical development studies, economic geography and employment relations. This has partly taken the form of a concern to understand the role that labour regimes play in the

structuring, organisation and dynamics of global systems of production and reproduction. Labour regimes are seen as historically formed, multi-scalar phenomena resulting from the articulation of struggles over local social relations, often intersecting (directly or indirectly) with the commercial demands of lead-firms in globalised production networks, and with the gendered and racialized politics of social reproduction. The notion of a labour regime has a long heritage that can be traced to debates in the 1970s and 1980s in development studies, feminist political economy, industrial relations, and political sociology, and in labour geography in the 1990s. This workshop seeks to develop further this emerging field of intellectual enquiry by examining the nature, role, constitution and dynamics of and in labour regimes in globalising capitalism.

In taking seriously Thompson and Smith's (2009) call for labour process theory to incorporate but simultaneously move beyond distinct workplaces, a labour regimes approach introduces the variegated scales of political-economic and socio-cultural relations, processes and contexts that produce and reproduce networks of workers dispersed across spaces and places from the local to the global (Bernstein 2007; Baglioni et al. 2018; Taylor and Rioux 2018). As Pattenden (2016) argues in a development of Banaji (2010), the labour regime is a useful mediating category between the day-to-day labour processes of a particular workplace with its diverse 'forms of exploitation' and the more abstract 'general forms of domination' under capitalism.

But if a labour regime can only ever be understood through its particular historical-geographical configurations and as such has to be analysed empirically, to what extent can we theorise the category further than is currently deployed, often descriptively? This workshop seeks to engage this question head-on. Further, is it the case that the thorny methodological issue of any particular labour regime's analytical bordering (where it stops and starts) can only be defined in relation to the types of questions being asked? This is why some are able to usefully define and explain labour regimes in terms of long historical processes of colonisation (Bernstein 1988), to compare national political economies (Burawoy 1985), to compare similar industries across national political economies (Kelly 2002; Anner 2015), to identify particular patterns of labour exploitation and control in relation to distinct GPNs (Pattenden 2016; Baglioni 2018a; Smith et al. 2018), and to make sense of the reproduction and control of specific labour processes in discrete places and industries (Jonas 1996; Smith and Pun 2006; Pun 2007; Mezzadri 2016; Baglioni 2018b; Pattenden 2018). Can we build on and critically synthesise these contributions to offer an approach to labour regimes analysis that can be operationalised more broadly?

The workshop is designed to foster collegial conversation and debate on these issues in an open fashion. All invited participants share a critique of exploitation in its various forms, and draw (in different ways) on critical political economy.

Participants will be expected to share a written contribution in advance, with the strict deadline of 1 December 2018. This could take the form of either a concept note or a full paper, but where the latter is submitted we ask authors to edit the paper down so as to reduce the number of words and sharpen where the paper contributes to thinking through the role of labour regimes in understanding the dynamics of contemporary capitalism.

PROGRAMME

Monday 7th January

10.30 Arrival (coffee and tea on tap!)

11.00-11.45 Introductions – why this topic and why this group

Chair: Liam Campling

All

11.45-13.15 PhD projects session

Chair: Elena Baglioni

Jonathan Jones / Hannah Schling / Rosie Rawle / Zafer Ornek / Shyamain Wickramasinghe

13.15-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.45 Labour Regimes – industrial relations, economic geography and development studies

Chair: Adrian Smith

Kirsty Newsome et al, 'Labour Process Analysis and Global Value Chains'

Alessandra Mezzadri, 'The Sweatshop Regime'

Neil Coe, 'Conceptualising multi-scalar labour regimes – some fragments'

Coffee break

16.15-18.00 Exploitation/unfree labour

Chair: Neil Coe

Ben Selwyn et al. 'Exploitation in and through global production: theories, critiques, empirics'

Siobhán McGrath, 'Unfreedom in Contemporary Labour Regimes: Concept Note'

Carlo Inverardi-Ferri, 'The illicit, labour regimes, and cultural political economy'

Dinner

19.00 at Palatino, 71 Central Street, London EC1V 8AB

Tuesday 8th January

9.30-11.15 Labour regimes and global production

Chair: Liam Campling

Elisa Greco, title TBC

Steffen Fisher, title TBC

Helena Pérez Niño, title TBC

Martin Hess, 'Labour regimes and global production: Concept note'

Coffee break

11.45-13.30 Reproduction and labour regimes

Chair: Adrian Smith

Rutvica Andrijasevic, "Disappearing workers': Foxconn in Europe and the changing role of temporary work agencies'

Elena Baglioni, 'The making of cheap labour: Production and reproduction in households and factories in the Senegalese horticultural value chain'

Jonathan Pattenden, 'The politics of classes of labour: fragmentation, reproduction zones and collective action in Karnataka, India'

13.30-14.30 Lunch

14.30-16.15 Scalar labour regimes

Chair: Elena Baglioni

Liam Campling, Adrian Smith et al, 'Trade-based Integration, global production and labour regimes in Moldova and South Korea'

Stefanie Hürtgen, 'Transnationalization and Fragmentation: Labour Regimes in a multi-scalar perspective'

Dae-oup Chang, 'Transnational Labour Regime and the Mutation of Neoliberal Development in Cambodia'

Short break

16.30-17.45 Closing – open discussion and ways forward

Facilitators: Elena Baglioni, Liam Campling, Neil Coe and Adrian Smith

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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