
EDITORIAL

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In this *Transfer* open issue we publish six articles. Five of them have been selected by the editors following the usual peer-review procedures of the journal. The last article is the winner of the Transfer Young Author Prize for the best paper by a young scholar presented at the 11th European Regional Congress of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA) in Milan in September 2016.

The majority of the articles published in this issue analyse the challenges that internationalisation of work practices and regulation brings to workers in different countries of Europe, as well as the ways in which trade unions mobilise local and international resources to address these challenges. The first article, by André Freire, Luís Cabrita, Mariana Carmo Duarte and Hugo Ferrinho Lopes, approaches these questions through a study of workers' attitudes towards European integration, as reflected in their opinions about the EU and preferences for Eurosceptic parties. Drawing on the European Election Study 2014 data, the authors compare the political attitudes and choices of workers, especially manual workers, with those of the more affluent classes, and contrast the responses of workers in countries more or less affected by the Great Recession. The article finds less support for the European project among the workers, irrespective of the extent to which their country has been affected by the recession. In other words, the fundamental detachment of the workers from the EU is a deeper structural problem and not merely an effect of the crisis. More encouraging is the finding that the lack of support for the EU is not clearly translated into preferences for Eurosceptic parties.

Felix Hadwiger from the University of Hamburg looks more closely into ways in which international regulation can be leveraged to improve workplace relations. In the article on mediation and arbitration in global framework agreements, Hadwiger demonstrates enforcement problems that arise from the lack of clear procedures for resolution of disputes between multinational companies and global union federations. Based on the conclusions drawn from his analysis of disputes within global framework agreements and case studies of successful dispute resolution, the author argues for a global and comprehensive procedural framework for mediation or arbitration, to be set up and monitored by the International Labor Organization.

The following two articles bring us contrasting case studies of the ways in which unions in two Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Norway, have coped with the consequences of industries' internationalisation and restructuring. Eli Moen from Norwegian Business School in Oslo studies the strategies of one company – Norwegian Air Shuttle – to leverage internationalisation in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis in order to weaken organised labour. Moen argues that the management of the NAS used the crisis as an opportunity to delocalise employment and increase reliance on atypical employment, as 'part of a strategic move to increase managerial prerogatives'. This has manifested itself *inter alia* in the company's attempts to sideline the Norwegian national law and labour institutions, evade information and co-determination rules, and even attempt to violate basic human rights such as the right to organise. While Moen warns of dangers arising from the international companies' ability to shift between different regulatory environments and thereby

undermine the legal framework and the position of unions in their home countries, Mads Peter Klindt from Aalborg University shows how trade unions can still draw on local resources to strengthen their role, even amidst advancing liberalisation and the wider context of trade union weakening. Klindt brings together the insights of the literature on trade union revitalisation, governance, and the political economy of skill formation to identify capacities that help trade unions assume the central role in local partnerships for skill formation in the framework of the Danish government's active labour market policy. The article demonstrates the way these capacities have been put to successful use in the cases of recruitment and training of workers for the offshore industry in western Jutland, and the training and retraining of workers made redundant by the closure of Lindø shipyard on Funen.

Another example of the revival of local and national partnerships to counter top-down liberalisation is presented in the article by Giuseppe Antonio Recchia of Bari University in his discussion of the future of collective bargaining in Italy. The article offers a critical examination of recent trends in the Italian employment legislation the main objective of which has been to facilitate a more flexible and decentralised collective bargaining system. The laws have made it possible for companies to deviate from the legislation and industry-wide collective bargaining on a wide range of topics, and to shift to complementary (particularly company-level) agreements. However, as the law overwhelmingly shifted the balance of power in favour of management, the unions have responded by efforts to control the decentralisation process by concluding new intersectoral agreements, re-regulating workers' representation, making the agreements more inclusive, and providing tools to control and sanction non-compliant behaviour.

The last article in this open issue is the winner of the *Transfer* Young Author Prize for 2016. The prize was awarded to Judith Christina Stroehle, a PhD candidate at the Università degli studi di Milano, for her article assessing the enforcement of labour standards through private governance. Stroehle analysed over 1000 audit reports of the Fair Labour Association to determine institutional and structural characteristics of the business environment that increase the likelihood of individual companies' compliance with international labour standards. The article focuses on the apparel, sports- and footwear industry, and tests the effect of a broad range of contextual variables, as well as firm-specific characteristics, on both observable rights, and also process rights, such as anti-discrimination and freedom of association. Contrary to much of the literature that expects private governance to act as a substitute in countries where public governance is weak, Stroehle finds that the two are in fact complementary. Private governance standards are more conscientiously enforced where public regulatory quality is higher, to the extent that the effect of the institutional environment can override the impact of company characteristics such as its position in the global value chain.

The editors trust that the wide variety of methods, cases and theoretical approaches collected in this issue can serve better to illuminate different facets of the complex challenges facing trade unions today. We hope that by improving our understanding of the problems they can also help us improve the state of labour relations in Europe. It is needed.

Jens Lind and Vera Scepovic