

Track Themes for ILERA (IIRA) Philadelphia 2012

The integration of national economies through transnational markets, technology and growing institutional linkages will likely reach new levels by the time the next World Congress of the ILERA (formerly IIRA) meets in Philadelphia. Issues of work and employment, of labor and capital relations and of the interdependence of social and economic systems will be influenced by such integration. International and transnational linkages will continue to grow but even more importantly, national and purely domestic policies and practices will need to adjust to the growing size and scope of an integrating global economy. The five themes selected for this Congress are designed to capture new research, concepts, theories, policies that examine the development of these trends both at the international stage as well as its impact on national, sectoral and regional institutions and practice. So, while our themes emphasize the effects of global integration, they fully include developments in domestic policy and practice and in national and sub-national institutions and relations at work.

1. Trans-national Movement of Labour & Growing Diversity in the Workforce

Coordinator:

Harry C. Katz, Cornell University

Movement of people across the globe has resulted large migrant workforces. In some cases, formal programs bring immigrants to a new home while in many other cases migrations take place informally or illegally. Either way, these workers add a new reality to the labor market and to the workplace. Immigration can be a boon to the local economy or it can be socially and politically explosive. How are these workers are integrated into the local labor market over time? What public policies and workplace level practices are effective in such integration? What role do institutions play in this process? (Note: There is some overlap here with Track 2 on unions and NGOs that seek to organize such workers).

- a. Immigration (formal and informal) and immigrant workforce
- b. Diversity in the workplace
- c. Discrimination and harassment in the workplace
- d. Labor market outcomes of immigrants
- e. Protection of rights of migrant workers
- f. Gender issues at all levels: workplace, labour market, international

2. Labour and Social Movements Responding to Globalization

Coordinators:

Paula Voos, Rutgers University

Adrienne Eaton, Rutgers University

Most established labor unions have been shaped by their own national history and its industrial past, as well as by transnational ideas like social democracy. Today, labor organizations face an

increasingly global economy, a different macro-economic context, changing work-family arrangements, and the spread of new ideas ranging from neo-liberalism to environmental consciousness. How have labor unions responded at various levels? New research is invited on how labor unions have innovated – successfully or unsuccessfully – in the face of such developments. We are especially interested in their approach to organizing and mobilizing both current and new members; the evolution of union structure and internal organization; leadership development and necessary skills; evolving strategies vis à vis employers; union relationships and alliances with community organizations and other social actors; union approaches to public policy and government; and transnational union alliances and labor organizations.

This track also encourages submissions on other types of social organizations that have grown in recent decades to organize workers and fight for rights at work. These are non-governmental organizations based in the community. These organizations have proliferated in both developed and developing economies. Research on how they conceive of labor's interest, on the strategies they employ, and in how they work to advance labor protection would bring valuable new knowledge to the Congress.

- a. Union responses to globalization
- b. Trans-national labor organizations and activities
- c. Changes in labor union structures, strategies and leadership
- d. Organizing the unorganized
- e. Worker protection in informal labor markets
- f. Emerging role of NGOs and civil society groups in worker protection

3. Emerging Orders of Production and Skill Development in a Global Economy

Coordinator:

Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The logic of producing goods and services has undergone significant change as a result of forces such as globalization and advancements in technology. These changes cut across all nations, industries, organizations and workplaces. Some industries have rationalized production on a truly global scale. Others may have done so strictly within the domestic economy or in a limited region (e.g., North America, Southeast Asia, etc.). These changes in how goods and services are produced and delivered have resulted in large-scale changes in how skills required are procured, developed and managed. Human resource management practices from training to worker involvement to work organization have witnessed many changes and innovations. How do these practices impact management and workers? Which innovations work more effectively in certain contexts?

- a. Emerging practices in human resource management in response to globalization
- b. Global production chains for goods and services

- c. New patterns of work organization
- d. New technologies and their implications for skills and employment
- e. Developing skills for a knowledge economy

4. Raising the Floor for Rights at Work in a Globalizing Economy

Coordinators:

Richard Block, Michigan State University

David Kucera, ILO

The current trend in globalization was fuelled by large-scale deregulation in the movement of capital. Labor on the other hand, remains far less mobile. This asymmetry has led to greater inequality and inequity in most labor markets. Indeed, less developed countries may use this asymmetry to encourage investment on the grounds that the jobs and wealth created will improve the standard of living of workers in that country. Yet, labor conditions have not improved for most workers and there is some evidence that these conditions have actually declined for many. These phenomena suggest that the benefits of a model of international trade based on principles of neoclassical economics with its emphasis on price and cost minimization and comparative advantage have not yet been diffused to workers. For globalization to be sustainable, more workers must benefit from these changes in the global economy, and such benefits must be realized within a reasonable period of time. New research is invited on ways to raise the floor on working conditions for workers in the worst jobs. Are there theoretical models that can reconcile the benefits of the free flow of capital with improved working conditions? For example, rather than analyzing trade primarily in terms of microeconomic models of the theory of the firm and consumer behavior, can macroeconomic models of aggregate demand provide new insights? Given countries' interest in sovereignty and domestic economic development, is there a role for public policy, and if so, what is that role? Are private initiatives effective? Is there room for hybrid approaches that attempt to use public and private initiatives in conjunction with each other?

- a. Models of labor standards, trade, and economic growth
- b. Gaps in core labor standards – evidence from key firms, industries, regions and countries
- c. Innovations in legislation aimed at improving labor standards
- d. Corporate codes of conduct
- e. Public policy responses to labor standards in low-wage industries and occupations
- f. Compliance with and enforcement of labor standards
- g. Labor conditions of workers in informal work such as domestic work, micro enterprises, home-based work, etc.

5. Income and Employment through the Life Course

Coordinators:

John Budd, University of Minnesota

Colleen Manchester, University of Minnesota

Aaron Sojourner, University of Minnesota

Sudden and frequent changes in economic markets have contributed to disruptions in jobs, careers and employment. Contingent employment and compensation strategies have increased income volatility and insecurity. Demographic shifts and changing preferences have blurred the boundaries between different phases of the life course: education, work and retirement. These changes imply that income and employment security have to be re-conceptualized for a global economy. Many employment and income security programs that took shape under purely domestic considerations need to be re-positioned to meet the needs of workers, employers and the public at large.

- a. Innovations in income, employment, and retirement security programs in response to economic volatility and other pressures
- b. Public and private policy approaches to dealing with gaps in employment and interrupted careers
- c. Unemployment insurance: effectiveness and limitations in a volatile economy
- d. Workplace health, injury and related compensation
- e. Training for career transitions
- f. Gender and ethnicity issues