

## Transnational industrial relations and the search for alternatives

A workshop at Greenwich University

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The institutional and political dynamics that affect the workplace increasingly extend across national boundaries. These dynamics include actions by elites, such as the investment or sourcing decisions of multinational firms, directives of the European Commission, or bailout packages of the International Monetary Fund. But they also include actions by workers, their representatives, and their allies, such as the Occupy movement, the US and UK Uncut, the Indignados movement, and the daily work of European Works Councils and Global Union Federations.

Workers, unions, and social movements have been playing catch-up as elites have reconstituted themselves and their institutions at a transnational scale. There are now several examples of workers and unions operating at a new scale in response to the internationalization of markets and politics. But there are also many examples of civil society failing to respond to some challenge from the transnational sphere. The politics of austerity in the Euro zone is just one example.

Why do workers, unions, and other progressive campaigners so rarely operate at the transnational level? What lessons can be learned from leading cases of success or failure? Are contemporary patterns of resistance from below more striking than organised labour initiatives from above? Are there new actors (the informal sector, migrants, young workers, the precariat) playing an important role in resistance? Are these movements showing signs of internationalizing themselves? How has the sovereign debt crisis challenged international forms and agents of worker representation? Have experiences of organizing in countries still experiencing rapid economic growth (China and India in particular) transformed unions' strategies and structures of international solidarity?

This workshop is an attempt to assess the state of knowledge about transnational industrial relations and to assess what it means for progressive social movements. We invite academic papers and contributions from trade unionists and other actors in civil society on the following:

***Industrial relations in multinationals:*** Works Councils (European and Global), International Framework Agreements, Corporate Social Responsibility

***Organizing an international workforce:*** worker hyper-mobility and trafficking, corporate campaigning, organizing across supply chains, cultural diversity in unions

***Supranational political action:*** promoting alternatives to neoliberalism within in or against European Union institutions or the global governance framework (e.g. ILO, IMF, World Bank)

***Transnational actors:*** activist networks, Global Union Federations, cross-border union mergers, Non-Governmental Organizations

Please submit a 300-word abstract by 1 March 2012 to Lefteris Kretsos (l.kretsos@greenwich.ac.uk).