

Journal of Industrial Relations

CALL FOR PAPERS

Multinational Companies and Employment Relations in the 21st Century

Symposium – 10th European Conference of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA), 20-22 June 2013, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Special Issue: *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. X(X), 2015

Organisers and Special Issue Guest-Editors:

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There is a critical need for fresh research into multinational companies (MNCs) because they “disproportionately influence the direction of change” in the management of people (Batt et al., 2009: 474). Recent data indicates there are 82,000 MNCs in the world, involving more than 810,000 subsidiaries, employing approximately 77 million people and accounting for one third of total world trade (UNCTAD, 2009). Consequently, it is unsurprising that MNCs can have significant effects on employment practices in the contexts in which they operate (Clibborn, 2012).

MNCs have significant potential to be a source of innovation in the diffusion of new employment relations (ER) policies and practices. However, they might also disrupt the status quo of the host context by attempting to remain rooted in their home country’s national business system. The ability to impact ER in different host countries will vary from country to country depending on factors such as the power of the MNC and the permissiveness of the host context. Studies have considered such issues in the European context but less is known about emerging economies such as, China, India, Brazil and Russia. This special issue will seek papers on MNCs operating in emerging and transition economies, however the special issue is not exclusively focused on these contexts.

Research on ER in the new economic superpowers of India and, in particular, China is quite sparse as is research focusing on MNCs operating in other ‘transition economies’ (Peng, 2009). This is especially important given the changes in employment relations in these countries. For example, new legislation in China encourages collective bargaining at a time where there appears to be increasing levels of industrial unrest. Europe has also seen major change from both an economic, social and ER viewpoint over the past few decades. Research is emerging on how new European legislation impacts on employee relations issues, particularly the information and consultation directive (e.g. Lavelle, et al., 2010), but there is much scope for greater interrogation of the impact of European legislation on MNCs in different countries.

While there are some significant studies on ER issues in MNCs (e.g. Almond et al., 2005; Ferner, et al., 2005; Marginson, et al., 2010), Collings (2008) suggests that they have received comparatively limited attention. He argues that a possible explanation is the neglect of employment relations issues in the popular, unitarist, North American scholarship which tends to dominate the HRM field. There is a strong case for redressing this imbalance particularly given the economic and social significance of MNCs and the central role of ER in determining firm productivity and profit (Katz and Elser, 1997).

This special issue aims to bring a collection of papers together that consider ER in MNCs in the 21st Century. We seek submissions that are focused on a range of ER issues in MNCs (see below for a suggested list of topics). In particular, we encourage empirical investigations from qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approaches. Conceptual papers are also welcome. We are keen to attract papers stemming from all sectors of industrial activity and different regions of the world, particularly from emerging and transition economies.

Possible Topics

For this special issue, submissions are particularly welcome that deal with some of the following areas/issues:

- The economic transformation of emerging countries like China and India and its impact on the ER approaches of MNCs.
- MNCs ER practices, including employee voice mechanisms within subsidiary operations in the different regions of the world, particularly emerging and transition economies.
- MNC responses to host country industrial relations institutions (e.g. trade unions and collective bargaining).
- MNC responses to the emergence of international institutions and associated regulations and legislation (e.g. ILO, European Union) and the rise of global trade unions.
- The innovative and disruptive capabilities of MNCs on ER systems in different countries.
- The impact of industrial relations systems on MNC location/investment decisions.
- The role of the corporate HR function in ER issues in subsidiaries.
- The impact of ethical issues surrounding ER practices on the global reputation of MNCs.

The above is an indicative list, and we invite authors to explore themes and research questions beyond these.

Symposium and Special Issue Process

Questions related to the content and logistics of the symposium should be directed to the organisers, Professor Timothy Bartram and Dr Anthony McDonnell (contact details below). We will be holding a special symposium at ILERA Europe (20-22 June 2013) for potential contributors to this special issue. When submitting an abstract to the special issue please indicate if you would be willing and able to attend and present at the ILERA Europe symposium.

Abstracts of between 800 and 1000 words should be submitted to Professor Timothy Bartram by 1 March 2013. The abstracts should clearly outline the aims, method and significance of the proposed paper to be submitted for consideration. The organisers aim to advise the authors if their abstract has been accepted by **29 March 2013**.

Those who are successful will be expected to submit their *full paper* (formatted to JIR standards) for discussion two weeks prior to the symposium date so that papers can be distributed (in pdf format) to other participants to read prior to the symposium.

The organisers of the symposium have agreement from the editors of the *Journal of Industrial Relations* (JIR) for a special issue on the theme in Vol. X(X), 2015. After the completion of the symposium authors will have two months to submit their paper to Rawya Mansour at [JIR](#) for peer review. Final drafts incorporating revisions must be submitted by 30 June, 2014. Those articles which make it through the symposium and journal reviewing process will be published in the **Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. X(X), 2015.**

TIMELINE:

- 1 March, 2013 – Abstracts to Professor Timothy Bartram
- 29 March, 2013 – Confirm acceptance of abstract and invitation to write full paper
- 3 June, 2012 – Full paper submissions for Symposium
- 20-22 June, 2013– Symposium at ILERA, Europe – full papers to be submitted in advance
- 20 August 2013 submission of paper to Rawya Mansour at [JIR](#) for peer review
- 30 June, 2014 – Accepted papers to be submitted to [JIR](#)
- Vol. X(X), 2015 – Publication of Special Issue.

The style guide for the journal can be found at <http://jir.sagepub.com>

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