***Journal of Industrial Relations (JIR)***

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

***“Supply Chains, HRM Practices and Labour Standards”***

**Special issue**: Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol.57(4), September 2015

**Symposium:** UTS or Macquarie University, Sydney Australia

**Date:** Tuesday 11February 2014

**Organisers and Special Issue Guest-Editors**:

Dr Sarah Kaine, UTS, Australia

Dr Chris F. Wright, Macquarie University, Australia

The impact of commercial pressure imposed through supply chains on managerial practices and employment standards has emerged as an important and challenging topic for employment relations and labour market researchers. Trade liberalisation, the privatisation of public services and technological advancements in transport and communications have combined to make product markets more competitive. This has facilitated the growing market power of large (often multinational) commercial entities. In many advanced economies, there has been a trend among these large entities, in both the private and public sectors, to outsource and contract-out their peripheral activities to more specialised firms. The organisational boundaries between firms have increasingly blurred as a result, with production systems and supply chains becoming more segmented and often internationalised. This development has major implications for our conventional understandings of employment relations institutions and regulation (Marchington et al., 2005).

The global value chain scholarship argues that in ‘captive’ supply chains, where ‘supplier firms’ have a high degree of transactional dependence on ‘lead firms’ (Gereffi et al., 2005), the disproportionately stronger position of lead firms allows them to negotiate favourable commercial terms with suppliers. Supplier firms pass many of these pressures on to their employees, especially those with weak bargaining power. The global value chain literature is growing in influence within employment relations scholarship due to its ability to help explain these developments. Much of the focus of this scholarship has been on the regulation of supply chains at the supranational or multinational level (Barrientos, 2008; Davies et al., 2011; Hammer, 2005; Riisgaard and Hammer, 2011).

There has been less focus on how national and local regulations and institutions are responding to the fragmentation of production systems and supply chains, even though the nation state remains the main locus of institutional and regulatory labour market activity. The emergence of supply chain pressures has diminished the capacity of national (and sub-national) regulatory architecture to direct the behaviour of firms in these supply chains. This has major implications for employment standards, managerial practices and strategies and labour market institutions. Nevertheless, in some states (such as Australia and a number of the Northern European states), governments have introduced forms of ‘supply chain regulation’ to protect standards and promote good practice among supplier firms (Kaine and Rawling, 2010; Rawling, 2006). In the United States, the United Kingdom and parts of the developing world, it has often been left to trade unions, non-government organisations and brand-conscious lead firms to establish modes of ‘private regulation’ in the form of corporate codes, standards frameworks and framework agreements (Milkman, 2006; Weil, 2010; Wills, 2008; Wright, 2011).

We invite proposals for papers on the impact of supply chain pressures and the blurring of organisational boundaries on employment standards and human resource practices, particularly on the institutional and regulatory implications. We are especially interested in papers on developments at the national and local levels (in all jurisdictions), but also invite papers on the global/transnational dimensions of supply chains and employment relations. We encourage authors to develop their own themes, but they may like to consider the following:

**Theoretical developments** – What are the implications of the blurring of organisational boundaries for conventional theories of employment relations and HRM? What insights can be developed from other disciplines? Doe supply chain pressures require employment relations scholarship to adapt existing conceptual frameworks or incorporate new actors and institutions?

**The legal and regulatory dimensions of supply chains** – Have international production systems and supply chain pressures undermined the effectiveness of existing *regulatory architecture*, such as national (and sub-national) laws and standards regulating employment relations? Have public forms of supply chain regulation promoted by national/sub-national governments been effective in maintaining standards? Are private forms of regulation promoted by non-government actors effective and plausible substitutes?

**The role and responses of institutions** – What direct impacts have supply chain pressures produced with respect to working conditions, employment standards and managerial practices? What strategies have unions and civil society organisations developed to organise workers across organisational boundaries? How have regulatory bodies sought to create, monitor and enforce standards in supply chains? Does the intensification of supply chain pressures require these actors and institutions to undertake new functions and responsibilities?

**The response of firms and the impact on HRM and managerial practices** – How have lead firms in dominant market positions shaped the HRM practices of supplier firms and other firms in their supply chains? How do the power relationships between client and supplier firms impact on the practices of intermediary firms, such as those performing distributional activities? Is there any evidence of the managerial practices of lead firms being ‘transplanted’ onto the practices of other firms within the supply chains?

**The impact of different supply chain dynamics on employment** – How do inter-firm relations and employment relations vary across different types of supply chains (i.e. hierarchical, captive, relational, modular, market)? What characteristics within supply chains (e.g. the relations between different firms and other stakeholders) shape these variations?

**International comparisons** – Have ‘varieties’ of supply chain regulation and institutional responses emerged across national boundaries? What regulatory and institutional patterns can be discerned among and between different national groupings (e.g. those identified in the varieties of capitalism, employment regimes, and comparative welfare state literatures)? How significant are differences in institutional and regulatory dynamics in advanced economies as compared with emerging economies?

**Symposium and Special Issue Process**

Questions related to the content and logistics of the symposium should be directed to the organisers, Dr Sarah Kaine and Dr Chris F. Wright (contact details below).

**Abstracts of between 800 and 1000 words should be submitted to the JIR’s editorial assistant, Rawya Mansour by 2 August 2013.** The abstracts should clearly indicate which theme the paper fits within and 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 **30 August 2013**.

Those who are successful will be expected to submit their *full paper* (formatted to JIR standards) for discussion by 13 January 2014 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 September 2015. After the completion of the symposium authors will have two weeks to submit their paper to Rawya Mansour at JIR for peer review. Final drafts incorporating revisions must be submitted by 1 May 2014. Those articles which make it through the symposium and journal reviewing process will be published in the **Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 57(4) September 2015.**

**TIMELINE:**

* 2 August, 2013 – Abstracts to Rawya Mansour at JIR
* 30 August, 2013 – Confirm acceptance of abstract and invitation to write full paper
* 13 January, 2014 – Full paper submissions for Symposium
* 10-11 February, 2014 – Symposium at UTS or Macquarie University, Sydney – full papers to be submitted in advance
* 1 May, 2014 submission of paper to Rawya Mansour at JIR for peer review
* 30 March, 2015 – Accepted papers to be submitted to JIR
* September 2015 – Publication of Special Issue.

The style guide for the journal can be found at [http://jir.sagepub.com](http://jir.sagepub.com/)

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