

Date: 2014-11-10

Applicant's Name : Prof Harry Katz

Workshop Name : COMPARATIVE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Track : Track 5: Employment Relations

Chair : Janice Bellace (Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania)

Presenter/s : Greg J Bamber (Monash University), Russell D Lansbury (University of Sydney), Nick Wailes (University of New South Wales) and Chris F Wright (University of Sydney)

Carola Frege (LSE) and John Kelly (Birbeck College)

Harry Katz (Cornell University), Thomas Kochan (MIT), and Alex Colvin (Cornell University)

Discussant : Ming Wei-Liu (Rutgers University) and Paul Marginson (University of Warwick)

Convenor : Harry C. Katz (Cornell University)

Contact email : hck2@cornell.edu

PROPOSAL

We propose a special workshop focused on the three recently published texts on comparative employment relations authored (or edited) by Carola Frege and John Kelly; Greg Bamber, Russell Lansbury, Nick Wailes, and Chris Wright; and Harry Katz, Tom Kochan, and Alex Colvin. These texts offer major new insights and advances. A particular strength of all three of these new books is their extensive coverage and analysis of developments in emerging countries and issues related to global supply chains. At the same time, the emphasis of each book differs as do the frameworks each uses to analyze contemporary developments.

The idea for what became CERGE emerged out of issues involved in teaching the subject to undergraduate and postgraduate students. Available texts were strong on the details of individual countries but weaker on comparative and theoretical analysis and by implication on the concepts, theories and methods involved in such analysis. Undergraduate students appreciated the institutional detail of national IR systems that were largely unfamiliar to them but some of them, as well as most postgraduate students, required comparative analysis as well as more theoretical approaches in addition to empirical description. Moreover there were growing literatures on the regulation of employment relations above the level of the nation state, whether for example through the institutions of the European Union or through international framework agreements signed between international unions and MNCs. Somehow all of these components had to be contained within a single text, certainly if it aspired to be reasonably comprehensive. CERGE was intended to cover all of these areas.

Our first aim was to provide theoretical approaches for examining developments in employment relations. But it is one thing to map out theoretical approaches; it is quite another to ensure that textbook contributors systematically discuss their material in the light of those approaches. Perhaps it is enough in an introductory country chapter to describe major issues, debates and developments without plunging into difficult and complex theoretical controversies.

We also had to make choices about which areas of the employment relationship to have treated comparatively, a difficult topic given the enormous demands made by such chapters on their authors. Few writers are experts in more than a small number of countries but sometimes good comparative analysis demands larger Ns that stretch the resources of even the most expert authors.

In choosing countries, we therefore traded regional depth and theoretical importance against geographical breadth. We wanted to analyse economically important countries, countries which model certain employment relations systems (CMEs, LMEs..), and put a particular emphasis on new transitional economies, which have previously been neglected in textbooks. Thus, there are only four European countries and only two English speaking countries. In contrast we included all four BRICs as well as South Africa. (In an ideal scenario we would have also liked to include more African countries as well as other Asian, Southern and Northern American as well as Eastern European countries.)

An important goal was also to provide an overview of core employment topics such as individual and collective employee rights at work (why is regulation necessary?), as well HRM, employment and economic performance or broader social

political aspects (welfare state).

Finally, supra-national regulation was a straightforward topic in the sense that the range of chapter headings was less contentious: IFAs, EU, NAFTA and the ILO were all obvious topics for inclusion.