

ILPC 2019 Special Stream No. 4

### **‘Socio-ecological transformations of the labour process’**

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The stream addresses the contradictory relationship between labour and the environment and socio-ecological transformations from the perspective of the labour process. We invite papers which discuss the reasons and forms of the work-related appropriation of nature and their linkages to the rising (global) social inequalities.

The global working society is confronted with a double crisis of ecologically destructive results of the capitalist organization of work and vast social inequalities. Thus, from a socio-ecological perspective the current global working society is socially and ecologically unsustainable. This crisis can be seen as rooted in the societal relationships with nature. Insofar these relationships are particularly mediated through the labour process; different modes of organizing work and the labour process entail more or less unsustainable ways to appropriate nature. Besides the negative environmental impacts of capitalism, advanced commodification encompasses the entire human body and personality. In addition to direct health impacts in dangerous workplaces, this often results in the overuse of the “inner nature” of workers.

Given that both nature and the worker are affected by the expansionary tendencies of capitalist production and valorisation, it is in the interests of both workers and environmental protection to contain or overcome those tendencies. But, however, the relationship between labour and the environment is in many ways highly contradictory, well-known e.g. as the job-versus-environment dilemma. Focusing on global relationships further, fundamental challenges become apparent: the labour process as well as the reproduction of the working class is based on the access to resources, sinks and labour power on a global scale, i.e. on norms of production and consumption that undermine living conditions elsewhere and in the future. This constellation can be called the *imperial mode of living*. The imperial mode of living links production processes, the labour forces and labour processes of different parts of the world in unequal ways, e.g. cheap raw materials and pre-products from Southern countries are transformed or refined in Northern factories. Due to the rapid industrialisation of Southern countries, this constellation has become more complex in recent years. This implies, that externalising socio-ecological costs in space and time has become increasingly difficult and even more conflictual. There is still a lot of knowledge to be produced to understand the socio-ecological aspects of power relations in the global economy, as well as of global value chains in relation to industrial relations and the labour process.

The following questions could be addressed within this stream:

- What are the consequences of the socio-ecological crisis with regard to employment and working conditions in particular industrial sectors and professions? How do socio-

ecological issues affect industrial relations and how do actors, e.g. trade unions, cope with the challenges of existing unsustainability?

- What are the socio-ecological consequences of flexible and digitalized work (e.g. regarding commuting, settlements, energy consumption)?
- Along the global value chains different degrees of environmental injustice are created. What are the main trends? Who is affected and how, which movements of transnational socio-ecological solidarity can be observed?
- What are the methodological consequences and problems of socio-ecological research of the labour process (e.g. regarding inter- and transdisciplinary research; transformative research approaches; different and hierarchized forms of knowledge production etc.)?
- How do gender differences, ethnicity and class inequalities relate to the labour process and socio-ecological issues?
- In which ways are the existing dynamics of environment, labour and migration interconnected?
- How do trade unions cope with the challenge of the ecological crisis and with the dilemma that many jobs are still provided by industries that strongly contribute to aggravating climate change?
- To which extent is there a chance of reorganizing production in a more use-value oriented way, thereby also linking production and reproduction in a new way and questioning the dominant notion of labour as wage labour?
- Which historical experience exists regarding “greening” and democratizing the labour process – as part of the “imperial mode of living” - and what can be learnt from them for current struggles and transformation processes?
- Which changes in the social consciousness of workers can be observed in the current crisis and to which extent do they provide starting points for a socio-ecological transformation with an active role of workers?

**Please submit abstracts via the International Labour Process Conference website ([ilpc.org.uk](https://www.ilpc.org.uk)) by the deadline of 26 October 2018.**

For information on the ILPC 2019 and the Calls for Papers for the General Conference and the other Special Streams please go to <https://www.ilpc.org.uk/>