Industrial Relations Research Unit /OHRM
Warwick Business School
University of Warwick
Seminar Series

Wednesday 1st March 2017

2.00-3.30 pm, 2.214, Warwick Business School

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‘The vanishing commons: TiSA, transformation of public services production, and challenges to social reproduction of labour’

Abstract

Transnational corporations directly, via lobbying, and indirectly, via International (Financial) Institutions, pursue restructuring of global trade in a manner that favours transnational accumulation since 1970s. The main EU, US, and global business lobbies and many governments strongly support the new Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – documents designed to re-regulate global trade and liberalise movement of large capital beyond the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), among other WTO frameworks. This paper shows (1) that the architecture of the treaties is such as to allow expansion of the limits of the possible in the regime of financialised neoliberal accumulation, (2) that incorporation of public services into the new global trade agreement, TiSA, in combination with TTIP, are an offensive on the remaining global commons, and (3) that as such the Treaties present a threat to the everyday social reproduction of labour globally. The paper is a transnational historical materialist analysis of the process of incorporation of existing and "creation" of new, virtual spaces for continuing accumulation of capital at expense of the remaining existing and future global commons and intensified exploitation of labour.

Firstly, I conduct an interrogation of GATS and proposed TiSA and TTIP clauses to highlight the changes the two will bring to the current global trade regime. Next, I present a qualitative and a Social Network Analysis (SNA) study of corporate players involved in TiSA/TTIP negotiations through their networking and lobbying arrangements. I follow by explaining how governments’ (central, regional and local) ability to change and expand public services and control corporate activity will be influenced by TiSA/TTIP conditions. And lastly, I highlight the challenges to the everyday social reproduction that the shift in global trade architecture pose.

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