
EDITORIAL

Transfer
2015, Vol. 21(2) 127–129
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permission:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1024258915573177
trs.sagepub.com



The European marketization project is intensifying in response to the euro crisis. This is putting national labour movements under increased pressures. The increasing transnationalization of production and the centralization of economic governance within multinational firms, the European Central Bank and the European Commission have put national unions in increased competition with one another. Even the public health sector – which has so far been seen as the most sheltered sector – has become subject to transnational marketization processes. And yet, workers and trade unions are not without weapons. Too often the structural constraints of the global economy are emphasized at the expense of the potential agency of labour. Economic and political integration processes have also provided new strategic possibilities for trade unions. Key here is how trade union action at local and national level may be connected across borders in moments of transnational solidarity.

The purpose of this special issue is to analyse critically transnational labour action in times of crisis. Although more and more social struggles have a clear European dimension, most post-crisis labour protests still have taken place in a national framework. Some observers even note a growing North–South split in European trade union strategies. There have, however, also been some countervailing cases of labour’s transnational responses to the crisis, especially if one also includes more informal forms of collective action by workers as understood in a broad sense. This suggests that the ‘renationalization’ of the European trade unions is not a foregone conclusion. The studies included in this special issue therefore not only identify obstacles to transnational collective action but also assess the conditions under which they can be overcome.

Earlier versions of the articles in this special issue were presented on 27 and 28 February 2014 in Oslo at the international workshop on ‘Labour and Transnational Action in Times of Crisis’, organized by the Centre for Advanced Study research group on ‘Globalization and the Possibility of Transnational Actors’ at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (<http://transnationallabour.wordpress.com/>).

**Roland Erne, Andreas Bieler, Darragh Golden, Idar Helle,
Knut Kjeldstadli, Tiago Matos and Sabina Stan**