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Introduction

The global environment has changed substantially. The financial crisis, economic internationalisation, regionalisation and trade integration have been important factors in configuring domestic and international responses to these changes. While domestic markets are central to our understanding of development, patterns of production, value added and consumption transcend national boundaries. By nature of their outsourcing networks, employment structures and transcending national boundaries, Global Production Networks (GPNs) and Global Value Chains (GVCs) challenge traditional reference points in the practice of human resource management and the enforcement of internationally agreed labour standards. What emerges is not just a need to understand why national regulatory frameworks are being reconfigured but how the politics of employment and labour protection transcend borders to re-establish the State and public responsibility as a central concern in our understanding the rights and management of labour.

This is illustrated in recent interviews conducted with the employer party in the International Labour Organisation (ILO). An employer representative much experienced in the ILO and in the leadership team of a major global corporate, stated flatly and uncompromisingly that global firms could no longer avoid engagement with international labour standards, especially those associated with the ILO's core principles (interview ILO, June 2013). Engagement is, in this view, not a choice, but a necessity, for several reasons. One is the expectations of consumers. Another is mutual expectations by participants in supply chains. A third is government expectations in host economies. A fourth is executive preference and commitment. Not all global corporates are as explicit as this about the impact of expectations associated with global labour standards (and some seek to avoid the issue altogether), but any casual assessment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments embodied in corporate business strategies and web-pages will throw up frequently references to ILO core standards and similar measures of ethical or responsible behaviour.

Such prominence, at least formally, of ILO and similar standards reflects a sea-change in the regulation of labour in a globalising world. That sea-change reflects the increasingly complex relationship between, first, national employment relations (ER) systems and supra-national and international regulation, and, second, domestic production arrangements and the now established integrated global form, the Global Value Chain (GVC). Whilst domestic ER systems remain a vital and

dynamic context in which labour regulation occurs (a context itself effected by international forces for change), the scope and dynamism of global production integration has placed ever greater emphasis on supra-national (for example, European union (EU)-type regional) and international regulation, by companies, individually or in concert, and by states in coordinated action. ILO and similar standards have come to play a central role at both national and international levels of individual and networked company activity.

Much has occurred in the last three decades which challenges us to understand the contemporary context of global labour regulation in terms of both theory and empirical analysis. This chapter provides an interpretation of global regulation as currently configured, starting in this case from the particular perspective of the International Human Resource Management literature. It places particular emphasis on the adequacy of interpretive frameworks for understanding contemporary global regulation of labour. It concludes with a commentary on challenges that follow for the field of IHRM.

The Evolution of IHRM in brief

Like other academic studies, IHRM came to the impacts of economic internationalisation and, later, globalisation, late in the day and in uneven fashion. International business arrangements after the Second World War ranged ahead of academic understanding of their dynamism. IHRM grew out of the emergence of HRM, itself a movement on from the world of Personnel Management (PM). HRM extended the personnel role beyond the limits imposed by the PM tradition, eventually claiming a strategic role for HRM in company development. The international dimension of HRM subsequently emerged in the context of the multinational enterprise (MNE). A long-established focus on the management of expatriate staff across MNE operations was complemented by a sustained interest in the cross-cultural challenges involved in working internationally. The strategic aspect of HRM combined with the MNE-focused study of expatriation in the international business strategy literature. This further emphasised HRM in the MNE and became a core feature of IHRM. Alongside IHRM emerged a parallel interest in comparative HRM (CHRM), the former looking at how companies manage people internationally, and the latter at how national contexts influence HRM practices. In time, the two have come together as company strategies and national contexts combine to determine company HR strategy (though disciplinary boundaries are often defended). The unit of study for IHRM was, and is, in general, the company, and the approach adopted traditionally tended to unitarism and a North American bias.

Orthodox versus Radical Tensions

Changing contexts have produced tensions with IHRM between the narrower, traditional focus on MNEs and their staffing arrangements, and a broader focus, which takes on board broader institutional and contextual factors affecting HRM. Whilst all commentators accept that IHRM has developed substantially since its origins in the 1980s, there remain those who see IHRM primarily as an adjunct to international business, and those who wish to move away from the MNE (and the company itself) as the main focus to a wider framework that engages with economic, political, institutional geographical and organizational factors. The latter tradition adopts what might be described as a “political economy” of IHRM, which engages positively with critical traditions in HRM and beyond.

This contrast is illustrated well in the comparison of two recent contributions to the IHRM literature. Scullion et al (2007) introduce a special issue of the Human Resource Management Journal with a specific reference to the dynamic and evolving world of IHRM, and then move to issues what they consider to be the “most significant” for the discipline. The issues are an eclectic mix of four. The first is the “changing landscape of international business”, which, for Scullion et al, has been marked by new destinations for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), such as Eastern Europe and the Developing Asian economies. Related issues include distance and MNC strategic choice, and MNEs and the trans-border transmission of ideas, knowledge and value systems. A second issue is the impact of global terrorism and its impact on international business. A third is changing career structures in MNEs, and the fourth is changing patterns of global staffing, again for MNEs and international business.

In contrast, Delbridge et al (2011) propose a far more radical and challenging agenda for contemporary IHRM. Their target is multifold – the narrow focus on the MNE and company, a similarly narrow focus on practitioner behaviours, and the “managerialism” (unitarism) of the IHRM discourse. They propose instead breadth and depth of focus – the wider economic, organisational, political and institutional contexts, a “societally embedded” approach and a specific engagement with Critical HRM. They propose a “theoretical framing” to deliver this broader analysis. At the national level, they propose the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) approach as an antidote to the “universalist paradigm” and convergence of traditional IHRM. They also propose a focus on sectoral and regional analyses, able to capture and understand the complex texture of IHRM traditions and practices. Second, they promote what they describe as “multi-level analysis” of IHRM, in which IHRM

develops theoretical understanding and empirical practice that integrates insights from the workplace, company level, national and supra-national contexts, including a specific focus on institutional factors. Third, they argue for an extended version of Smith and Meikson's System, Society and Dominance (SSD) model (Smith and Meikson, 1995), which, they aver, permits the integration of national and international business contexts in a multi-level, multi-actor analysis that comprehends institutional arrangements and actors at all levels. We will return to the SSD model later.

The contrast between the two pieces captures a twofold intellectual dilemma that marks many disciplines as they confront a changing and globalising world. On the one hand, disciplines seek to protect their intellectual territory against encroachment from other disciplines. Whilst rhetorics of interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinarity are recognised, disciplines tend to protect their "turf" for institutional, professional and epistemological reasons. On the other, globalisation imposes new challenges on disciplines that have operated in traditional geographical and institutional frameworks. Thus, for example, the decline (but not demise) of the nation state, and the concomitant rise of supra-regional (EU-type) and global regulatory regimes poses important challenges to disciplines in terms of geographical scope, institutional arrangements and concepts. We can see this clearly in the Scullion et al. piece. They, both implicitly and explicitly, wish to preserve a traditional view of IHRM as an effect of the MNE and its HR strategies, whilst also, tentatively, recognising that the context in which MNEs operate is changing (hence the reference to a changing landscape for international business and what is a vicarious choice of international terrorism as a new contextual factor for international business). One can observe an exquisite tension in this piece, between a desire to remain orthodox and in a heartland tradition, and also recognise that the orthodoxy is under assault and must change. The effect is, in the end, tentative and conservative.

Delbridge et al are more radical. They specifically attack the narrow, traditional focus on the MNE and its HR strategies. They suggest, first, that the traditional narrow view is managerialist. This is inevitably true, for that tradition has emphasised management drivers, practices and decision-making to the exclusion of any serious engagement with counter views, especially those emerging from organised labour. Not surprisingly, this lacuna is often identified with a strong North American tradition within the orthodoxy. They also attack the focus on the MNE as an organisation, to the exclusion of wider political, economic and institutional factors. They argue that "societal embeddedness" must be taken into account if we are to understand IHRM.

Delbridge et al then propose a new, broader agenda for IHRM. That agenda is developed in what at first glance appears to be a radical departure from the IHRM orthodoxy, but which, on reflection, is less a radical departure and more an updating or upgrading of IHRM to meet the intellectual developments taking place in other disciplines. This is evident in the references to the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) argument and the SSD model. The choice of these two approaches is understandable. The VoC argument provides a framework for understanding national differences in economic strategy, and the consequences of such difference for economic policy settings, firm strategy, employment relations, social and political accommodations and much more. Its adoption requires IHRM to understand complex, differentiated national contexts. Smith and Meiksin's SSD model is invoked to provide a cross national, international complement to the VoC model. The key elements of the SSD approach recognise the systemic and supra-national nature of capitalism, the "embeddedness" of business practices in social contexts, and a reality in which "dominance effects" allow some economies garner greater power than others, as do some business organisations (MNEs). For Delbridge et al, the SSD model:

Provides the basis for multi-level, multi-actor analysis as the influence of dominant institutional norms and conventions promoted by multiple actors in the organizational field – including regulatory organizations, trade unions, consultancies, the business press, education and training organizations and charities, as well as MNEs – may be observed at global, national, sub-national and/or industry sector levels. (p 497)

What does the combination of the VoC and SSD models offer for IHRM? According to Delbridge et al, it extends IHRM beyond the enterprise, managerialism and a narrow, IHRM orthodoxy. Instead, it offers IHRM a way forward that understands spatial institutional and theoretical complexity, the interplay of multiple contexts, and the importance of actor agency.

Delbridge et al's is a very different approach from that of Scullion et al. However, despite appearances, there are important similarities. For example, there is an abiding interest in Delbridge et al in the MNE as it operates in a multi-level context. The invocation of a complex multi-level analysis has not eroded entirely the priority given to the MNE in IHRM. This is an important point, for, whilst it might be argued that without the MNE as a locus of analysis the "HRM" dimension of IHRM loses a traditional anchor point, the implication of a multi-actor, multi-level analysis is that for some actors in some contexts, the MNE as conceived by IHRM is less important, or as different from the traditional view attached to the institution. Implicit in Delbridge et al is the need for a break with the defining role attributed to the MNE in IHRM, yet the making of that break appears to be a step too far.

A second feature of Delbridge et al's argument is its tacit acceptance that IHRM has failed to develop within its disciplinary space a critical framework to challenge its dominant tradition, and that new beginnings require an appeal to developments in other disciplines. This is a well-trodden path, but it begs the question why VoC and SSD are invoked, rather than other alternative frameworks? One obvious explanation is contingent popularity. The VoC approach was much in vogue in the first decade of the 2000s, and is a very helpful model for prising apart the IHRM orthodoxy. It also offers the advantage of key themes, which articulate well with a broader interpretation of IHRM. The adoption of the SSD approach may offer similar advantages, yet it is more problematic, for we have on offer a far wider set of analyses – in International Relations, the Regulation tradition, the emergent GVC literature, for example - of globalisation and its sub-global implications, many of which would be equally serviceable for Delbridge et al's purposes. They are, in fact, quite open to the implication that the SSD model is a heuristic tool used to illustrate the possibility of and need for greater breadth in IHRM analysis. One positive conclusion to take from their analysis is that the door to more sophisticated analysis in IHRM is now ajar, and we are welcome to enter.

The intent of this comparison is to establish that, first, there is a debate about the configuration of IHRM and, second, that the challenge to a "universalist" orthodoxy welcomes further development. The subsequent sections of this chapter illustrate two directions in which the IHRM debate might head. The first is an alternative to the SSD model, which suggests the need for a firmer engagement with the GVC literature. The argument will be that Delbridge et al's contingent use of the SSD approach should lead IHRM into engagement with analyses that at first glance are remote from the traditional matters that concern the IHRM orthodoxy. The second direction is a proposed engagement with International Relations and international regulation, and their implications for IHRM.

GVCs: an alternative contextualisation

GVCs provide a framework for understanding, inter alia, global production arrangements and their governance, their contribution to capitalist accumulation, their governance arrangements and, in particular, their approach to the labour process, and the impact on their operations of externally-derived regulatory regimes (at national and international levels). GVC analysis provides a lens through which IHRM may be viewed equivalent in its heuristic quality as an analytical framework to the SSD approach recommended by Delbridge et al. Moreover, by its nature at inception as a globally-derived analysis, and because it prioritises the relational aspect (geographical and institutional) between firms and accumulation, it may help to shift IHRM analysis more completely out of its traditional focus on HRM in the MNE.

Gereffi et al's discussion of governance arrangement within GVCs provides an appropriate point of departure (Gereffi et al 2005). The five forms of governance proposed for GVCs – market, modular, relational, captive and hierarchical – reflect power relationships, the manner of decision-making and control, and, therefore, approaches to national and international regulation of production arrangements. Which form is adopted is an effect of multiple factors, including, for example, the strategic direction of lead firms within the GVC, the changing complexity of production requirements, the configuration of technical and process standards, and the evolution of the GVC in terms of coordination challenges. Gereffi et al. reduce this complex picture to a theory of GVC governance based on three factors:

- The *complexity* of information and knowledge transfer required to sustain a particular transaction, particularly with respect to product and process specifications;
- the extent to which this information and knowledge can be *codified* and, therefore, transmitted efficiently and without transaction-specific investment between the parties to the transaction; and
- the *capabilities* of actual and potential (p.85)

Robinson and Rainbird (2013) have offered an interpretation of the implications of the Gereffi et al. governance model for management behaviours and the opportunities that arise for labour mobilisation across GVCs. Their work provides an important insight into the relationship between the form of governance, the predominant managerial strategy that follows the adoption of that form and, the likely “space” for labour mobilisation. They conclude that the range of opportunities for labour mobilisation varies greatly, from the most limited engagement at local company level (in the case of market governance arrangements) to the greater potential for engagement in captive and relational arrangements (Robinson and Rainbird, 2013, p.100).

We are less concerned here with the nature of the possible arrangements than the degree to which different governance arrangements may inhibit or permit labour mobilisation. It is important to grasp what is being proposed, for it moves towards a framework for a different approach to IHRM. As global integration develops further, global production arrangements will expand their influence. At the local level, this will not be solely the companies directly engaged in the value chain, but also all those indirectly involved via supplier networks, logistics and the like. It will also involve the state in multiple forms of intervention and regulation (see below) and, in all likelihood, important elements of civil society, be they trade unions, trade activists, environmental groups and so on. Hence, we already accept a complex model of commercial interrelationships operating in local,

regional and national economies along the value chain, some involving more complex arrangements, others less so as they provide services such as transport and storage. In the destination economies, for example, we have the array of retailing, branding and consumer practices intimately involved in the chain. There is, pace IHRM, a role for MNEs in the model, but only as one actor in a complex system. We can also find a proxy in the idea of the lead firm for the notion of dominance found in the SSD model. But, again this is a qualified dominance, defined by the complex of power arrangements at locate a chain in global and sub-global locations. We could also argue that, as amended below, this approach lends itself to at least as sophisticated an analysis of the national environment as the VoC tradition.

It is clear that this model permits opposition to and challenge in the particular chain itself, and to broader global production arrangements. The unitarism and managerialism, which are challenged by Delbridge et al in their criticism of IHRM orthodoxy, are firmly rejected in the Robinson and Rainbird approach. The latter is a model that not simply permits, but accepts as legitimate and expected, contrary views to the logic of global production.

A Lacuna in the Model.

We are here less concerned about further differentiation of the “systems of management control” column in Robinson and Rainbird’s model, though it is a fertile area for development. Here we focus on the final column, relating to labour mobilisation. We can tease out the opportunities into different categories or contexts, giving rise to a more nuanced understanding of labour mobilisation, which in turn illuminates the world in which IHRM operates.

The practices described in the final column fall into perhaps 6 categories, involving some potential overlapping:

- collective bargaining: primarily at local levels
- transnational trade union campaigns, often seeking to promote or extend collective bargaining
- broader civil society campaigns, including trade unions
- promotion of accountability codes, sometime tripartite
- application of international standards (ISO and others)
- monitoring and certification measures

These practices may be further reduced to three broad categories. First, there is the traditional collective bargaining approach, in which workers seek to have local bargaining arrangements

improved, whilst also taking part in campaigns to extend bargaining across the global company or GVC. Second, there are the broader civil society campaigns, sometimes involving unions, but extending the campaigning focus to wider civil society representation and broader targets, environmental impacts, human rights issues, consumer choice and economic sovereignty, as well as narrower labour standards. Such campaigns may, at times be at odds with the narrower collective bargaining agenda, in cases, for example, where there is seen to be a trade-off between environment-damaging mining and employment. The third category is the implementation of codes, involving monitoring and reporting, sometimes certification, often on a voluntary basis with an eye to consumer concerns and brand protection. Each category provides, to a different degree and in different ways, opportunity for worker voice to be heard in GVCs and their participating firms.

It is striking that, in the Robinson and Rainbird table, the opportunities for labour mobilisation are unmediated in their relationship to the modes of governance. Students of employment relations and international labour standards will note the absence of a crucial contextual factor in the analytical mix – the impact of national employment relations regimes, and of international labour standards regulation. Arguably, missing from the table is a column, which addresses the particular contexts in which labour mobilisation is modified by the regulatory environment. This is illustrated in the following table:

Form of Governance	Opportunities for Labour Mobilisation		Regulatory Reference Points
Market	Local collective bargaining		National ER framework, possibly influenced by e.g. ILO standards, Decent Work practices etc. or supra-regional ER standards and practices
Modular	Local collective bargaining plus international campaigns		National ER framework as above, with firm(s) and National ER arrangements under campaign pressure to recognise rights, reform ER practices, meet global standards etc.
Relational	Influence in chain for extended standards and systems	Mediated by	National ER frameworks, indirect impact of e.g. ILO standards through firms, presence of ILO-type standards

			in other industrial standards models
Captive	Consumer campaigns involving CSOs and unions; tripartite organization activities and monitoring and certification of standards		Reference to, and inclusion of, ILO core labour standards; reference to organizations which adopt core labour standards as best practice; combining core labour standards with other standards (e.g. environmental, human rights)
Hierarchical	Via tripartite organisations; monitoring and certification		Inclusion of core labour standards in monitoring and certification; adoption by tripartite organisations of core labour standards as best practice

Table 2. Context and Mediation in the Governance and Mobilisation of Labour.

The inclusion of regulatory mediation (or regulatory reference points) provides a more comprehensive understanding of the management- labour relationship within GVCs. Outcomes are then understood to be an effect of the form of the GVC, the dominant management practices, the mobilisation of labour as an independent actor, and the complex of regulatory arrangements that apply domestically and internationally. This is, in principle, similar to our understanding of domestic labour-management relationships as an effect of company and sectoral dynamics, dominant management practices, mobilised labour and the regulatory framework (formal and informal) which applies. In the international context, there is added complexity provided by, for example, the interaction of different domestic regulatory environments, the increasingly complex relationship between voluntary and non-voluntary labour standards in an emerging system of global governance, the forms of management practice driven by GVC governance arrangements, and so on, yet the essential elements remain the same.

Added complexity: the emerging debate on global governance and labour-management relations

The introduction into the GVC analysis of international regulatory arrangements is not straightforward, for, in particular, there is an emerging debate about how we understand global governance and labour-management relations. We should welcome this debate, for it was, until the late 1990s, uncharted territory, in part because of a failure on the part of scholars to understand the scope and implications of globalising production arrangements. The 1990s and early 2000s saw a

blossoming of analysis, which understood that globalisation required a substantial extension of existing analyses of labour-management relations, in part based upon an intellectual engagement between Employment Relations, International Relations and International Political Economy. That engagement is still nascent, yet stands as a crucial point of reference for the development of IHRM.

We illustrate the debate by referring to three strands of debate. The first is our own work on the concept of an international labour standards regime (Haworth and Hughes 2000; 2003). The second is an alternative formulation, using the concept of transnational arenas (Helfen and Fichter 2013). The third is the radical alternative offered by Waterman in his notion of emancipatory global labour studies (Waterman, 2011).

We first proposed an engagement between Industrial (Employment) Relations (IR) and International Relations (later International Political Economy – IPE) in the late 1990s (Haworth and Hughes 2000). The origins of the proposal lie further back in studies undertaken from the late 1970s on international trade union organisation and strategy and on the changing role of the ILO in the 1980s and 1990s. Our thesis suggested that IR's attempts to understand the international were limited by a theoretical weakness that might be removed by engagement with IPE. It also happily accepts a further union with, for example, the GVC debate discussed above.

The advantage of engagement with IPE was, in our view, its understanding of emergent global governance. We noted the extension of a traditional liberal institutionalist position in IPE into the study of international organisations, which in turn gave rise to the concept of global governance. The evidence for global governance was found in the constellation of institutions and actors to be found on the global stage and the manner in which, separately and jointly, these actors and institutions were framing and intervening global issues. The concept was not problematic, as it is criticised on two major fronts. One tradition sees in global governance a framework for a global neo-liberal order. Another questions the extent to which international institutions can escape the control of constituent nation states (especially hegemonic powers) and achieve an autonomy that seems essential for global governance. Notwithstanding these challenges, the idea of global governance remains a powerful presence in IPE.

The “regime” was identified as a key modality of global governance. The status and operation of regimes are again contested, but the concept finds empirical support in the activities of, for example the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the ILO. Krasner (1982) defines regimes as “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations”. We identified one such convergence in what we

dubbed the International Labour Standards regime (ILSR) in which the ILO provides an international context for the definition of global labour standards. The ILSR meets Krasner's definition of a regime precisely – principles such as social justice, norms such as those embodied in tripartism, rules defined in a long-established Constitution and associated mechanisms, and a long tradition of tripartite decision-making. Tripartism, binding government, employers and trade unions, is the framework in which actors converge and conduct their business.

Central to the ILSR is the assimilation of three processes-institutional, substantive and spatial. First, the institutional process provides the wherewithal for formation and maintenance of the ILSR. At the global level, international organisations, most prominently the ILO (since 1919) but including the OECD, the World Bank and IMF, have engaged with organised labour through a process of institutionalised dialogue. During the global financial crisis, the work of the ILO on global unemployment and the promotion of its Decent Work agenda have been influential in getting 'labour issues' on the Ministerial agendas of the G20 and in facilitating poverty reduction strategies of the IMF and World Bank. Second, the substantive process initiates and drives the development of the ILSR within spatial and institutional frameworks. For much of the twentieth century through to the present day, this has been the development, and implementation of international labour standards. Growth in regional trade defines the third element in the ILSR, the spatial process. Regionalisation and the creation of regional blocs such as, for example, the EU, NAFTA, Apec and Mercosur now provide similar opportunities for the promotion and protection of labour interests at the regional level.

We subsequently traced the contemporary consolidation of the ILSR through the reconfiguration of the ILO under successive Directors General to meet the challenges of a globalising world. Key moments in this adjustment included the 1998 adoption of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the 2008 adoption of the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation, the simultaneous institutional reforms of the ILO and the development of its Decent Work agenda under Juan Somavia, and the ILO's engagement with the G20, EU and other global agencies in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (Hughes and Haworth, 2010). At the heart of this consolidation were several processes. One was the establishment of the ILO and its principles at the "top table" of international agencies. Another was the recognition in the aftermath of the GFC that ILO principles – for example, employment-based growth - were an essential political concomitant to the economic policies implemented to overcome the crisis. A third was the inexorable spread of the ILO's core labour standards, identified in the 1998 Declaration, into, for example, corporate social responsibility statements of companies, international pacts such as the UN

Global Compact, and labour clauses in international trade deals (despite the failure of the Social Clause agenda in the 1990s). Suffice it to say that those same core standards emerge frequently in the monitoring and evaluation of labour standards across GVCs, and in the expectations of lead firms when considering contract arrangements. The US withdrawal of GSP privileges from Bangladesh in mid-2013, following a devastating fire in a textile factory involving hundreds of deaths, starkly illustrates the international application of ILO standards.

How does the concept of the ILSR articulate with the relationships laid out in Table 2? In simple terms, the ILSR defines the desirable and expected global standard of labour protections. Hence, first, it informs the domestic IR regulatory environment through the ILO's traditional promulgation of standards and recommendations. Second, its outputs – labour standards – are embodied in the codes of conduct and related assessment tools that are used to monitor and evaluate firms participating in global production arrangements. Third, it provides to companies a ready-made standard against which they can measure their performance as an employer or as a contractor of labour. It is also important to note here that only the ILO provides this framework of standards, partly for historical reasons, partly because of the political reach of the ILSR as currently configured.

Not all are convinced by the argument for the ILSR. Helfen and Fichter (2013) propose an alternative approach based on the notion of the “arena”. Their argument is particularly interesting for it engages directly with the actions of trade unions in global production networks (GPN), an alternative formulation of GVC. Their argument harks back to long-standing debates about how trade unions can engage effectively on a trans-national basis, where historically traditional union strengths have been national or sub-national. They suggest that one emergent transnational labour relations (IR) practice – the Global Framework Agreement (GFA) - may be the key to understanding a developing “arena” of IR, which transcends the MNE and encompasses the GPN (GVC). The notion of arena is counterposed directly to that of a regime.

Briefly, Helfen and Fichter dismiss the idea of an ILSR because it “presupposes a state of institutionalization that in practice is non-existent and neglects the politics and interest conflicts of emerging processes of labour-management interaction” (p.3). For them transnational IR is in “a nascent, formative stage as far as institutionalization is concerned” (Ibid.). They point to a wide variety of actions – campaigns, GVC-based labour disputes, codes of conduct, for example – as evidence of “a very fragmented, heterogeneous and patchwork picture of development” (Ibid.). Instead, they “offer a heuristic model postulating the emergence of transnational arenas emanating from GFAs as a more adequate means of exploring the dynamics of transnationalization in labour relations, in which the presence of unions is a decisive factor” (ibid.). They prefer the idea of an

arena “because it is more clearly associated with a political space for collective actors that is still contested and emergent, and hence, more applicable to *processes* of institutionalization” (p.4). They go on to emphasise the formative aspects of their analysis with reference to transnational IR as “a patchwork of nascent sub-arenas” (ibid.). The overall tone of their analysis is that the world in which they are analysing transnational IR is inchoate, indistinct and difficult to pin down, except in transient observation of elements of those sub-arenas. The reader is left with a clouded understanding of what might distinguish Transnational IR and Global IR, a distinction which may be important, as it suggests two levels of analysis – the Global at the global and the transnational at the level of the GPN, for example.

Here is not the place to engage in a comprehensive commentary on the Helfen and Fichter analysis. Its focus on GFAs, GPNs and Trade Union Networks (TUNs) is most welcome. The emphasis on contested spaces and union action is also welcome, though the implication that it is somehow lost in other analyses is only partly true. One might in preliminary terms, wish to make the following observations about this approach. First, a summary rejection of the notion of an ILSR without more careful analysis of the evidence suggested for its existence is a matter of concern. The potential high degree of complementarity between the two analyses is consequently lost, especially when one considers the distinction made by Helfen and Fichter between the global and the transnational. A global regime and transnational arenas are potential bedfellows. This is a concern that merits further work. Second, there is a little of the arriviste in the emphasis on the contemporary inchoateness of emergent processes. In fact, such questions have been in play since the late 1970s, long before GPNs, GFAs and TUNs came on the scene. From a historical perspective, the role of the Global Union Federations (GUFs) and the wider trade union movement has become significantly more sophisticated over the last thirty years, both in analysis and action. From that perspective, the strategic thinking of, for example, the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) and the GUFs, is light years ahead of that of the 1970s, and merits reference and recognition. It is, of course, true that GVCs provide new opportunities and challenges, as we have discussed earlier, but the contemporary capacity to understand such arrangements and frame responses – the capacity to create and sustain GFAs, for example – rests on thirty years of analytical and practical development in the international union movement. Third, the focus on GFAs, TUNs and GPNs – whilst important – may erect defensive and narrowly-defined barriers against other traditions in the same analytical space. It remains the case that transnational and global IR would benefit from more analysis. The institutional elements addressed by Helfen and Fichter do not constitute the whole picture of actors, institutions and outcomes that comprise global IR, and their argument for inchoateness would be easier to accept if their analysis paid more serious attention to those other factors.

Peter Waterman offers a quite different prescription (Waterman, 2011). Drawing on a lifetime in international labour studies, he posits the movement from what has been described as the New Global Labour Studies (NGLS) to an Emancipatory Global Labour Studies (EGLS), which derives from “the necessary articulation of Participatory Democracy, Alternative Production Systems, Multiculturalism, Justice and Citizenship, Biodiversity, Rival Knowledges, Intellectual Property rights and even...*a New Labour Internationalism*” (p.16). His argument transcends any limited sense of transnational or global IR, counterposing instead a politics of liberation in which IR plays a role, both in terms of traditional labour struggles, but also in terms of Labour’s role in broad social movements that transcend the workplace.

His argument, and that of others in his tradition, is not simply of intellectual interest. The practices that he identifies as central to EGLS are not theoretical concepts, but empirical circumstances found internationally from the townships of South Africa to urban communities in the Philippines. A powerful statement of these practices can be found in Webster et al (2009), which offers case studies of new, primarily Southern union movements and practices, and offers a vision of social movement unionism that might helpfully be incorporated into the previous two contributions to global IR theory. Of course, the Waterman perspective is not primarily about regulation. It is a political manifesto for emancipatory social movements, and, consequently, places little emphasis on regulatory regimes. However, it is a powerful message to the practitioners of IHRM about how far some labour movements and their politics of emancipation have moved from the traditional North American focus on managerialism and unitarism identified by Delbridge et al..

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has moved some way from an early IHRM grounded in a narrow focus on the MNE and the managerialism and unitarism of a North American management tradition. It has traced two stages of broadening – the eclectic approach of Scullion et al, still primarily grounded in an international business tradition, and the radical challenge posed by Delbridge et al.. In both, to greater and lesser extent, respectively, the need to sustain disciplinary boundaries provides boundaries to challenge and change. Subsequently, the chapter has proposed a new space in which IHRM can engage and broaden – the GVC and its operations. The advantages proposed for the GVC approach lie in its integration of firm and sectoral behaviour with management strategy and labour mobilisation, including elements of global regulation. In turn, we have proposed that the regulation dimension be expanded to improve the coherence of the Robinson and Rainbird approach. However, we then showed how the invocation of global regulation as an important dimension of global

production arrangements, also imports contested approaches to global governance, global regulation and the choateness (or not) of associated institutional arrangements. We noted that there are important analyses that point to an emergent politics of emancipation, found often in social movements in developing countries, that pose even greater challenges to orthodox IHRM thinking about labour in international production. That the BRIC economies are home to such movements should not escape the thoughtful international business scholar.

In identifying these challenges we also note that the absorption of and reference to internationally agreed labour standards form part of a dialogue that also acts to fuse the interests of formal and informal employment in GVCs. How this fusion evolves is influenced by management strategy, the strength of labour activism, the functioning of regulatory frameworks and the promotion of consumer interests. Decisions on upgrading or downgrading strategies within GVC's pressure wage structures and employment patterns. These provide focus for labour activism across national boundaries in which the interests and protection of formal and informal labour are promoted. The growth of consumer markets in the South and expansion of South-South trade has helped promote labour market reform in key economies such as China and with it, a greater emphasis on the role of formal law as the enabling apparatus for labour protection and regulation. As we highlight above, labour and social movements in the global South have played a significant and often complex role in promoting interests within and without the workplace. The challenge, recognised by the executive we quote, is that internationally agreed labour standards transcend the managerialism of the workplace and become a rallying banner under which labour mobilises, co-operates and pressures GVCs.

One of the bald lessons from the global financial crisis is that international co-operation is not only the outcome of negotiated relations between States but also, by extension, the result of interaction between convergent domestic and international interests. The decisions and actions of national and international organisations provide political space for the development of alliances that bring together state, private and public interests and require that the rationale and make-up of such alliances be examined. What these alliances have in common is that they establish mutual expectations about patterns of behaviour and develop working relationships that allow the parties to adapt their practices to national frameworks while at the same time reflecting internationally agreed norms.

Orthodox IHRM thinking remains peripheral to understanding the complex nature of these changes and limited in adjusting to the challenges they pose to firm-focussed unitarism.

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