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# Labour and the Challenges of Development

- *Labour, growth and development* – what kind of state-society linkages are necessary to avoid ‘enclave’, ‘uneconomic’ growth and development?
- *Labour, development and trade* – what role does trade play in undermining or enhancing inclusive development?

**Call for Papers**  
**International Workshop**  
**at the**  
**University of the Witwatersrand**  
**Johannesburg, South Africa**  
**1-3 April 2007**

## Workshop background

The Global Labour University [www.global-labour-university.org](http://www.global-labour-university.org) is a network of trade unions and universities that aims at facilitating research, debate and qualification programmes in order to address global labour issues. At its annual workshop in 2007 trade unionists and scholars are invited to present papers and discuss the challenges for organised labour as outlined in the two lead questions, which are elaborated on below.

Unions around the world operate in a complex and rapidly changing environment. In response to the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century organised labour fought for legislation and welfare provisions to make the ruthless dynamic of a 'free' market compatible with a democratic and inclusive society. Within many Northern industrialised countries this struggle has been remarkably successful during the second half of the twentieth century, with many achieving near full employment and a substantial social wage. However, much of the Southern developing (or majority) world experienced low or at best 'enclave' development, where a few cosmopolitan elites enjoy the fruits of 'development', while the majority experience massive unemployment, informalised work, low wages and poor working conditions. For many, this experience of *under*-development is a direct result of colonialism and neo-colonialism, which arguably was a necessary condition for the development of the North

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the new wave of 'neo-liberal' globalisation has shifted jobs from the North to parts of the South. While on the one hand this has boosted employment in parts of the South (especially Asia), it has prevented states from spreading the benefits of economic development to all their citizens. In the North it is eroding the regulatory capacity of the nation state and the capacity of trade unions to defend social achievements. Most countries in the world now experience diminishing labour rights and welfare provisions, informalisation of employment relations and growing inequality and poverty. Indeed, on a global scale, the rich have become richer and the poor poorer

### 1) Labour, growth and development

"In many international cases, the developmental state has been characterised by a high degree of integration between business and government. The South African developmental state has different advantages and challenges. While we seek to engage private capital strategically, in South Africa the developmental state needs to be buttressed and guided by a mass-based, democratic liberation movement in a context in which the economy is still dominated by a developed, but largely white, capitalist class." (paragraph 20, ANC National General Council, July 2005, Consolidated Report on Sectoral Strategies).

While South Africa has unique challenges, this statement arguably applies to much of the developing world, particularly the rest of Africa and Latin America, where foreign multinational corporations dominate key sectors of the economy. The key question is: what *kind* of developmental state is needed to achieve inclusive development, and what is the role of organised labour as a transformative actor in relation to the state, capital and the rest of civil society?

Where the state has been mainly embedded with an emerging indigenous industrial bourgeoisie, labour and other civil society actors have often been excluded or suppressed. Even if organised labour is incorporated, the question remains whether development that is subordinated to economic growth, in a context of extensive labour-saving technology and fierce global competition, will achieve inclusive or enclave development. Will a different paradigm, that of a *democratic* developmental state that is

embedded primarily with organised labour and other civil society actors - such that growth is subordinated to development (or human needs) - achieve holistic, balanced and inclusive development?

Papers are invited that:

- a) interrogate whether democracy and active civil society participation (including in particular a mobilised and organised labour movement that straddles the formal/informal and trade union/new social movement divisions) is necessary for inclusive socio-economic development and an effective 'developmental state'; and/or
- b) analyse the relationship between the state, society and the market - including the view that the nurturing of indigenous entrepreneurs is in the long-term interests of labour and development; and/or
- c) analyse the notions of 'development', 'economic growth' and 'uneconomic growth', with reference to experiences of 'enclave' development that benefit a small urban elite linked to globalised networks of privilege, while the majority reside in urban and rural squalor; and/or
- d) develop new proposals for balanced, sustainable development that creates quality jobs and enhances the welfare of all citizens, without unduly harming the natural environment.

## **2) Labour, trade and development**

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) aims at the progressive elimination of all barriers to trade in goods and services. The imbalance of past agreements has led to severe implications for development in developing countries. While the advocates of neoliberal globalisation argue that "free" trade enhances growth and reduces poverty, the experiences of many countries in the developing and developed world is that often this is not the case. In a context of depleting energy reserves, many now also question whether accelerated globalised trade is sustainable, given the huge amounts of energy involved in transporting goods across the world.

Developing countries point to double standards by developed countries. They argue that, on the one hand, developed countries pressurize developing countries to open their markets, while on the other hand these same countries protect their own markets through non-tariff barriers and subsidised agriculture. This prevents developing countries from building their trading capacity, increases their vulnerability, and would make many of them further dependent on aid, and thus more vulnerable to pressure by developed countries and agencies such as the WTO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the current context, developing countries are particularly concerned about the developmental impact of concessions they are being asked to make in Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) negotiations and under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); in addition, they are concerned about the impact on agricultural livelihoods if multinational agribusiness seizes all of the gains available through the Agriculture negotiations.

Papers are invited that:

- a) analyse the industrial, employment and development (including environmental) policy implications of liberalization through trade deals such as NAMA and GATS; and/or
- b) critically address the social and economic arguments around respect for core labour standards in relation to trade and socio-economic development; and/or
- c) identify effective strategies to communicate these social and economic arguments as well as successful policies based on the use of these arguments; and/or
- d) consider the different approaches to the negative effects of neo-liberal globalisation (particularly the migration of jobs and investment) from the perspectives of workers in the North and those in the South, and ways to overcome perceived differences (such as over alleged 'protectionism') and to maximise global solidarity among workers; and/or
- e) analyse whether the stress on jobs, as opposed to alternative livelihood strategies, is the most appropriate labour approach to trade and development debates; and/or
- f) develop proposals to build the capacity of less well-resourced developing country union movements to respond to the employment and development effects of liberalising trade and investment.

**Format**

The workshop will bring together an international group of scholars and trade unionists. It will feature working groups, paper presentations, and panel discussions involving both academics and trade unionists. Papers will be presented mainly in small interactive working groups to allow for in-depth discussion and development of ideas for possible future research and cooperation. A selected number of papers will be published in the 2007 GLU Yearbook

Proposals for papers should be sent by 1 November 2006 to:

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*The proposal should be a one page abstract that*

- 1) gives the name, address and institutional affiliation of the author/s;*
- 2) outlines the main idea; and*
- 3) indicates what methodology will be used.*

**Sponsors:**

