

Editorial

Going Against the Grain: Our Commitment to Truly Global Labour Studies

*Maurizio Atzeni, Elena Baglioni, Teri Caraway, Neethi P.
Nicolas Pons-Vignon, Omar Manky Bonilla*

This issue of the journal is the last in which Ben Scully participated as an editor. Ben has played an extremely important role in the journal's life over the past eight years and has contributed to maintaining the academic quality of the journal, through his meticulous yet constructive approach to papers under review. Ben has also been a key facilitator in the editorial board, managing the important changes the journal has gone through in the past year. We wanted to thank Ben for leading us into the "adulthood" of managing the *Global Labour Journal* with his characteristic smoothness and calmness. We are committed, as a board, to building on the crucial work of our predecessors and to growing the journal's quality and outreach.

Ben leaving the editorial board marks the beginning of a new challenging period for the current editorial board. The academic publishing environment is undergoing further commodification of knowledge production. As academics, we write and review papers and steer and coordinate editorial boards often for free. Universities pay us for our research work and then pay publishers for accessing journal articles whose content publishers receive basically as a gift, without paying for it. Recent implementation of open access policy by funding institutions, such as the one adopted by the European Union for all its funded research, has made work that was previously accessible only through individual or institutional subscriptions open to anyone. This is in itself very positive, especially for scholars across the Global South, whose institutions have limited resources to pay for accessing expensive journal databases. However, publishers' imposition on authors of so called 'golden' or 'green' paid routes for making the publication open access is creating an absurd situation in which you as author have to first grant copyright to journal publishers and then have to pay them to get back your freedom – paying for what it is yours, an oxymoron that is somehow legitimate within the market logic.

Payment for open access is also creating new forms of academic colonialism and discrimination between authors in core countries, whose work is read and cited because they can pay for it to be open access, and those in peripheral countries, whose work remains inaccessible and thus less relevant in terms of ranking systems. This situation is not just unfair for authors (often published in the same journal or participating in international debates side by side, one visible and the other invisible) but it also creates hierarchies in terms of which part of the world creates knowledge and, in turn, how this knowledge is recognized by scholarly communities worldwide. This, added to the predominance of English as the global working and research language, produces a double, though contradictory, side effect in the social sciences: it makes entire lines of research and epistemology from the South disappear while opening the doors to sectarian, supposedly anticolonial, niches that do not allow the regeneration of science in these regions.

The *Global Labour Journal* has proudly, since the beginning, opted for an open access model with no fees charged. We are an independent, self-managed journal, hosted by MacMaster University Library Press, that relies on lots of voluntary work and the contributions of our current institutional partners (The Centre for Global Workers' Right at the University of Pennsylvania and the Department of Labour, Welfare and Society at the Professional University of the Italian Switzerland DAESS/SUPSI) to cover the editorial work of our managing editor only, Dr Claire Ceruti. In its 13 years of history, the journal has become an important reference point for labour scholars across the world. This has been partly connected to our strong links with the International Sociological Association (ISA) RC44 Labour movement and with the Global Labour University network. Free access to the journal contents has made us a reference point for those studying labour from an interdisciplinary perspective, from both core and peripheral countries. There is certainly more that we can do to build on this existing strength. While GLJ will remain in the near future, for practical and cost reasons, an English language journal, we particularly feel that we need to improve the journal's opening and positioning in respect to other languages and labour research cultures.

We see a number of possible concrete ways to do this in the near future that we'll strive to achieve. We are aiming to establish alliances with other journals for internationally coordinated special issues (such as the recent one on Labour Conflict, Class and Collective Organization in which we participated, published across four different journals – see <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/issue/view/487>), and in this sense we invite potential special issues organisers to think big! We are planning to establish linkages with other peer journals in labour studies publishing at local national level in other languages than English for article exchanges, so that a section in our journal can host articles published somewhere else in a different language, and vice versa with GLJ articles. Similarly, we will continue to give special editorial assistance to papers by non-English speaking authors and to those new to academic research (both early career as well as activist-researchers) and invite authors to submit translations of their published articles to our website so that both original peer reviewed article submissions and their translations can be accessed simultaneously.

We also strive for the GLJ to become a ranked journal, with an impact factor – but we will not seek this at any cost. For instance, we reject the tendency to exclude special issues from rankings, under the spurious pretext that they would tamper with the “objective” blind review process. Not only are special issues fully compatible with a blind review process, they constitute important attempts to capture academic debate about important issues. We are proud of the special issues we have published, such as those on African trade unions (<https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/issue/view/466>) and on working class transformation in the Americas (<https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/issue/view/424>), and intend to continue publishing ambitious, high quality special issues.

As with many of the plans in our own lives, the achievement of these aims depends on various factors. We particularly value the collective dimension of our editorial board as it is crucial to the work of the GLJ and to its broader political aim of putting labour at the centre of our understanding of social change. We thus invite all those interested in the GLJ to collaborate with ideas and proposals.