Workshop: Transnational migration and global work

Time: March 6-7 2014

Venue: Stockholm University, Geovetenskapens hus

Theme of the workshop
In times of globalization, activities of work are also becoming more global in nature and in particular they involve transnational migration flows. Nation states and international organisations, such as the EU, are examples of emerging global migration regimes, trying to monitor global work. The increasing mobility of people, who wish to improve their life situations, is another indication of the significance of global work. Recruitment agencies are brokering migrant workers, students are entering international universities and transnational firms are acting within global value chains. Some migrant workers enter the high end of the economy and are sometimes referred to as highly-skilled or career migrants, whereas others enter the low end of the economy, often suffering from exploitation and low earnings. The extensive student migration from India to the ICT firms in the US, South-Asian women doing domestic work in Singapore and Thai berry pickers in Sweden are all examples of global work – gendered and characterized by class and ethnic hierarchies in an evermore globalized labour market.

This workshop emphasizes how various forms of global work are closely linked to transnational migration processes. Webs of networks tie countries together, constituting a transnational social space, facilitating migration flows. The everyday practices of individual migrants are affected by these networks – and the simultaneous events taking place in the sending and receiving countries – and at the same time contribute to their continuation. There are hence many examples of how transnational migration processes and global work practices are interlinked: in globalized economies institutions develop global networks within which workers are recruited. These institutions can be transnational firms, global brokers or a network of families and friends. In the receiving society, transnational networks are often used in the labour market and transnational migrant entrepreneurs can use their contacts in their homeland to establish their business in the new country.

The workshop is divided into two major strands:

A. Migrant practices and everyday life

In this part of the workshop focus is on the transnational activities of migrant workers and/or international students in the global labour markets. We are for example interested in the everyday life of the migrant in the homeland and/or in the receiving countries, the temporary or permanent migrant, who may or may not be embedded in an existing structure of social network (e.g. diaspora) and gender relations and effects on the household and how they relate to ‘global work’.
B. Structural conditions: policies, organizations and brokers

The second strand of the workshop focuses on the structural level of transnational migration processes and its relation to global work, such as the political agendas or migration regimes of nation states, the activities of migrant organisations, the agendas of transnational firms or the mediating role of recruitment agencies.

We welcome scholars with an interest in transnational migration and global work to contribute to the workshop within these two strands. Please send your abstract no later than January 25, 2014, and your paper no later than February 20, 2014, to: Charlotta Hedberg (charlotta.hedberg@humangeo.su.se). The abstract should not exceed 400 words and the paper should be between 4000 and 7000 words (including references).

Programme (preliminary)

Thursday, March 6 2014: Migrant practices and everyday life
10:00 – 11:30 Key note speech: Indonesian Domestic Workers and the (Un)Making of Transnational Livelihoods and Provisional Futures
Professor Brenda Yeoh, University of Singapore

11:30 – 13:30 Lunch
13:30 – 17:00 Working groups
Dinner

Friday, March 7 2014: Structural conditions: policies, organization and brokers
9:00 – 10:15 Key note speech: Organizing Global Work: Migration Infrastructure and the Logistics of Transnational Labor in Asia and the Middle East
Associate Professor Johan Lindquist, Stockholm University

10:45 – 12:30 Working groups

Arrangements
The workshop is held in cooperation between the partner universities Stockholm University, University of Helsinki and the National University of Singapore.

Organisers:
Charlotta Hedberg, Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University
Erik Olsson, Department of Social Anthropology/CEIFO, Stockholm University