**Power resources in contemporary employment relations**

Organizers:

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**Key words:** Power resource theory; employment relations theory;industrial relations theory; unions; labour struggles

**Abstract**

Power resources theory has experienced a strong revival, having been used as a framework for analysing overall labour market relations, both in countries with strong and weaker trade unions, and specific conflicts in new industries like platform work. This highlights the potential of power resource theory for casting new light on contemporary and comparative employment relations in a variety of contexts. At the same time, it is a theory that has at its core the contentious relationship and power balance between workers and employers. While many employment relation scholars have long drawn theoretical inspiration from analytical frameworks that only gives the employment relationship a partial or marginal role, power resource theory places the employment relationship centre stage for explaining broader societal developments. Therefore, power resources theory seems to hold significant promise as a foundational theory for employment relations.

That said, there are also challenges and questions that needs to be tackled. Is power resource theory a theory or merely a heuristic devise? Can power resources theory become a micro-foundation of employment relations research? What is the explanatory power of power resources for broader societal development in our contemporary world? How can the interaction between various power resources be conceptualised? What are the challenges of operationalizing recently conceptualised power resources (such as ideational and coalitional)? How to study the power resources of employers and capital? What is the adequate temporal and geographical scale for power resources theory, and how can we theorise the link between different scales? How should power resource theory addresses the divergence of interests among workers?

This special session focuses on the application, potential and challenges of power resource theory. With its focus on power resource *theory*, the special session will be part of the agenda for the ILERA IR Theory Study Group.

**List of participants who will present papers (all confirmed):**

Aurora Trif, Pedro Mendonca, Marco Hauptmeier & Felix Syrovatka, Chris F. Wright & Colm McLaughlin, Kirstin Jesnes, Jesper Prytz, Lisa Dorigatti, Bjarke Refslund & Jens Arnholtz.

**Format:**

Participants will present papers in the early phase, so that the further development of the papers can be discussed, along with a focus on using the empirical research for discussing the potential and challenges of power resource theory. Given the number of already confirmed presentations (8), we propose that this special session is given at least two time slots.