

Workshop on The Precarity of Labor Migrants in Global South and Global North States

29 October 2025
Hybrid/Online ([Webex link](#))
2:00 pm - 6:10 pm CET

Abstract

Labor migrants in the Global South often encounter low-skilled, temporary or informal employment opportunities, which contribute to their precarious conditions. The precarity of labor migrants in the Global South is shaped by various factors, including socio-economic contexts, migration patterns, social protection systems, and legal and policy frameworks. Similarly, labor migrants in Global North states find themselves in precarious economic, residential and social situations characterized by insecurity, instability, social exclusion and isolation (Hung et al., 2024). These situation results from the ongoing interplay between neoliberal labor markets and highly restrictive immigration regimes (Lewis et al., 2015).

We consider labor migrant precarity to encompass both economic precarity—such as low pay and unstable work—and legal precarity, which is linked to their immigration status. While economic precarity is a common feature among labor migrants in both the Global South and the Global North, their legal and policy conditions differ significantly. In the Global North, labor migrants face restrictive social policies, while in the Global South, these restrictions, combined with corrupt institutions and social marginalization, contribute to the expansion of informal employment patterns within the formal labor sector—what Jinnah (2020) refers to as “negotiated precarity.” In addition, gender inequalities in migration laws in Global South countries shape different migration patterns (Khattab et al., 2020).

Intra-regional migration within the Global South (e.g. within Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa) is also characterized by limited social protection and weak labor rights. Labor markets in the Global South are often characterized by the absence or inadequacy of social safety nets (e.g. unemployment benefits, health care), which exacerbate the precarity of both local and migrant workers. This situation has been further strained during the recent COVID-19 crisis, where tensions and vulnerabilities between migrant and local workers have intensified. The lockdown also reinforced gender inequality and patriarchy, as women are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs and face greater exposure to health risks (Arora & Majumder, 2021). Furthermore, industries that rely more on labor than capital - such as construction - and those that depend on global markets - such as the tourism sectors - became even more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis (Naduni et al., 2022).

Overall, informal working conditions in the Global South exist within deregulated labor markets where employers seek low-cost, ‘flexible’ labor, while restrictive immigration and asylum policies shape access to residence, work, and welfare. In these contexts, labor migrants are often excluded from labor legislation, collective agreements and employment contracts (ILO, 2011; Pantaléon & Castracani, 2017).

In contrast, in the Global North, migrant workers are highly dependent on their legal status. Their precarious employment and labor relations are actively shaped by both employers and the state, referred to “migration regimes” (Zou, 2015; Strauss & McGrath, 2017). Moreover, employers differentiate workers due to labor contracts, further contributing to increasingly restrictive migration policies (Alberti, & Danaj, 2017). Thus, the deregulation of labor migration and refugee protection in the Global South stands in stark to the proliferation of restrictive migration policies in the Global North.

Workshop Description

The workshop aims to compare the precarity of migrant workers in the Global South and the Global North and to explore common solutions to mitigate it.

The workshop consists of four thematic panels, each of which will address the following questions:

1. What are the key indicators of precarity of labor migrants in the Global South and Global North?
2. How do migrant workers experience precarious working conditions and what strategies do they develop to cope with them?
3. How does the legal protection of migrant workers in the Global South interact with the regulation of restrictive migration policies in the Global North?
4. How do health and climate crises affect the effectiveness of labor policies in the Global South and the Global North? What are the main similarities and differences?

References

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The workshops takes place online on [WEBEX](#), **Wednesday 29 October 2025 from 2:00 to 6:10 pm CET**.

Organised by the team of project IP49 [Evolving \(Im\)Mobility Regimes: Migrant Workers' Entitlement and Precarisation in Times of Crisis](#)

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Program (2:00 - 6:10 pm CET)

2:00 - 2:10 Introduction

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Session 1

2:10 - 2:30 Heat Inequality: Migrant Workers and the Politics of Survival

Shubhda Arora, Indian Institute of Management, India – shubhda.arora@iiml.ac.in

2:30 - 2:50 Precarious Working Conditions of Self-Employed Women Workers in India

Tulika Tripathi, Central University of Gujarat, India – tulika.tripathi@cug.ac.in

2:50 - 3:10 Circular Migrants Labour in India: Invisible and Precarious

Nripendra Kishore Mishra, Banaras Hindu University, India – nripendra.mishra@gmail.com

3:10 - 3:30 Discussion

3:30 - 4:10 Break (40 minutes)

Session 2

4:10 - 4:30 Conceptual Notions of Precarity, and Empirical Results from Fieldwork across Canada and South Africa between 2012-2021

Zaheera Jinnah, University of Victoria, Canada – zjinnah@uvic.ca

4:30 - 4:50 Documentation Fragility, Policy Complexity, and Migrant Regularisation in Latin America: Implications for Labour and Social Precarity

Marcia Vera Espinoza, Queen Margaret University, UK – mveraespinoza@qmu.ac.uk

4:50 - 5:10 The Evolution of Precarious Work Among Migrant Workers in Europe Since the Great Recession of the Late Noughties

Olga Ganjour, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Geneva
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5:10 - 5:20 Break (10 minutes)

5:20 - 5:40 Precarity and EU migrant Workers: Between Labour Market Transformations and the Environment

Sandra Mantu, Radboud University, Netherlands – sandra.mantu@ru.nl

5:40 - 6:00 Discussion

6:00 - 6:10 Conclusion

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