



Institutskolloquium

IfP

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2025/2026

Institutskolloquium / DEPARTMENTAL SEMINAR

How can migrant labour change national economies?

Wednesday, 21 January 2026 · 16:00 c.t.

Room 124, Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Or join online via Zoom: 930 8975 0663 (Meeting ID), 142311 (Passcode)

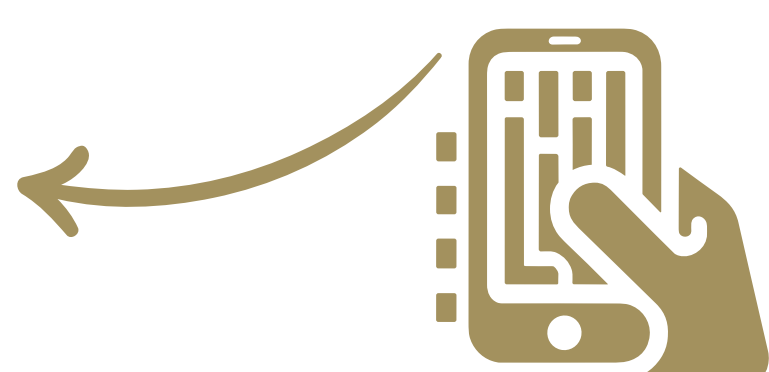


What is the long-term impact of labour migration on receiving countries' labour markets? This question is increasingly important because labour migrants' share of employment has expanded substantially, reaching beyond 25 percent in some European countries. However, predominant approaches in comparative political economy - Varieties of Capitalism and the Growth Model literature - have failed to deliver adequate answers. The central problem is that these approaches assume that the use of migrant labour happens in ways that are compatible with the national model (Menz, 2008; Ivardi and Wanklin, 2025) and therefore has limited effect on those models. By contrast, this paper develops the argument that firms pursuing deviant business strategies that are less compatible with the predominant model can use migrant labour to overcome institutional and policy obstacles, and that labour migration can therefore underpin incremental, but transformative changes in national models. To substantiate this argument, the paper presents a case study of the development in the Danish economy. Drawing on highly detailed register data for the last two decades, the paper shows that the increasing inflow of migrant labour has allowed firms and sectors that were peripheral to the Danish growth model to grow, while also reshaping the functioning of institutions in other sectors. Rather than simply conforming to national model, labour migration thus underpins changes in those models.

Jens Arnholtz is an Associate Professor at the Employment Relations Research Centre (FAOS), Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen. His research interests are in the field of employment relations, with a special focus on cross-border labour mobility, posting of workers, Europeanization of national labour markets and power resource theory.



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For more information