

Global Value Chains, CSR and New Social Movements

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Track chairs

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Description of the track

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The last decades have witnessed the rise of unprecedented levels of geographical dispersion and transnational coordination in the organization of corporate activities. Value chains previously organized and regulated in domestic settings have become integrated into global management systems through complex inter-firm and intra-firm network arrangements. The governance of these chains, including production location decisions, contractual and technical arrangements, and value distribution, increasingly escaped the control of local actors to become embedded in transnational management spheres closely associated to financial markets and driven by profit-making, shareholder value considerations.

In a context where existing social and environmental regulations remain circumscribed at the national level while international initiatives are, at best, optional or incentive-based, the global search for profit-maximization has led to growing social exploitation and environmental degradation in global industries.

A Global Value Chain perspective allows to shed light on these issues and contextualize the debate on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by highlighting the rise of interdependencies and power shifts in the organization of global industries and corporations, as well as their social and environmental consequences. It also offers a valuable tool to trace the rise of new social movements attempting to create social and cognitive linkages between dispersed parts of global value chains, for instance by

organizing campaigns to rise consumer awareness of labor abuses or environmental destruction at the far end of global value chains feeding end markets for consumption products.

By adopting such contextualized, transnational perspective on global corporate activities and the new social movements attempting to channel regulatory forces in global value chains, the track aims to elicit papers addressing the following type of questions:

- How do social or environmental issues at one end of global value chains relate to global decision-making processes at the other end of the chain? How does the social responsibility of global corporations apply to social and environmental issues in value chains organized through several layers of suppliers and intermediaries?
- How do various actors such as firms, workers, environmental or social NGOs following distinct agendas in global value chains attempt to frame CSR conceptions and debates? What significant differences or similarities can be observed in their framing of CSR? What role do they play in the emergence of international norms or standards to regulate the social and environmental dimensions of global value chains?
- What kind of social movements can be observed in relation to business activities in global value chains? How are these movements organized, how are strategies defined and implemented through organizational forms?
- How do networks of corporate activities interact with activist networks within the context of global value chains? What kind of conflictual or cooperative agenda emerge from such interactions?

Short Bibliography

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Biographical note on each track chair

Florence Palpacuer is professor of management at the University of Montpellier, France, where she is responsible for a master program in Human Resources Management and co-directing a research team on Altermanagement, Globalization and Ecology. A former consultant at the International Labour Organization in Geneva, she participates to various international research networks on Global Value Chains and their implications for employment and development. She has published a number of book contributions and articles on these issues in journals such as *Economy and Society*, *Transnational Corporations*, *Competition and Change*, *Management International*, *Society and Business Review*, *World Development*, and *Global Networks*. Her empirical research has focused on the global clothing and agri-food industries. Her current field work is on social movement organizations in the global apparel chain.

Jennifer Bair is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research interests lie at the intersection of economic sociology, political economy and development studies with a regional focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. She is the editor of *Frontiers of Commodity Chains Research* (Stanford University Press, 2008) and co-editor of *Free Trade and Uneven Development: The North American Apparel Industry after NAFTA* (Temple University Press, 2002). Recently, she also guest edited a special issue of the journal *Competition and Change* on the 'Global apparel chain after the multi-fiber arrangement'. In addition to several book chapters, her publications include articles in the journals *World Development*, *Global Networks*, *Environment and Planning A* and *Comercio Exterior*. She is currently completing a manuscript entitled 'Sewing up development? From boom to bust in post-NAFTA Mexico and beyond'. She started to investigate NGO strategies in global commodity chains in recent years.