

CALL FOR PAPERS

SASE 2017, Lyon Network O: Global Value Chains

Panel: Responsible value chains and production networks: challenges and perspectives

Co-organizers:

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One of the key global challenges of the twenty-first century is to understand how firms, from OECD and emerging economies, might better engage with questions of responsibility and social justice, thereby becoming more accountable. Heightened awareness of consumers, campaigns and direct action by NGOs and other civil society groups, and recent orientations in national and supranational policies are now pressuring firms to take responsibility for the environmental and social impact of all activities linked with their products, not just those undertaken in house. The increasing fragmentation of production and deepening of outsourcing and offshoring, poses significant challenges in terms of ensuring sustainable production and consumption systems.

Key actors of such global value chains (GVCs) are multinational enterprises (MNEs) located in both developed and emerging economies, whose role in supporting the development of responsible production networks is far from resolved. While cases are reported in which MNEs play an active role in spurring initiatives that address environmental degradation and human rights violations, contrary evidence suggests such outcomes are not necessarily widespread or easy to achieve, pointing for example for the need to strengthening counter powers based on civil society and/or governments. Indeed, mounting academic and policy literature indicates that participation in global production networks has the potential to exacerbate vulnerability and degeneration of local social and environmental conditions, pointing to the need to strengthen counter powers based on civil society and/or governments.

Extensive research on global production networks (GPNs) and global value chains (GVCs) has helped significantly to move beyond nation-state centric perspectives of trade, to account for the key role played by MNEs, governance relationships between value chain actors and implications for economic, social and environmental improvements. In parallel, the International Business (IB) literature has provided key insights into the internal functioning of MNEs, particularly relating to outsourced location and investment decisions, with more critical strands exploring the social and

environmental implications of MNE business strategies and sourcing practices.. Yet the challenge of articulating economic rationales with social and environmental outcomes remains poorly understood.

Against this empirical and conceptual backdrop, this panel seeks to provide critical reflections on, and better understanding of, why, how and under which circumstances MNEs may engage in mitigating or improving social and environmental outcomes beyond the search for profits and legitimacy within the institutional settings in which they operate – in a context characterized by increasing pervasiveness of GVCs and concentration of resources amongst fewer and larger MNEs.

In particular, we welcome papers focused on:

- The circumstances under which incorporation into global value chains can lead to beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes, or when the achievement of two of the three pillars of sustainability could indeed lead to the degradation of the third;
- Exploring tensions and contradictions involved in promoting responsible forms of management in GVCs and the trade-offs between the three pillars of sustainability;
- How institutional innovation within and around MNEs could support the development of responsible production networks;
- Highlighting challenges and proposing best-practices for how MNEs can implement greater transparency and accountability in GVCs;
- Understanding intra-firm, inter-firm and broader network features that might support the promotion of social justice, human rights, environmental footprint reduction;
- Exploring the role and relevance of geographical, sectoral and institutional dynamics in supporting the development of responsible global value chains;
- The outcomes of legal and voluntary instruments or combinations between the two in improving social and environmental conditions in GVCs;
- How interaction with civil society and state actors might produce improvements in the social responsibility strategies of MNEs.

With a view to encourage multidisciplinary debate and reflection on the above topics, we welcome contributions bridging literatures on international business; global value chains; global production networks; corporate social responsibility (CSR) and irresponsibility (CSI); and labour issues in the context of GVCs/GPNs. We are also open to both theoretical and empirical papers involving developed or developing countries, with a focus on firms or other organizations, territories or industries.

Deadline for sending in the abstract to the proponents of the panel: 28th January 2017