

Organizing across the supply chain - Enlightening responsible forms of organizing

Convenors

Nora Lohmeyer, Freie Universität Berlin, nora.lohmeyer@fu-berlin.de

Juliane Reinecke, King's College London, juliane.reinecke@kcl.ac.uk

Jette Steen Knudsen, Tufts University, jette.knudsen@tufts.edu

This subtheme seeks to enlighten different forms of organizing across the supply chain, paying particular attention to socially and environmentally responsible forms of organizing. Global supply chains are today's dominant form of production—yet they are related to a number of social and environmental challenges, such as substandard working conditions and environmental damage. These issues are particularly difficult to address in global supply chains, given the lack of legally binding global frameworks, the many and varied actors involved as well as their dispersed geographical reach and different institutional contexts (Distelhorst, Locke, Pal & Samel, 2015; Frenkel, 2001; Locke, 2013). How can we improve our understanding of the prospects and difficulties of organizing social and environmental standards across the supply chain? This question can be explored at different levels.

The organization of global supply chains points to different *modes of governance* pertaining to social and environmental standards. These include private, public and civic forms of regulation as well as their interplay (Fransen & Burgoon, 2017; Levy, Reinecke & Manning, 2017). While private forms of regulation based on single firms or corporate interest representation emphasize efficiency and minimum standards, wider stakeholder forms of regulation that include NGOs and unions are designed to limit corporate power and realize broader values. New institutional innovations such as the Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh in the global garment supply chain may combine various modes of governance (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2017). Yet, the trade-offs involved in such novel constructions remain to be systematically studied and evaluated (Alamgir & Banerjee, 2018).

Global supply chains span different *geographies and organizational fields and respective institutional contexts*. However, the structure of these supply chains often favors some organizations at the expense of others. Whereas labor intensive production gets outsourced to countries in the so-called global South, shifting the most socially and environmentally damaging

steps of production to countries like Bangladesh, China or India, the most value-creating steps such as design, research and development and marketing often remain within the global North, leading to an unequal distribution of value. How can we analyze these inequalities from an organization theory perspective?

Global supply chains also involve *a variety of actors*—some of which have been largely overlooked by organization scholars. Whereas the practices and policies employed by lead firms to govern their supply chains have been in the focus of organization scholars (e.g. Helfen, Schüßler & Sydow, 2018), the role of governments (e.g. Knudsen, 2018), trade unions (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2017) or more remote actors such as sourcing agents (Soundararajan, Khan & Tarba, 2018) or (sub)-contractors—have gained less attention. Also, the variety of these actors and their interests implies that organizing across the supply chain is often accompanied by severe *inter- and intra-organizational contestations*, such as between lead firms and other stakeholders or between corporate social responsibility (CSR)- and procurement managers within lead firms. The resulting conflicts and contestations unfolding on the intra-organizational level are often overlooked.

We invite theoretical and empirical papers using both qualitative or quantitative research methods (or some combination of the two) that address modes of organizing across global supply chains by focusing on the following or related topics:

- relationships and potential trade-offs between different modes of governance across supply chains;
- tensions between and within organizations working across supply chains, between economic, environmental and social objectives, logics and actions as well as how these are interpreted, resolved (to varying degrees) and implemented;
- how technology and other innovations may contribute to organizing responsibly (or irresponsibly) across the supply chain;
- effects of CSR programs and practices on different stakeholder groups, such as workers in factories;
- the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives, certification, standards, international trade agreements and other modes of regulation in supporting CSR within supply chains;
- the role and impact of different ways to organize labor (i.e., unions or worker participation committees);

- appropriate theoretical lenses to analyze organizing across supply chains (e.g. Global Production Networks or Political CSR)

This is an interdisciplinary subtheme seeking to bring together organizational theorists, sociologists, political scientists, as well as industrial relations and development scholars.

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Nora Lohmeyer is postdoctoral researcher at the Management Department at Freie Universität Berlin (Germany). Her research revolves around the discourses and politics of corporate social responsibility, the privatization of regulation as well as the governance of labor standards in global garment supply chains. She is part of the Garment Supply Chain Governance Project (www.garmentgov.de).

Juliane Reinecke is Professor at King's College London (UK). She is a Fellow at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership and Research Fellow at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge. She is also a Visiting Professor in Sustainability at the University of Gothenburg. Her research interests include process perspectives on global governance, sustainability and temporality in organizations and global value chains. Juliane serves as Associate Editor of *Business Ethics Quarterly* and on the Editorial boards of *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies* and *Organization*.

Jette Steen Knudsen is Professor of Policy and International Business at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University (USA). Her research centers on the interface between government regulation and business actions with a particular focus on corporate social responsibility. Her new project examines possible relationships between improvements in foundational labor rights and the organization of production in the garment industry.