

Mini-Conference Proposal SASE 2017

Title: Transnational governance of global production in a new era of information sharing: prospects and challenges for labour, business, and the environment.

Organisers:

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In the present changing global economy, modes of business, work and working conditions are being increasingly shaped by advances in communication, data, and knowledge sharing through information technology. Global firms are able to outsource more and more of their production with the help of sophisticated software that make it easier to track the inputs and outputs in the management of vast global value chains. Also, workers in factories have created communication platforms to share information over working conditions and mobilize collectively. We are interested in understanding how these changes affect and influence modes of regulation and governance, as well as methods of resistance and activism within affected industries in global production systems.

Indeed, digitalization and data sharing can affect global production, transnational governance, and work in multiple and ambiguous ways. For example, demands (through regulation and campaigns) to increase transparency in global supply chains are leading to the creation of on-line tracking tools of materials and suppliers in global value chains. Branded firms are also increasingly tracking working hours in real-time of outsourced factories in distant locations. Trade unions and other civil society organizations are also using new communication technologies and social media in creative and strategic ways in their fight for better working conditions and higher environmental standards. Yet advances and innovation in communication and information sharing also pose threats as it opens avenues for new techniques of policing and controlling of workers, trade unions, and activists by the state and business alike. Such prospects and challenges remain underexplored and are not yet fully considered in our current theoretical frameworks and ideas of transnational governance, global value chains/global production networks and labour and environmental governance, institutional theories of regulation, and transnational business governance interactions.

We are interested in papers that examine empirically and theoretically changes in the modes of regulation and governance, and resistance and activism over labour and environmental conditions and what opportunities and limits and challenges they create for positive change.

The following are examples of research questions we are interested in:

- How do new ways of communicating and information-sharing affect modes of governance that involve business collaboration along supply chains, the role of the state, and activist networks?
- How do new forms of collaboration and information sharing help integrate and link different issues such as labour, environment, and business conduct in campaigns and modes of governance?
- How are new forms of transparency requirements in global supply chains enacted, resisted, and create opportunities for change by business, the state, and other actors? Similarly how do workers, trade unions, and civil society organisations harness these requirements for increased transparency in new forms of advocacy?
- How far do advances in digitalization and information technology create new possibilities for policing and control by the state and/or the private sector?