

Socially responsible public procurement: an exploration of the state in labour governance in global production networks

Call for Papers for submissions to a Special Issue

Editors:

Gale Raj-Reichert, Queen Mary University of London, School of Geography

Alex Hughes, Newcastle University, School of Geography, Politics, and Sociology

Adrian Smith, Queen Mary University of London, School of Geography

*Abstract submission deadline is **Friday 6 July 2018** to Gale Raj-Reichert at g.raj-reichert@qmul.ac.uk*

**Supported by the British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award held by Gale Raj-Reichert at Queen Mary University of London, School of Geography, and sponsored by the Centre on Labour and Global Production at Queen Mary University of London*

Global industries face significant challenges over labour violations and poor working conditions in developing countries. This is due to governance gaps in global production networks (GPNs) and how those gaps arise from commercial pressures in globalising and out-sourced systems of production. Such governance gaps include either inadequate regulations, deficient regulatory enforcement capacities in developing countries, or weak and unsustainable self-regulatory private mechanisms by firms and civil society actors. Moreover, inter and intra-firm power relationships in GPNs have often prevented sustainable labour governance practices. This call for papers is interested in understanding how and with what effect the state can transform these conditions through utilising public procurement mechanisms to govern labour standards. The focus on public governance to shape labour conditions through socially responsible public procurement has been under-explored in the literature on globally fragmented industries. It is critical to address this gap in research particularly in the context of the 2014 amendments to the European Union (EU) Directive on Public Procurement which allows clauses on social and labour standards in procurement contracts by EU members states. Similar engagements by regulatory authorities at various scales may be occurring in other parts of the world.

The possibilities of socially responsible public procurement raise important questions around how this governance tool affects labour governance in GPNs. For example, can it be harnessed as an effective mechanism to improve working conditions? What might the challenges be in bringing about effective change? To consider this requires an examination and conceptualisation of the state as a particular type of governance actor in GPNs. In this regard, we are interested in socially responsible public procurement practices across the local, national, and regional scales in the EU. We consider the EU occupying a hybrid form of a regulator-buyer governance actor in the GPN. This is because while it is able to set market access standards with cross-border affects globally, the EU is also a large buyer which has the ability to exercise economic coercion via a new set of market entry barriers through social clauses and labour standards in procurement contracts.

Within this context, we would like to invite abstracts for contributions to a Special Issue on *Socially responsible public procurement: an exploration of the state in labour governance in global production networks*. We are interested in an inter-disciplinary set of papers (from economic/political geography, business, law, sociology, and political science) which speak to the role, engagement, and powers of the state in socially responsible public procurement in globally fragmented industries. While the focus is on the EU we also welcome papers which focus on other countries including comparative analyses. Depending on the papers received, we will target Environment and Planning A, Global Networks, Review of International Political Economy, or Regulation and Governance for the Special Issue.

Authors of abstracts which are accepted will submit a draft full paper in early November. Authors will be invited to attend a launch event and authors workshop in late November (date to be confirmed) funded by the British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award (transport and accommodation will be funded by this project). Papers selected for the Special Issue will be reviewed and commented on by the editors. Final papers will be submitted to the editors in early February and a final authors workshop will be held in late February 2019. Papers will be submitted to the journal by end March 2019.