

Central European University
Equality and Social Justice Research Group

Global Markets and Social Justice

Brown bag lunch seminar

Corporate Social Responsibility and Workplace Justice: Opportunities for international bargaining or threats to nation rights?

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Over the past thirty years, economic political and technological factors have fundamentally changed how goods are designed, produced and consumed. The social sciences are awash with accounts of how this production regime has re-set the clock in industrial relations, decreasing trade union density and power, incorporating cheap, often poorly organized and unregulated labor into vast global value chains. In certain sectors corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved as a form of private labor regulation system running parallel to, and interacting with, public systems of regulation. The power of the private sector and the decline of the state as regulator is often over-hyped; national industrial relations institutions still play a more important role in determining workers' rights and standards. However, the growing prominence of CSR as a mode of regulation means that working standards and rights are increasingly being influenced by unilateral corporate decisions. Furthermore, while in many cases CSR appears to be having a positive impact on labor standards, labor *rights*, specifically the right to unionize and collectively bargain, are often ignored by private sector self regulation. This paper will explore the emergence and role of private labor regulation, and some implications it holds for trade unions, the traditional means of acquiring workplace justice. It will also examine the notion of social justice within supply chains compared to social justice within national boundaries.

Labor and Environmental Regulation in the Global Electronic Industry: The Promise of Private-Public Institutional Complementarities

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The fragmentation and geographic dispersion of production represents one of the hallmarks of the current wave of globalization. Global production networks that connect large brand corporations from advanced, industrialized societies with their suppliers located in emerging economies, present a set of challenges for workers and communities from around the world. Greater exposure to the exploitative forces of global markets, in the context of deficient national regulation, often result in precarious working and environmental conditions including low pay, extensive overtime, abusive treatment, inadequate use of hazardous substances, etc. My research examines the implementation and effectiveness of one type of institutional response that was adopted to address these concerns: private regulation by large brand corporations. I use the electronics industry in Eastern Europe as the empirical window to investigate the complementary interactions across private, corporate and public, state regulation to provide social protection to one of the most vulnerable group of workers, temporary agency workers.

Time: 28 November, 2011, 13.00 PM

Location: Central European University, Faculty Tower, Room 708