

# Review of International Political Economy

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrip20>


## The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions

**Genevieve LeBaron & Jane Lister**

To cite this article: Genevieve LeBaron & Jane Lister (2021): The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions, Review of International Political Economy, DOI: [10.1080/09692290.2021.1956993](https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2021.1956993)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2021.1956993>




View supplementary material 



Published online: 03 Aug 2021.




Submit your article to this journal 



Article views: 441



View related articles 



View Crossmark data 



# The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions

Genevieve LeBaron<sup>a</sup>  and Jane Lister<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; <sup>b</sup>Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

## ABSTRACT

Within the international political economy (IPE) literature on global supply chains, there is growing debate about the effectiveness of private global supply chain solutions to address social and environmental problems. Most scholarship takes supply chain solutions at face value, investigating the circumstances under which they are effective, lacking, and how effectiveness could be incrementally improved. These studies have helpfully investigated operational and procedural issues associated with private governance and relationships between stakeholders in standard-setting processes. But the literature often loses sight of broader and more fundamental questions about whether or not private governance initiatives are actually working to solve the problems they've been established to address, like pollution, modern slavery, and global North and South inequalities. In this introduction to the Review of International Political Economy special issue on the hidden costs of global supply chains, we analyse key trends in the effectiveness of private governance solutions, drawing on our literature review of 290 academic journal articles and contributions within this collection. We argue that not only are global supply chain solutions falling short when it comes to many of the indicators that matter most, but they come with hidden costs – including unintended consequences, perverse effects, and unacknowledged impacts.

## KEYWORDS

CSR; global supply chains; private governance; globalisation; environment; labour

## Introduction

Initiatives to address the social and environmental costs of global supply chains have exploded over the last two decades. In the face of growing world-wide public and policymaker concern about problems such as forced labour, climate change, and biodiversity loss, companies and civil society groups have engineered an armoury of global supply chain solutions to improve business practices. These include: single firm corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives like eco-efficiency measures and supplier codes of conduct; industry-wide programs such as the Carbon Disclosure project and the Fair Labor Association; and various forms

**CONTACT** Jane Lister  [jane.lister@ubc.ca](mailto:jane.lister@ubc.ca)

 Supplemental data for this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2021.1956993>.

© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) between industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs).

A vast interdisciplinary literature examines and extolls the positive benefits of global supply chain solutions. Diving deep into the minutia and nuances of these programs, business and management scholars analyse the incremental positive gains achieved by improved toolkits, projects, and partnerships. They report on the upside business profit and ‘shared value’ generated through these solutions (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and stress the potential for positive on-the-ground improvements (Smith et al., 2019). In the absence of a ‘world government’, scholars argue, global supply chain solutions fill a crucial policy void (Cashore et al., 2004; Levy & Newell, 2004). Most researchers acknowledge that supply chain solutions aren’t perfect, but many assume these can be nudged towards incremental effectiveness and improved performance over time.

In this article, and indeed, in the special issue of *Review of International Political Economy* (RIPE) that we introduce within it, we contend that the prevailing optimism surrounding global supply chain solutions is demonstrably unwarranted. First, there is sparse and highly uneven evidence confirming the effectiveness of such solutions in tackling social and environmental problems. But even more importantly, the dissection of the governance of the global economy into disjointed, privately run, largely unenforceable supply chain-based solutions in fact, generates deeper costs: namely, the hidden cost that ‘solutions’ are entrenching rather than transforming the underlying drivers of labour and environmental problems and skewing perceptions of those problems and the progress being made (or not) towards solving them. The consequence is assured governance failure as the very dynamics worsening labour and environmental problems over the past several decades deepen, not only unhindered by the explosion of supply chain solutions, but actually enabled through them.

The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions to workers, communities and the planet (and to achieving truly effective governance mechanisms for their protection and welfare) are a blind spot for large swathes of scholarship on supply chain governance. Often, these lie beyond the scope conditions of individual studies, or are obscured by the metrics used to assess progress, which tend to mirror measures of effectiveness defined within the solutions themselves. While no doubt, not every study can be about everything at the same time, the consistent neglect of hidden costs within the literature dedicated to global supply chain solutions is important for both analytic and normative reasons. The contributions to this RIPE special issue highlight the need to integrate investigations of hidden costs and to widen the lens to so as to bring into view the dark sides of the rise and reliance on supply chain solutions more broadly as the key tool for governing the global production system.

We argue that the rise of global supply chain solutions has been accompanied by three key types of hidden cost. First, individual supply chain solutions come with hidden costs that play out from the micro-level of individual companies and CSR initiatives. High-paid consultants and NGOs develop solutions to address problems like child labour or chemical waste in supply chains – usually of one company, region or sector – and then enforce them using private tools like ethical audits (Auld, 2014; Fransen, 2012; Fransen & Burgoon, 2012). Social auditors and NGOs commissioned by companies write reports extolling the progress and benefits

of projects and programs, citing improvement across key performance indicators and metrics. But these activities can serve to distract from the root cause drivers, such as the high volume-low-cost business model, and can displace problems beyond the scope of individual solutions. For instance, ethical auditing can have the unintended consequence of reinforcing status quo commercial dynamics, while driving new problems, such as pushing child or forced labour deeper into the sub-tiers of global supply chains or prompting suppliers to lay off workers as they seek to recover the costs of expensive environmental certification (LeBaron et al., 2017; LeBaron & Lister, 2015). Indeed, supply chain solutions can lead to improvements across one set of indicators but spur new problems beyond the bounds of that initiative or set of metrics; for instance, an initiative to eliminate child labour from cocoa production can inadvertently increase it in artisanal mining, and environmental initiatives can carry adverse social consequences and vice versa.

Second, global supply chain solutions come with underlying hidden costs at the institutional meso-level. As multi-national corporations (MNCs) – and the NGOs, consultants, development finance institutions, international organisation bodies, and others paid to help them as implementation partners – come together to tackle challenges, these efforts may come with unacknowledged costs and unintended consequences for certain stakeholders, municipalities and states, and populations, reinforcing problems and crowding out potentially stronger direct regulatory enforcement. For instance, with the support of the World Bank, a large corporation might divest itself of plantations where labour abuse is a known problem, championing the creation of a new sustainable ‘worker-shareholder’ model, as Tata Group did through the International Finance Corporation’s equity investment of \$7.8 million in Assam’s tea sector a decade ago. Yet, while the World Bank and tea companies at the top of supply chains extoll the benefits, opportunities, and better lives enjoyed by tea communities as a result of this project, workers and unions contend this ‘solution’ has inadvertently stabilised and enabled business models configured around forced labour, coerced vulnerable and impoverished workers into buying shares without proper information about the risks of investment, and reinforced a highly unequal development model grounded in colonialism and racism (LeBaron, 2018, 2020; see also Ponte, 2008). Other examples of meso-level hidden costs include that industry-wide CSR programs may: facilitate the erosion of state-based labour or environmental inspection or support for state action (Bartley, 2018; Amengual & Bartley, forthcoming); chip away at state sovereignty (Constance & Bonanno, 2000; Vandergeest & Unno, 2012); diminish public pressure for regulating firm behaviour abroad (Kolcava et al., 2021); hollow out support for public assistance and welfare provisioning (Burgoon & Fransen, 2017); and ‘managerialize’ law enforcement such that ineffective symbolic structures become associated with legal compliance (Monciardini et al., 2021). This regulatory ‘crowding out’ is often fuelled by governments, who enable and at times even directly fund supply chain solutions, as they’ve whittled away their own environmental and social standards regulation and enforcement capacities and channel resources into voluntary market-based forms of regulation.

Finally, and most importantly, global supply chain solutions generate macro-level hidden costs. Namely, that global supply chain solutions fuel the systemic problems they purport to correct by stabilizing, distracting from, and leaving unchallenged dynamics that are driving environmental and social damage in the

first place. For instance, they charge corporate power and growth, reinforce a regulatory paradigm that privileges the interests of business and the wealthy, and stabilize the offshoring and outsourcing business models of contemporary capitalism (Milberg & Winkler, 2013; Peck, 2017; Soederberg, 2010; Urry, 2014). As corporations, NGOs and IOs proliferate solutions at the micro and meso-levels that are carefully designed *not* to disrupt the status quo of business models and supply chains (whose commercial dynamics are hard-wired to take advantage of social and environmental ‘externalities’), supply chain solutions are actually entrenching and enabling systemic drivers. For instance, eco- solutions enhance the rising power of big business and its capacity to destroy the planet (Dauvergne, 2016, 2018) while MSIs to address food security fuel perceptions that brand companies control conditions within agricultural supply chains, while distracting from the power actually accruing to financial actors to pry open new arenas for accumulation (Clapp & Isakson, 2018). Although the proliferation of supply chain solutions gives consumers, the public, and policymakers the impression that social and environmental problems are being addressed, more often than not, supply chain solutions reinforce and legitimise rather than challenge corporations. As such, they are empowering the very actors perpetrating large swathes of social and environmental damage.

As we discuss further below in relation to our review of 290 studies of the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions, these solutions often fall short even on their own terms because they almost never press upon the features of supply chains that are well-documented to trigger adverse consequences for environments, workers, and local communities. For instance, they do little to challenge low retail prices made possible by MNCs sourcing below the costs of production, which make it impossible for suppliers to pay their workers minimum wage (Anner, 2020; Vaughan-Whitehead & Caro, 2017). Nor, do these ‘solutions’ address power imbalances between MNCs and their suppliers, which leave producers little scope to negotiate the commercial conditions they need to meet social and environmental standards (Bartley, 2018; Fridell, 2007; LeBaron, 2020). They certainly do not disrupt the trend of corporate consolidation and monopolisation that continually lowers the floor for labour and environmental standards across entire sectors (Clapp, 2019; Khan, 2017). And only rarely do they meaningfully challenge the forms of gender oppression and gender-based violence that are used to subsidize profits (Barrientos, 2019; Dunaway, 2014) or ongoing colonial-era power relations of extractivism that bolster bottom lines across several industries (Banerjee, 2008; Bhambra, 2021). Indeed, global supply chain solutions almost never tackle the root causes of social and environmental problems, such as: the mass production, consumption, and disposal of cheap and low-quality goods; the shareholder primacy model (which puts pressure on businesses to produce short-term gains for shareholders); or even basic commercial dynamics like discount pricing and outsourcing (Murcia et al., 2021).

Our argument is not that supply chain solutions are completely ineffective. Indeed, as our literature review below makes clear, some supply chain solutions have yielded incremental successes and positive improvements. Rather, our point is that these small successes can conceal and distract from the much larger costs and trade-offs taking place at different scales, which in turn become harder to analyse and measure amidst the proliferation of solutions. For instance, the ethical audit

regime is facilitating corporate obfuscation of bad practices (LeBaron & Lister, 2015), fair trade certification is misleading consumers about the prevalence and nature of forced labour (LeBaron, 2020), and corporate worker feedback technologies are facilitating corporate obfuscation of worker abuse and exploitation, while creating the impression amongst policymakers and consumers that illegal practices are being addressed (Rende Taylor & Shih, 2019). Indeed, while some supply chain solutions *are* yielding incremental successes, these do not cancel out the costs; however, this fragmented mode and flurry of governance efforts makes it challenging for scholars, consumers, and policymakers to see the full picture.

By discussing hidden costs, we do not mean to suggest that global environmental impacts and labour abuses – or the forms of global production, corporate and market regulation, and inequality that give rise to them – are completely invisible or unanticipated. Critical and international political economy (IPE) scholarship has a well-developed literature probing the harms and dangers of corporate-led governance (Clapp, 1998; Cutler et al., 1999; Hatanaka & Busch, 2008; Mayer et al., 2017; Soederberg, 2010), much of which has been published in previous issues of RIPE. However, the insights of this literature have been largely overlooked within the vast body of scholarship focused on studying global value chains and the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions; these literatures often overlook costs and focus narrowly on technical questions, including evaluations of effectiveness that measure against the stated aims and objectives of supply chain solutions and take these at face value. Indeed, there is an entire interdisciplinary literature (anchored in business and management studies and also encompassing research within the disciplines of political science, management and business studies, geography, sociology, anthropology, development studies, amongst others) dedicated to understanding the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions, which has been largely siloed from scholarship in IPE. The literature on global value, commodity, and supply chains (cf. Bair, 2008; Gereffi et al., 2005; Selwyn, 2019) that sits loosely within IPE is often insular, focused on dynamics within firms and intrinsic to supply chains and overlooking the broader structural and big-picture political economy dynamics, including IPE debates about capitalism, corporate power and the governance of these, and the role of supply chain solutions within such dynamics.

In this article and special issue, we provide a bridge between supply chain scholarship and broader IPE literatures, such as on: wealth creation, corporate ownership, and power (Babic et al., 2017; Clapp, 2018, 2019; Heemskerk & Takes, 2016; Seabrooke & Wigan, 2017; Strange, 1996); financialization and the failure of corporate governance (Admati, 2017); NGOs and their role in either propping up or disrupting neoliberal economic policies and capitalism (Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014; Kamat, 2004); legitimacy and authority in non-state governance (Bernstein, 2011; Brassett & Tsingou, 2011; Cutler, 2003; Keohane, 2011; Strange, 1996); and expertise, and its impact on processes of policy change (Hay, 2008; Hearson, 2018). Our intuition is that global supply chain solutions are playing a far more significant and constitutive role in shaping the corporate-led global economy than is typically realised, and that it is therefore an area that could benefit from research by IPE scholars who haven't researched CSR or supply chain solutions in the past.

Drawing on the critical and international political economy insights, we analyse scholarship on the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions and explain how the contributions to this SI take both forward. As we describe in greater detail

below, to this end, we conducted a literature review in which we analysed and coded 290 academic journal articles that provide evidence about the effectiveness of supply chain solutions in relation to social and environmental problems. We found that across this literature, scholarship tends to approach supply chain solutions at face value, rarely analysing the broader dynamics or consequences associated with their rise. Yet, as this special issue and introduction point out, when global supply chain solutions are studied in technocratic ways with narrow measures of effectiveness, the full costs of supply chain solutions – to the public good, to workers and to the planet – tend to be hidden and obscured.

Capturing the hidden costs of diverse supply chain solutions across social and environmental arenas within the global economy is a massive and multi-faceted task, and indeed, isn't possible within a single special issue, and especially within its brief introduction. With this article, we hope to establish the importance of the topic of hidden costs for IPE questions and debates around CSR, global supply chains, and beyond. As we elaborate below, the articles within our special issue contribute to IPE scholarship in varied ways, but are united in their exploration of three key questions: 1) How well are global supply chain solutions 'working' to solve social and environmental problems, across micro, meso and macro scales, where effectiveness is defined according to the solution's stated aims?; 2) What are the hidden costs to workers, communities and the environment (and the mechanisms to effectively govern their protection and welfare) of global supply chain solutions?; and 3) Beyond the confines of individual solutions and initiatives, what are the broader drivers and consequences of the turn to global supply chain solutions for the global economy, IPE theory, and global governance? Taken together, our special issue sees as its mission to describe the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions and lay out how they can – and should – be studied in future IPE research.

## **The lacking effectiveness of global supply chain solutions**

Hundreds of global supply chain solutions have emerged over the last three decades, and these continue to proliferate rapidly. According to *The Guardian*, there are, for instance, now over 460 ethical and sustainability labels covering food and beverage packaging alone (Subramanian, 2019). Within this introduction and SI, we define global supply chain solutions as initiatives that purport to address social and environmental problems linked to production practices, or communicate, implement, verify or shape social and environmental standards within global supply chains. Global supply chain solutions are led by non-state actors and center around privately-set standards, but may still have some form of state or IO involvement. For instance, the International Organization for Migration's ethical recruitment certification scheme (IRIS) involves private audit companies, recruiters, and certification standards, but receives funding from the Swiss, Australian, Canadian, and Swedish governments alongside private sector donations.<sup>1</sup> A key differentiating factor between global supply chain solutions and 'traditional' forms of labour and environmental governance is that 'solutions' tend to be voluntary while the latter tend to be mandatory, though occasionally solutions incorporate legally binding components.



Global supply chain solutions have emerged as part of broader trends and changes in the governance of global production over recent decades, including the privatisation of transnational governance (Cutler et al., 1999). They have been driven by MNCs, as part of their quest to stave off criticism and co-opt dissent (Dauvergne & Lister, 2013) as well as by NGOs and consultants who have been increasingly willing to collaborate with companies towards designing and implementing initiatives to improve practices and impacts associated with global supply chains (Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014); but as noted, global supply chain solutions sometimes involve or are funded through government actors and agencies, not least through the involvement of IOs representing governments. They can also involve auditing, assurance, and advisory firms (e.g. the Big Four), investors, international financial institutions, amongst other actors. Global supply chain solutions can be contrasted against traditional state-based efforts to regulate and improve business practices in global supply chains, such as through anti-bribery legislation or ‘home-state’ legislation that requires mandatory changes to company behaviour or production practices. However, as Genevieve LeBaron and Andreas Rümke point out, such legislation can also give rise to supply chain solutions (LeBaron & Rümke, 2019; see also Cutler & Lark, 2020), and the interactions between global supply chain solutions and state regulation and power are increasingly complex.

As is clear even from the diversity of terminology used within articles in this SI, there are longstanding conceptual debates amongst scholars of global supply chain solutions, including differences in how private authority, legitimacy, and regulation is understood, the terminology used to describe these phenomena, and how scholars understand the interactions between public and private supply chain governance. We do not hope or attempt to settle these differences here, but rather use global supply chain solutions as an umbrella concept that encapsulates the full range of initiatives that purport to address social and environmental problems in, associated with, or directly caused by corporations and supply chains. Common features of global supply chain solutions are that: they generally present corporations as neutral actors, capable of solving labour and environmental problems (as opposed to a main cause of them, as might be the case with activist campaigns); they tend to be built around rules and standards set by businesses and civil society, though sometimes also involve reference to public regulations (e.g. minimum wage or worker health and safety laws); and they frequently have weak enforcement mechanisms and accountability systems. Another key feature that cuts across diverse global supply chain solutions is that they tend to take for granted the current configuration of global production and define their scope in ways that leave fundamental global governance issues unchallenged: the soaring power, dominance, consolidation, and profitability of transnational corporations (Fichtner & Heemskerk, 2018; Seabrooke & Wigan, 2017); North-South inequalities anchored in colonialism and racial politics (Singh, 2021; Tilley, 2020); and the neoliberal dynamics of ‘outsourced governance’ (Mayer & Phillips, 2017). Rather, the ‘solutions’ are similar in how they carefully define the scope of the problem in limited ways that allow corporations to solve them. In defining and communicating (‘best practice’) solutions in ways that leave broader political economy dynamics unchecked, global supply chain solutions create a flurry of activity and a body of often misleading, industry-generated evidence for consumers and policymakers that problems are being tackled, while simultaneously reinforcing the systems of power,



profits, and corporate dominance ultimately driving these problems. As Bobby Banerjee (2008, p. 51) has argued, these solutions (and CSR more broadly) are 'intended to legitimize and consolidate the power of large corporations'.

Supply chain solutions emerge at company and industry levels and within multi-stakeholder forums; have wide coverage from upstream commodities (e.g. minerals, timber, soy and oil palm) to downstream products (e.g. electronics, furniture and chocolate); and they tend to bifurcate across social and environmental issues (Auld et al., 2008). Table 1 describes the key categories of private global supply chain solutions and the key governance actors involved.

*Company-level solutions* consist of firm-level sustainability efforts directed at identifying and improving environmental and social issues. These include supply chain tracing, risk assessments, supplier codes of conduct, eco-efficiency measures, auditing and reporting programs, some of which increasingly rely on AI to predict and map problems like forced labour or environmental risk in supply chains (see Dauvergne, 2020). Besides government regulators and activist organizations, MNC buyers and sellers such as Cargill, Walmart and Apple are major governance actors with respect to company-level supply chain solutions given their large global economic leverage. *Industry-wide supply chain solutions* consist of collaborative programs initiated by groups of companies within and across economic sectors. These include guidelines, codes and standards addressing the environmental and social performance of the sector so as to reduce financial risks, improve sector reputation and sustain business value and profitability. Lead firms and industry associations are often at the helm of designing and coordinating these supply chain solutions. *Multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs)* are supply chain solutions that involve industry, NGO actors, IOs and others working together to define private transnational 'rules', typically separate from direct state engagement (though states occasionally do play a role in these). MSIs include three specific types: *enforcement* MSIs that prescribe and audit transnational rules (e.g. ethical certification programs such as Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance); *instructional* MSIs that provide procedural guidance on management practice (e.g. Global Compact, Global Reporting Initiative), and *partnership* MSIs between corporations and NGOs designed to fix certain problems, such as the Coca Cola and Greenpeace collaboration to develop natural refrigerants.

As mentioned, a voluminous literature has emerged to study these private global supply chain solutions, including past assessments of prospects and limits such as Vogel (2010) and Locke (2013) and recent critical examinations of governance effectiveness (Bartley, 2018; Bloomfield & Schleifer, 2017; DeFries et al., 2017; Oya et al., 2018; van der Ven et al., 2018). Like the solutions themselves, this literature is highly fragmented, with studies tending to focus on *either* environmental or social issues, often in relation to just one or a small number of metrics (e.g. living wages), one initiative (e.g. Fairtrade certification), or to one local or national setting. While this is understandable given the challenges of undertaking rigorous analysis of supply chain solutions amidst high barriers to access – notably, that the data generated through them tends to be private and MNCs and other organizations are hesitant to share it – it is often hard to sustain a focus on the big picture. Significantly, this literature sprawls across academic disciplines, from anthropology to management studies, adding to the difficulty of grasping patterns and seeing key trends.

**Table 1.** Categories of global supply chain solutions.

	Company-level	Industry-led	Multi-stakeholder initiatives		
			Instructional	Enforcement	Partnerships
Environmental examples	Closed loop eco-efficiency (LCA; materials, energy and waste reduction); codes of conduct; audits; and reporting	Carbon Disclosure Project; Consumer Goods Forum; Sustainable Apparel Coalition; GlobalGap; ISEAL Alliance	Global Compact, GRI, EITI, IFOAM, ISO, RSPO, RTRS, BCI	FSC, MSC, Rainforest Alliance, 4C, UTZ, Kimberley Process, EITI	Walmart-EDF re: chemicals; Coke-Greenpeace re: natural refrigerants
Labour examples	Codes of conduct (e.g. fair wage, work hours, whistle blower protection); audits; and reporting	FLA; WRAP; SA8000; RBA; BSCI; ICS; APSCA; SMETA, ETI.	Ethical Tea Partnership; ACT; International Labour Organization Better Work programme	Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, BES 6002.	
Key governance actors	Corporations Consulting/audit firms NGOs Government regulators organisations; consultants; certification organisations; trade unions; United Nations agencies	Industry Associations Voluntary company self-reporting NGOs  Certification standard-setting organizations; audit and certification bodies; businesses who self-report information; private foundations; consultants; NGOs. Private auditing companies (and their subcontractors); standard-setting and audit protocol organizations; consultants	Industry associations; corporations; NGOs; government  Corporations NGOs		

Acronyms: 4C: compliant coffee code of conduct; ACT: action on living wages agreement; APSCA: association of professional social compliance auditors; BCI: better cotton initiative; BES 6002: ethical labour sourcing standard; BSCI: business social compliance initiative; EDF: environmental defense fund ; EITI: extractive industries transparency initiative; ETI: ethical trading initiative; FSC: forest stewardship council; FLA: fair labour association; GRI: global reporting initiative; ICS: initiative clause sociale; IFOAM: international federation of organic agriculture movements; ISEAL: international social and environmental accreditation and labelling alliance; ISO: international organization for standardization; LCA: life cycle assessment; MSC: marine stewardship council; NGO: non-governmental organization; RBA: responsible business alliance; RSPO: round-table on sustainable palm oil; RTRS: roundtable on responsible soy ; SA8000: social accountability 8000 standard; SMETA: Sedex members ethical trade audit; UTZ: sustainable farming certification standard; WRAP: worldwide responsible accredited production.

See International Trade Centre, 'Sustainability Standards Map' available online at: <https://sustainabilitymap.org/>.

Indeed, as the global governance of production has increasingly occurred through fragmented sector, product, and issue-based private initiatives, academic scholarship has mirrored this shift, with scholars zooming in on cases of individual initiatives and evaluating effectiveness in narrow and limited ways. There has been a tendency to measure effectiveness in terms of acceptance, design, and uptake (Auld & Renckens, 2017; Dauvergne & Lister, 2010; Schleifer, 2019) instead of outcome performance or on-the-ground effectiveness. No doubt, there is considerable merit in granular understandings and comparisons of the procedural input and output legitimacy effectiveness of CSR programs and certification schemes, rigorous evaluation across a narrow set of metrics, and seeking to understand why one may be more effective than another in relation to a particular issue or geographical context. But we worry that this approach sometimes leads the literature to lose sight of whether global supply chain solutions are actually working to solve environmental and social problems, both individually and collectively, as well as their broader consequences. Indeed, the rise of global supply chain solutions has had important analytic consequences for the ways in which trade, production, and the standards associated with these are understood and investigated, and studies – like the solutions themselves – often shy away from the metrics and dynamics that matter most in shaping social and environmental outcomes.

### ***Analysing the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions***

That said, while fragmented across several fields and dozens of journals, there is nevertheless a wide and growing body of scholarship that has probed the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions. To bring broader trends into view, we have conducted a review of this literature focused specifically on the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions in achieving environmental and social sustainability. Our review centers around English-language articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals over the period 1998–2019. To gather relevant research, our research team conducted searches on the Web of Science database of journal repositories using over thirty key terms such as ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘multi-stakeholder initiative’. Initially, our search yielded over 24,000 articles, which vastly sprawled the social sciences and science. We then narrowed down through search terms (e.g. Supply Chain, Multi-Stakeholder Initiative) and strings, targeting articles that specifically measured and discussed the effects of private governance schemes from disciplines across the social sciences. This located 1917 academic journal articles. This list was subjected to an initial review of titles to exclude articles that were clearly not relevant to our interests, such as anything that, from the title, clearly focused on financial performance rather than social and environmental effectiveness. This reduced the list to 346 articles, which were then reviewed more thoroughly with reference to the abstracts. After eliminating articles that, once reviewed, didn’t speak to the central themes of the literature review, this was reduced to a list of 290 articles that broadly address the effectiveness of a range of global supply chain solutions, including both their social and environmental impacts.<sup>2</sup>

We encountered three obstacles in the context of this review, which are worth briefly mentioning since they shape its contents, as well as our efforts to overcome them. In the first case, we found that the academic literature on supply chain

solutions is characterised by divergent, highly specialised terminology. Simply put, there is heavy usage of specialised jargon within the literature on global supply chain solutions and this jargon tends to vary across academic discipline. This means that, even in spite of our long list of search terms, some relevant works may not appear because of unique language that wasn't included within our searches. We sought to navigate and overcome this obstacle by adding new search terms as it became clear we were missing relevant literature that was framed using specialised terminology. In the second case, the literature's interdisciplinarity is a challenge. As mentioned, the literature relevant to our interests in this article is massive and sprawls across nearly every academic discipline (see, for example, Folke et al., 2019). As IPE scholars, we focused on the social science literature since we were best equipped to analyse it and because it contained the most relevant findings. Within the social sciences, we included a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives, while balancing considerations around capacity and upholding the manageability of the search. Finally, in targeting articles that specifically measured and discussed the effects of supply chain solutions, we tended to focus on empirically-driven findings to the expense of theoretically-oriented studies. Our primary interest was to excavate and assess patterns in the empirical evidence about the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions, but to date have mostly sat beyond the scope of core IPE debates.

After compiling our list of 290 academic articles, our research team then categorized, coded, and analysed these (see [Supplementary Material](#)). We analysed each study according to: the focus of the global supply chain solution (both in terms of specific region(s) and sector(s) encompassed within the study); the companies and solutions named (if any); the measure(s) of effectiveness used within the study; whether the study focused on environmental or social outcomes or both; the research approach and method; impact measures; and study results with respect to effectiveness (coding as 'positive', 'negative' and 'mixed'). 'Mixed' included situations where there was effectiveness across some indicators or for some stakeholders, but where this was accompanied by evidence of lacking effectiveness across other indicators or for other stakeholders included within the study. 'Positive' includes situations where there was unambiguous effectiveness across all criteria within the study. 'Negative' includes situations where there was unambiguous 'non-effectiveness' or worsening across all criteria within the study.

While there are potentially hundreds of observations about the effectiveness and hidden costs of global supply chain solutions that could surface from our analysis, here, we make five observations based on our review, which we consider especially relevant to this special issue's focus on the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions:

1. Optimism about the capacity of private global supply chain solutions to solve environmental and social problems is largely unwarranted; there is uneven, and across several key metrics, sparse hard evidence that private global supply chain solutions are working to address environmental and social problems.
2. The highest levels of effectiveness tend to be observed in relation to metrics and indicators that are low stakes rather than high stakes for social and environmental standards in supply chains.

3. Global supply chain solutions are expanding the role, scope, and power of private actors within the governance of global production, with unknown consequences.
4. Global supply chain solutions come with hidden costs to workers, communities and the environment, including unintended consequences, perverse effects, and unacknowledged impacts on societal protection and well-being.
5. Studies of global supply chain solutions are overwhelmingly skewed towards questions of design, uptake, and the reporting effectiveness of supply chain solutions, rather than on-the-ground effectiveness. And the literature on the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions is highly technical in its focus, treating supply chain initiatives as neutral, objective instruments that can be procedurally tweaked and nudged towards improved performance.

We explore these observations throughout the remainder of this article, and they feed into our typology below. The contributions within the rest of the special issue provide further analysis.

### ***Effectiveness for whom and to what end?***

Our review of the literature found that, even when effectiveness is defined in relation to the criteria put forward within global supply chain solutions (putting aside broader and more structural questions about effectiveness), there is patchy and insufficient evidence of supply chain solutions' effectiveness (Observation 1). Overall, the articles within our review break down into 146 study results with mixed evidence of effectiveness, 66 results with positive evidence of effectiveness, and 78 results with negative evidence of effectiveness. All three categories included studies that focused on the environmental issues only, social issues only, and both environmental and social issues. For instance, negative results were arrived at in 31 studies focused on social issues only, 21 studies focused on environmental issues only, and 22 studies that investigated both social and environmental effectiveness.

Examples of positive results include: improved uptake of (self-reported) suppliers' socially responsible practices among certain types of supply chain structures (Awaysheh & Klassen, 2010); firms' participation in certification schemes led to greater opportunity for conduct to be assessed by stakeholders (Auld & Gulbrandsen, 2010); and investors punishing companies for failure to comply with United Nations communications directives (Amer, 2018). Examples of negative results include: the failure of forest certification to improve environmental standards and a worsening of standards across key variables (Johansson & Lidestav, 2011); the deterioration of working conditions and decrease in average supplier rating over time within a garment supply chain in the face of company-level CSR efforts like code of conduct and social auditing (Locke et al., 2007); and the failure of ethical certification to raise income and livelihood standards over those of uncertified farmers in Ethiopia (Jena et al., 2012). Examples of mixed results include: evidence that a CSR-based employment scheme created limited 'hard' improvements in employment outcomes but some improvement in 'softer' employability skills (Walker et al., 2017); voluntary disclosure of information by companies with poor environmental records, but where that information is incomplete

and may not reflect companies' actual practices (Braam et al., 2016); and variation in certification scheme legitimacy amongst external stakeholders (Schleifer, 2019).

Within the positive results, we find some evidence that within the parameters of initiatives, progressive changes within a single company, issue area, or sector *are* occurring such as improved commitments, standards and implementation of clean energy and material efficiency and pollution-mitigation programs. However, we find that high levels of effectiveness are often observed in relation to indicators that are low-stake for those most affected by social and environmental problems. For instance, one study of how CSR impacts consumer attitudes towards firms found that charity events can improve corporate image (Sung & Lee, 2016). Another study found that CSR schemes can improve firm legitimacy (Husted et al., 2016). As well, many of these positive results – taken together, and viewed from the wide-angle lens of IPE – can also be seen as bad news for the planet and vulnerable workforces in that they tend to deepen and reinforce the status quo harms of prevailing business models and global production patterns.

Amongst the mixed results, we similarly find evidence of incremental improvements. We find consistent shortcomings with respect to the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions in relation to the highest-stake variables (Observation 2). On the social side, this includes, for instance, things like earnings/wages (Anner, 2012; Van Holt et al., 2016) and on the environmental side, things like actual emissions reductions (Belkhir et al., 2017; Haque & Ntim, 2018). With respect to some metrics, such as freedom of association, we find consistent evidence of ineffectiveness (Anner, 2012, 2017; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Egels-Zandén & Merk, 2014). Similarly on the environmental side, essential absolute measures such as the negative rebound effects of increased consumption from positive eco-efficiency measures are ignored (Dauvergne & Lister, 2010).

Taken together, our review unearths little evidence or cause for optimism that the rise and proliferation of global supply chain solutions is spurring meaningful progress towards solving problems like deforestation, plastic pollution, and poverty wages (Observation 1). The reality is, after over thirty years of global supply chain solutions, and efforts by Me4NCs and NGOs to improve them and achieve greater effectiveness, the studies within our literature review offer little evidence to suggest that global supply chain solutions are actually addressing the costs and harms produced within global supply chains. We propose a framework to grasp these uneven impacts of global supply chain solutions, differentiating between procedural and performance effectiveness (see Figure 1 and description below). The literature skews towards investigation of procedural impacts over performance impacts overall (Observation 5), with academic disciplines like economics, development studies, and environmental studies more interested in performance and disciplines like management and business more interested in procedural.

As mentioned, much of the literature captured in our review tends to be technical in its focus, treating supply chain initiatives as neutral, objective instruments that can be procedurally tweaked towards improved performance. The consequence of this narrow analytical lens is a critical gap in understanding that the failure of global supply chain solutions to effectively tackle environmental and social problems occurs in many instances *by design*, with important and often neglected consequences for stakeholders and the broader state of the global economy.

For instance, some ethical certification programs like Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance are designed to create loopholes around the most vulnerable workers in supply chains (e.g. hired day labour, or those who enter supply chains through informal labour subcontracting), rather than bring these to light (LeBaron, 2020). As well, imbued with corporate power and with industry actors leveraging strategic control over the design and scope of initiatives, many global supply chain solutions ignore causal drivers. This raises questions about the limits and analytic consequences of prevailing approaches to studying global supply chain solutions (Observation 5). This is an issue we return to in the conclusion, highlighting that questions about the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions that focus narrowly on whatever incremental gains may be made through individual initiatives fall critically short. As we argue below, there is a need to investigate how far and in what ways the ascendance of global supply chain solutions comes with hidden costs for workers, citizens, and the planet – as well as for scholarly investigation of production and trade, as studies tend to adopt effectiveness criteria and scope conditions heavily shaped by industry.

### ***Classification of impacts***

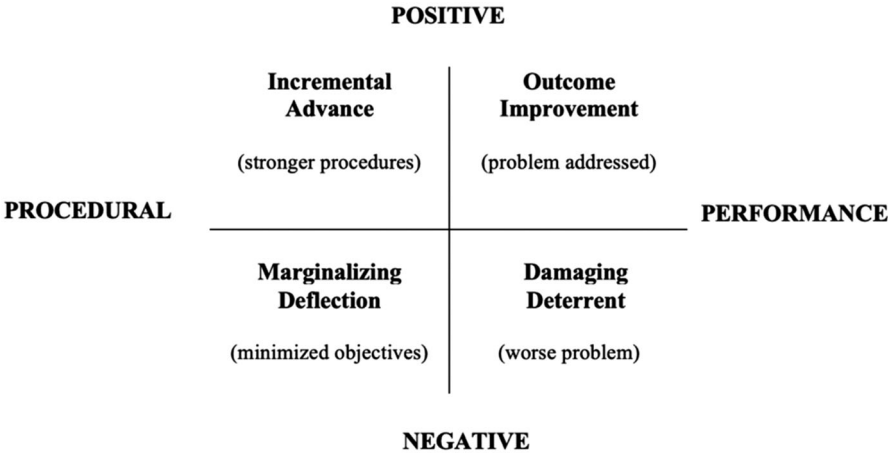
Supply chain solutions result in a range of impacts that are procedural or performance-related in nature, and positive or negative in consequence. The analytical challenge in terms of understanding the problem-solving effectiveness of these solutions we argue, is two-fold. First, the impacts of the initiatives are complex as they can be direct or indirect and dynamically interacting over time. Second, as we argue below, many positive impacts in fact, underlie and contribute to critical negative costs that are not necessarily invisible but rather, largely ‘hidden’, including unintended consequences, perverse effects, and unacknowledged outcomes. For example, an initiative to promote ethical recruitment might inadvertently lead to higher levels of indebtedness among vulnerable workers (as the costs of recruitment get pushed down the supply chain to the village level, which is beyond the scope of most initiatives) and deflect attention away from the results of unethical recruitment, often the use of trafficked labour by supplier firms.

Figure 1 provides a classification with examples of the types of impacts of supply chain solutions. Procedural refers to solutions that are managerial in nature – addressing operational practices as well as due process considerations. Performance concerns the impact of solutions on lessening the problem i.e. improving the state of the environment and labour conditions.

In an ideal governance model, supply chain solutions would fall in the upper right quadrant of positive performance improvement (problem resolution). Empirically, solutions have been mostly analyzed through a technical lens within the left quadrants of positive or negative incremental procedural progress (i.e. level of adoption, strength of targets and objectives, due process, etc.). Questions regarding actual performance outcome of the solutions (right quadrants) have been largely ignored. Mounting evidence of persistent and worsening global environmental change and poor labour conditions would seem to indicate that solutions are falling in the bottom right quadrant of negative performance effectiveness. It is this 4<sup>th</sup> quadrant paradox that our special issue is particularly interested to interrogate.



(a)



(b)

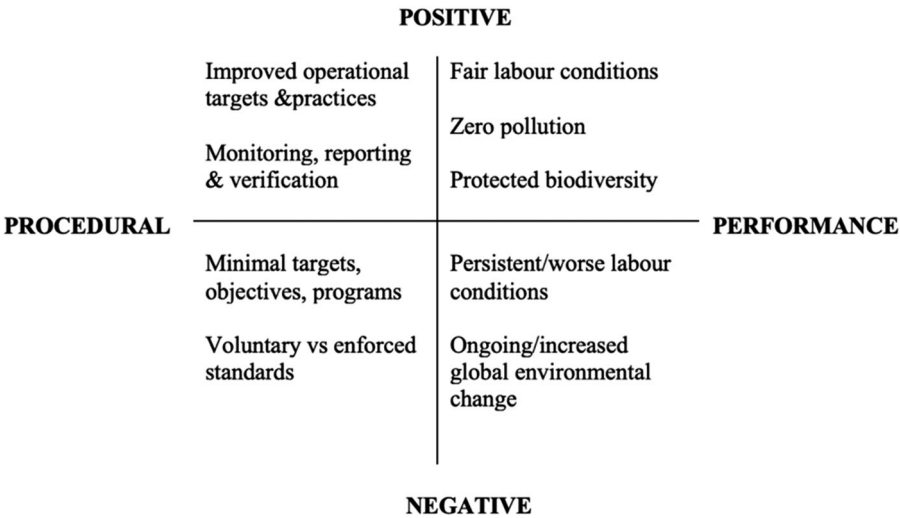


Figure 1. Classification of supply chain solutions impacts. a) Types of impacts. b) Examples

Simply put, the interlocking problems are that: many global supply chain solutions are ineffective, even on their own terms; scholarship on supply chain solutions has often downplayed this ineffectiveness by focusing on procedural rather than performance effectiveness and mirroring definitions of effectiveness set by the solutions themselves; and, that whether and to what extent global supply chain solutions either challenge or reinforce larger obstacles to the effective governance of social and environmental standards – like rising corporate power, tax evasion, or the rise of unaccountable intermediaries – tends to be completely out of focus,

both beyond the scope of ‘solutions’ themselves and of scholarship investigating their effectiveness.

## Hidden costs of global supply chain solutions

The hidden costs of global supply chain solutions encompass their unintended consequences, perverse effects, and unacknowledged impacts on workers, communities and the environment. As described in the Introduction, these form at micro, meso, and macro levels and are hidden beyond the boundaries of effectiveness criteria widely used by solutions themselves as well as scholarship, as exemplified by much of the research within our literature review. To date, there has been little investigation of the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions given the tendency to focus studies within the parameters of individual initiatives. To capture the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions within the global economy, we have developed a typology to parse and analyze the various hidden costs as they relate to specific supply chain solutions, and to assess why and how they occur at different levels (see Table 2).

As shown in Table 2, the interaction of hidden costs with supply chain solutions can be considered at three levels: 1) Micro-level hidden costs related to firm-level solutions; 2) Meso-level hidden costs related to industry-level solutions and their interactions with states, institutions, and IOs; and 3) Macro-level political economy hidden costs that reinforce the current capitalist paradigm and neoliberal self-regulatory assumptions at the root of social and environmental problems.

Overlooking these hidden costs, large swathes of scholarship have presented global supply chain solutions with greater optimism and less warnings attached than we feel is warranted. When these hidden costs are systematically examined, a pattern emerges that reveals the costs and trade-offs of global supply chain solutions overwhelmingly outweigh their benefits. Yet, the literature investigating global supply chain solutions has largely failed to take note of hidden cost dynamics at all.

Hidden costs carry major implications for assessments of the effectiveness, role, and value of global supply chain solutions. Not only do they underscore the need to investigate further the dark sides of global supply chain solutions and their *productive* rather than *passive* role in engineering the unequal dynamics of the global economy, but they beg investigation of what exactly global supply chain solutions are accomplishing for corporations, as they seek to expand their power and profit and evade more stringent forms of regulation on their activities.

## Contributions of this special issue

By analysing the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions across a range of geographic contexts and sectors, and through diverse theoretical lenses, this special issue aims to contribute new evidence and advance theoretical insights to better understand and act upon the adverse consequences of global supply chain solutions.

These unattended costs are important for IPE scholars to pay attention to. While the inner dynamics of global supply chains are not always considered central to IPE dynamics beyond supply chains, we argue that global supply chain solutions are helping to facilitate and engineer profound changes in the global economy.

**Table 2.** Typology of hidden costs of global supply chain solutions.

	Supply chain solutions	Type of hidden cost	Solutions as 'damaging deterrents' (see <a href="#">Figure 1</a> )
Micro (company or initiative level)	Metrics Certification Audits Reporting Technological efficiencies	Improvements that guard the business model status quo, deflecting attention from addressing the shift of problems along the supply chain and the underlying causal factors such as contracts, wages, etc.	Corporate sustainability audit programs resulting in privatization (vs increased transparency) of information of high public value.  Certification rewarding some aspects of company behaviour/parts of the supply chain while ignoring others  Auditing pushing illegal practice (eg. forced labour) deeper into the supply chain  Labour-focused supply chain initiative providing cover for firing unionised employees
Meso-level (state, international organisation (IO), or institution)	State, IO, and other institutional facilitation (enabling, endorsing, funding, mandating) of industry standards & MSI programs	Retreat of state monitoring & enforcement  Legitimation of neoliberal self-regulatory systems of corporate power	Certification and auditing privileging corporate power and deflecting/displacing stronger state-led agenda-setting, monitoring & enforcement of non-market values.  Certification designed to be a technical instrument aimed at procedural improvements but partial focus and coverage results in systemic avoidance of <i>the</i> high stakes questions, e.g. Does certification make people less poor? Does environmental auditing stop biodiversity loss? The more the question matters, the less supply chain solutions address it.
Macro-level (global capitalism)	Responsible investment & 'green economy' market transformations	Privileging of market profit and efficiency over non-market environment and social welfare values; reinforcing the growth of corporate power and social inequality within the current capitalist paradigm.	Green economy contradiction of increased growth on finite planet  Ethical consumerism crowding out citizen civic responsibility (voting) & empowerment (protests)  Forced labour endemic to global production systems

Although the rise and proliferation of global supply chain solutions may not actually solve problems like species extinctions and poverty wages, the trend *is* effective in reshaping power and governance dynamics.

The nature of world production has changed as a result of the widespread adoption of global supply chain solutions. It has helped corporations to position themselves as constructive citizens; as CSR has increased their authority and legitimacy as governance actors, companies have increasingly been embraced as the solution to problems like modern slavery and ecosystem depletion, rather than the cause of these problems. Alongside the explosion of supply chain solutions, multinational corporations have vastly increased their size, market share, and control over the global economy (Khan, 2017; Petry et al., 2021). Corporations are using this power to shape solutions in their own financial interests – ultimately, becoming richer and even more difficult to govern.

At the same time, global supply chain solutions are distracting from other key shifts; for instance, fair labour initiatives can distract from changes in the union density of a workforce, commercial dynamics that all but ensure suppliers cannot pay minimum wage, or from outsourcing practices well-documented to introduce forced labour into supply chains. Thus, notwithstanding the gains that could be made through individual supply chain solutions, there is cause for concern that the ascendance of global supply chain solutions comes with hidden costs relevant to a whole range of issues in IPE, from market volatility and economic instability of financialization and changing patterns of corporate ownership, investment and market speculation (Clapp, 2018, 2019) to the rise of artificial intelligence (Dauvergne, 2020).

By demonstrating that global supply chain solutions come with hidden costs that are often missed, we aim in this special issue to contribute to theoretical and empirical understandings of the limits of dominant forms of supply chain governance. Specifically, the issue sheds light into where and how the perverse outcome effects of global supply chain solutions occur and why. It consolidates evidence that while supply chain solutions may make gains in some issue areas, the net effectiveness of private governance as a solution to resolving the environmental and social risks and problems introduced by a self-regulatory, efficiency-driven model of global production appears to be limited (Dauvergne, 2020; Le Billon & Spiegel 2021; Ponte, 2020).

We also highlight the broader changes being spurred in the global production system and across various supply chains through the rise and proliferation of global supply chain solutions. As mentioned, our literature review finds little cause for optimism that the rise and proliferation of global supply chain solutions is making meaningful progress towards solving problems like global biodiversity loss and labour abuse (Observation 1). Yet, we see ample evidence that global supply chain solutions are not passively ineffective. Rather, as the articles by Ponte, Cutler & Lark, Fridell, and Dauvergne all illustrate in different ways, global production has entered a qualitatively different era as a result of the widespread adoption of private governance. Corporations have gained favour with governments and many NGOs as ‘champion’ citizens leading innovative, voluntary problem-solving CSR projects and initiatives. Yet, they are ultimately using this new reputational capital and authority to strategically shape rules and solutions in their own favour to guard the business status quo and expand their profitability and control.

Several articles within this special issue underscore and analyse these dynamics. Le Billon & Spiegel provide a rich comparative case analysis of the benefits and micro- and meso-level hidden costs of three types of solutions to eliminate conflict minerals, showing that the benefits legitimate corporate extractive communities while hiding the local costs to poor and marginalised workers. Through an analysis of corporate power and captured value in the global wine and coffee sectors, Ponte shows how the global supply chain ‘solution’ of environmental upgrading results in beneficial profits to large downstream lead firms while pushing the risk and compliance costs onto small upstream producers causing hidden environmental consequences. And Cutler and Lark demonstrate the privatised legal regime that has accompanied and facilitated the rise of global supply chain solutions has given corporations a new arena to exert power and evade public knowledge or scrutiny, through the rise of private arbitration solutions. In all of these cases, global supply chain solutions are clearly advantageous for business – advancing corporate power and financial goals. Yet, their benefits to environment and labour interests are uncertain and in many cases they are compromising.

The special issue highlights that the rise and proliferation of supply chain solutions is playing an important, yet under-discussed, role in stabilizing, legitimating, and reproducing contemporary capitalism (Dauvergne & LeBaron, 2014). In this sense, it is unsurprising that the actors working to conceal their hidden costs like corporations and consultants are doing so; indeed, many actors doing the ‘hiding’ have vested normative interests in assuaging societal and policymaker concerns while continuing to profit from exploitative business models. As mentioned, while many global supply chain solutions have done little to nothing to transform labour or environmental practices (see [Supplementary Material](#)), they allow consumers, activists, and policymakers to believe they are doing good and that it is possible to live ethically and resolve social and environmental problems through market behaviour and consumerism. While the proliferation of supply chain solutions hasn’t necessarily transformed the dynamics of production premised upon patterns such as poverty wages, gender-based violence, and environmental destruction, it has diverted energy and desires for a better world that in earlier eras of capitalism were targeted into contesting markets and capitalism, and incorporated these into markets themselves.

Such initiatives have also helped corporations to obtain social and political license to grow and take on a key role as central organizers of global economic activity. As such, supply chain solutions have contributed to pioneering new models of value and wealth creation and distribution, which are concentrating wealth in the hands of fewer and more powerful firms and individuals. As NGOs and civil society actors have endorsed and legitimized CSR, they have increasingly sought to transform the world with and alongside corporations, instead of by opposing corporations or calling for restrictions on their activities. The articles within this SI document the role of CSR and supply chain solutions in stabilizing and reproducing particular features of the contemporary global capitalist order, and the complicated role of civil society and NGOs within this.

For instance, Diprose et al. (2020) provide a strong in-depth empirical account of how multi-stakeholder sustainable mineral solutions in the tin sector play out on the ground in two major tin-producing Indonesian islands. The article highlights how local conditions shape and explain the benefits and hidden costs of

transnational solutions, and the role of stakeholder groups in delivering or undermining global supply chain solutions. In particular, the authors argue the importance of understanding resistance and the hidden costs associated with failure to align solutions with local political economies.

Dauvergne's article provides early warning of the hidden costs of a major emerging technological force – artificial intelligence (AI) – shaping supply chains and sustainability solutions towards business interests within the global political economy. Drawing on the SI typologies, the article highlights the importance of understanding the role and interaction of corporate power and the state in the complex relationship of micro firm-level benefits of AI solutions (e.g. clean energy and material efficiencies) to larger systemic macro-level hidden costs of AI to unsustainable outcomes (e.g. increased resource extraction and consumption).

Finally, in addition to describing and analyzing the hidden costs of global supply chain solutions, the contributions provide important analysis about the inequalities hard-wired into supply chains themselves, contributing to longstanding debates within RIPE (cf. Anner, 2020; Selwyn et al., 2020). Fridell's contribution to this volume documents the dynamics of wealth and value creation associated with the banana supply chain and associated supply chain solutions. Through the compelling case of the astonishingly rapid total collapse of the local banana economy in St. Vincent & the Grenadines, he presents a critical challenge to dominant theoretical lenses used to understand supply chains (Fridell, 2020). He argues that these systematically overlook some of the same power dynamics that global supply chain solutions and studies of them tend to omit. The theory, he notes, is overly static and consequently, has an inherent bias towards viewing economic integration as a beneficial solution. The reality, he argues is that there is a dynamic on-the-ground interplay of hidden costs over time that includes exclusion and re-integration and that are borne by local communities and governments not global companies.

The SI's contributions are both urgent and important, given the vast resources including money, time and effort spent each year on global supply chain solutions that mobilize and reinforce the status quo. The SI seeks to serve as a platform for deeper innovation in solving social and environmental problems by providing the first comprehensive account of the conceptual and practical challenges of hidden costs and reflections on how such challenges can be overcome.

## Conclusion

Although interest in global supply chain solutions and their hidden costs within IPE is typically limited to scholars interested in global value, supply or commodity chains, our hope is that this SI will ignite the curiosity of those interested in the power and legitimacy of business actors (including consultants, AI firms, auditors, and others) more broadly. Recent transformations have enhanced corporations' political and economic powers as liberalization of markets has afforded capital new freedom of movement to concentrate across borders; but corporations are by no means new political actors. Indeed, early corporations like the British East India Company, exerted political authority in conjunction with states as they extracted wealth from colonies (Phillips & Sharman, 2020; Tilley, 2020). From the early era of global capitalism, corporations have contributed to problems like violence, labour exploitation, and environmental degradation, which is a key reason that

their activities have been regulated by governments seeking to bring about more equitable and less harmful patterns of trade and production over the years. Yet, in the contemporary era, as corporations have been given the right to expand and effectively self-regulate through global supply chain solutions, the costs that corporate-driven global capitalism inflicts onto vulnerable people and the planet have become more easily hidden and obscured in powerful metrics, marketing, and lobbying by industry associations and individual companies about their positive impacts. In this sense, one of the key ‘hidden costs’ of global supply chain initiatives is that they cloud policymakers’ and the public’s ability to accurately gauge the impacts that corporations are having on various communities and regions of the world. We think these impacts deserve greater and renewed focus within IPE scholarship.

Harnessing the wide-angle lens of IPE, scholars of corporations and corporate power are well-positioned to zoom out from the minutia dynamics and discussions of individual supply chain solutions that currently dominate the literature, and to look at these solutions in a broader and more critical light. This includes their hidden costs at different scales. It also includes the broader role and significance of these solutions within corporate power, governance, and growth in the global economy.

Given the evidence of global supply chain solution ineffectiveness presented within our literature review, it is tempting to say that global supply chain solutions aren’t working and leave it at that. But the reality is that in their ineffectiveness for workers and the planet, they are accomplishing many strategic benefits for corporations, investors, and shareholders and are indeed working very well for those actors. Amidst climate change, the deep economic hardship accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, surging gender, racial, and North-South inequality, IPE scholars often wonder why sweeping changes to capitalism are so difficult to accomplish. This special issue highlights the shift towards splintered governance of the global economy into thousands of discrete global supply chain solutions as a key factor. The governance power of these ‘solutions’ is entangled in the fabric of the global economy in complicated ways, and is altering presumed relationships between corporations, civil society actors, and states (Büthe & Mattli, 2011; Cutler, 2003; Peck, 2017; Strange, 1996). Such trends and connections are a significant area for future exploration.

## Notes

1. See: <http://iris.saasaccreditation.org/>
2. Note on search methodology: The goal of this literature review was to collect as broad a range of articles as possible covering the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions in achieving environmental and social sustainability. To locate the literature, research team member Edward Pemberton conducted searches on the Web of Science (WoS) database of journal repositories. All of the search strings below were combined with the following top-level string using the WoS advanced search function:  
 TI = (Impact OR Effectiv\* OR Legiti\* OR Perform\* OR Success OR Fail\* OR Weak\* OR Inadequ\*) AND SU=(Business & Economics OR International Relations OR Government & Law OR Geography OR Development Studies OR Public Administration OR Urban Studies OR Area Studies). Where an asterisk (\*) is used, it represents an instruction to return any result that contains this string as part of a



larger word.

Key search terms included:

TS = (Supply Chain AND Corporate Social Responsibility OR CSR)

TS = (Forest Stewardship Council OR FSC)

TS = (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification OR PEFC)

TS = (Fairtrade)

TS = (Rainforest Alliance)

TS = (UTZ OR Universal Trade Zone)

TS = (Global Coffee Platform)

TS = (RSPO OR Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil)

TS = (Marine Stewardship Council)

TS = (BCI OR Better Cotton Initiative)

TS = ("Global Reporting Initiative")

TS = (Global Compact)

TS = (Code of Conduct AND Supply Chain)

TS = (Responsible Sourcing)

TS = (Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative)

TS = ("Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative")

TS = ("Multi-Stakeholder Initiati<sup>v</sup>\*" OR "Multi Stakeholder Initiati<sup>v</sup>\*)

TS = ("Multi-Stakeholder Govern<sup>v</sup>\*)" OR "Multi Stakeholder Govern<sup>v</sup>\*)

TS = ("Social Auditing" AND Supply Chain)

TS = ("Fair Labour Association")

TS = ("Global Network Initiative")

TS = (Bonsucro OR Better Sugarcane Initiative)

TS = ("Roundtable on Responsible Soy")

TS = ("Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials")

TS = (ISEAL)

This approach produced a list of results that was subjected to an initial review of titles by the research team to exclude anything that was clearly not relevant to the topic. The list was further reduced by excluding anything that, from the title, clearly focused on *financial* performance rather than environmental or social performance. This produced a list of 346 articles, which were reviewed more thoroughly by careful inspection of their abstracts to arrive at a list of 290 articles that addresses the effectiveness of global supply chain solutions in relation to social and environmental criteria. For final list, see [Supplementary Material](#).

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Ed Pemberton for his excellent research assistance and to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), grant #895-2018-1002 for research funding. We are also grateful to James Meadowcroft for his feedback on research framing, Rita Steele for supporting background research assistance, and to Stefano Ponte, Peter Dauvergne, Claire Cutler, Michael Bloomfield, Hans Krause Hansen, Philippe Le Billon, Ben Cashore, Kate MacDonald, Ed Pemberton and David Lark for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. We thank colleagues within the University of Sheffield Department of Politics and International Relations and Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI) for their feedback when an early version of this article was presented within their seminar series.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

**Genevieve LeBaron** is Professor of Politics at the University of Sheffield. Her research focuses on forced labour and social issues in global supply chains, and the political economy of corporations and their governance. She was elected to the College of the Royal Society of Canada in 2020.

**Jane Lister** is a Research Associate with the Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia. Her work focuses on supply chain governance and the business, politics and environmental effectiveness of corporate social responsibility.

## ORCID

Genevieve LeBaron  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0083-6126>

Jane Lister  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2465-9320>

## References

- Admati, A. (2017). A skeptical view of financialized corporate governance. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(3), 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.3.131>
- Amengual, M., Bartley, T. (forthcoming). Global markets, voluntary action, and the legitimacy of state intervention. Working paper.
- Amer, E. (2018). The penalization of non-communicating UN global compact's companies by investors and its implications for this initiative's. *Business & Society*, 57(2), 255–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650315609303>
- Anner, M. (2012). Corporate social responsibility and freedom of association rights. *Politics & Society*, 40(4), 609–644. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329212460983>
- Anner, M. (2017). Monitoring workers' rights: The limits of voluntary social compliance initiatives in labor repressive regimes. *Global Policy*, 8, 56–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12385>
- Anner, M. (2020). Squeezing workers' rights in global supply chains: Purchasing practices in the Bangladesh garment export sector in comparative perspective. *Review of International Political Economy*, 27(2), 320–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1625426>
- Auld, G. (2014). *Constructing private governance: The rise and evolution of forest, coffee and fisheries certification*. Yale University Press.
- Auld, G., Bernstein, S., & Cashore, B. (2008). The new corporate social responsibility. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 33(1), 413–435. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.environ.32.053006.141106>
- Auld, G., & Gulbrandsen, L. (2010). Transparency in nonstate certification: Consequences for accountability and legitimacy. *Global Environmental Politics*, 10(3), 97–119. [https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP\\_a\\_00016](https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00016)
- Auld, G., & Renckens, S. (2017). Rule-making feedbacks through intermediation and evaluation in transnational private governance. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 670(1), 93–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716217690185>
- Awaysheh, A., & Klassen, R. D. (2010). The impact of supply chain structure on the use of supplier socially responsible practices. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 30(12), 1246–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01443571011094253>
- Babic, M., Fichtner, J., & Heemskerk, E. (2017). States versus corporations: Rethinking the power of business in international politics. *The International Spectator*, 52(4), 20–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2017.1389151>
- Bair, J. (Ed.). (2008). *Frontiers of global commodity chain research*. Stanford University Press.
- Banerjee, S. B. (2008). Corporate social responsibility: The good, the bad and the ugly. *Critical Sociology*, 34(1), 51–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920507084623>

- Barrientos, S. (2019). *Gender and work in global value chains: Capturing the gains?* Cambridge University Press.
- Barrientos, S., & Smith, S. (2007). Do workers benefit from ethical trade? Assessing codes of labour practice in global production systems. *Third World Quarterly*, 28(4), 713–729. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701336580>
- Bartley, T. (2018). *Rules without rights: Land, labor, and private authority in the global economy*. Oxford University Press.
- Belkhir, L., Bernard, S., & Abdelgadir, S. (2017). Does GRI reporting impact environmental sustainability? A cross-industry analysis of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions performance between GRI-reporting and non-reporting companies. *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal*, 28(2), 138–155. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEQ-10-2015-0191>
- Bernstein, S. (2011). Legitimacy in intergovernmental non-state global governance. *Review of International Political Economy*, 18(1), 17–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290903173087>
- Bhambra, G. K. (2021). Colonial global economy: Towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy. *Review of International Political Economy*, 28(2), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1830831>
- Bloomfield, M., & Schleifer, P. (2017). Tracing failure of coral reef protection in nonstate market-driven governance. *Global Environmental Politics*, 17(4), 127–146. [https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP\\_a\\_00432](https://doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00432)
- Braam, G., Uit de Weerd, L., Hauck, M., & Huijbregts, M. (2016). Determinants of corporate environmental reporting: The importance of environmental performance and assurance. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 129, 724–734. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.03.039>
- Brassett, J., & Tsingou, E. (2011). The politics of legitimate global governance. *Review of International Political Economy*, 18(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2010.495297>
- Burgoon, B., & Fransen, L. (2017). Support for ethical consumerism and welfare states in the global economy: Complements or substitutes?. *Global Policy*, 8(S3), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12407>
- Büthe, T., & Mattli, W. (2011). *The new global rulers: The privatization of regulation in the world economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Cashore, B., Auld, G., & Newsom, D. (2004). *Governing through markets: Forest certification and the emergence of non-state authority*. Yale University Press.
- Clapp, J. (1998). The privatization of global environmental governance: ISO 14000 and the developing world. *Global Governance*, 4(3), 295–316. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-00403004>
- Clapp, J. (2018). Mega-mergers on the menu: Corporate concentration and the politics of sustainability in the global food system. *Global Environmental Politics*, 18(2), 12–33. [https://doi.org/10.1162/glep\\_a\\_00454](https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00454)
- Clapp, J. (2019). The rise of financial investment and common ownership in global agrifood firms. *Review of International Political Economy*, 26(4), 604–629. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1597755>
- Clapp, J., & Isakson, S. R. (2018). *Speculative harvests: Financialization, food and agriculture*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Constance, D., & Bonanno, A. (2000). Regulating the global fisheries: The world wildlife fund, unilever, and the marine stewardship council. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17(2), 125–139. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007625606243>
- Cutler, C. (2003). *Private power and global authority: Transnational merchant law in the global political economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cutler, C., Haufler, V., & Porter, T. (Eds.). (1999). *Private authority and international affairs*. SUNY Press.
- Cutler, C., & Lark, D. (2020). The hidden costs of law in the governance of global supply chains: The turn to arbitration. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1821748>
- Dauvergne, P. (2016). *Environmentalism of the rich*. The MIT Press.
- Dauvergne, P. (2018). *Will big business destroy our planet?* Polity.
- Dauvergne, P. (2020). Is artificial intelligence greening global supply chains? Exposing the political economy of environmental costs. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1814381>
- Dauvergne, P., & LeBaron, G. (2014). *Protest Inc: The corporatization of activism*. Polity.

- Dauvergne, P., & Lister, J. (2010). The prospects and limits of eco-consumerism: Shopping our way to less deforestation? *Organization & Environment*, 23(2), 132–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026610368370>
- Dauvergne, P., & Lister, J. (2013). *Eco-business: A big brand takeover of sustainability*. The MIT Press.
- DeFries, R. S., Fanzo, J., Mondal, P., Remans, R., & Wood, S. A. (2017). Is voluntary certification of tropical agricultural commodities achieving sustainability goals for small-scale producers? A review of the evidence. *Environmental Research Letters*, 12(3), 033001. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aa625e>
- Diprose, R., Kurniawan, N., Macdonald, K., & Winanti, P. (2020). Regulating sustainable minerals in electronics supply chains: Local power struggles and the ‘hidden costs’ of global tin supply chain governance. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1814844>
- Dunaway, W. (Ed.). (2014). *Gendered commodity chains: Seeing women’s work and households in global production*. Stanford University Press.
- Egels-Zandén, N., & Merk, J. (2014). Private regulation and trade union rights: Why codes of conduct have limited impact on trade union rights. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 123(3), 461–473. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1840-x>
- Fichtner, J., & Heemskerk, E. (2018). *The new permanent universal owners: Index funds, (im)patient capital, and the claim of long-termism*. SSRN. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3321597](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3321597).
- Folke, C., Österblom, H., Jouffray, J.-B., Lambin, E. F., Adger, W. N., Scheffer, M., Crona, B. I., Nyström, M., Levin, S. A., Carpenter, S. R., Anderies, J. M., Chapin, S., Crépin, A.-S., Dauriach, A., Galaz, V., Gordon, L. J., Kautsky, N., Walker, B. H., Watson, J. R., ... de Zeeuw, A. (2019). Transnational corporations and the challenge of biosphere stewardship. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 3(10), 1396–1403. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-019-0978-z>
- Fransen, L. (2012). *Corporate social responsibility and global labor standards: Firms and activists in the making of private regulation*. Routledge.
- Fransen, L., & Burgoon, B. (2012). A market for worker rights: Explaining business support for international private labour regulation. *Review of International Political Economy*, 19(2), 236–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2011.552788>
- Fridell, G. (2007). *Fair trade coffee: The prospects and pitfalls of market-driven social justice*. University of Toronto Press.
- Fridell, G. (2020). The political economy of inclusion and exclusion: State, labour and the costs of supply chain integration in the Eastern Caribbean. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1838315>.
- Gereffi, G., Humphrey, J., & Sturgeon, T. (2005). The governance of global value chains. *Review of International Political Economy*, 12(1), 78–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290500049805>
- Haque, F., & Ntim, C. (2018). Environmental policy. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 27(3), 415–435. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2007>
- Hatanaka, M., & Busch, L. (2008). Third-party certification in the global agrifood system: An objective or socially mediated governance mechanism? *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48(1), 73–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2008.00453.x>
- Hay, C. (2008). The “crisis” of keynesianism and the rise of neoliberalism in Britain. In J. L. Campbell & O. K. Pedersen (Eds.), *The rise of neoliberalism and institutional analysis* (pp. 193–218). Princeton University Press.
- Hearson, M. (2018). Transnational expertise and the expansion of the international tax regime: Imposing “acceptable” standards. *Review of International Political Economy*, 25(5), 647–671. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2018.1486726>
- Heemskerk, E., & Takes, F. (2016). The corporate elite community structure of global capitalism. *New Political Economy*, 21(1), 90–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1041483>
- Husted, B. W., Montiel, I., & Christmann, P. (2016). Effects of local legitimacy on certification decisions to global and national CSR standards by multinational subsidiaries and domestic firms. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 47(3), 382–397. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2016.3>
- Jena, P. R., Chichaibelu, B. B., Stellmacher, T., & Grote, U. (2012). The impact of coffee certification on small-scale producers’ livelihoods: A case study from the Jimma Zone, Ethiopia. *Agricultural Economics*, 43(4), 429–440. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1574-0862.2012.00594.x>

- Johansson, J., & Lidestav, G. (2011). Can voluntary standards regulate forestry? — Assessing the environmental impacts of forest certification in Sweden. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 13(3), 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2010.11.004>
- Kamat, S. (2004). The privatization of public interests: Theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era. *Review of International Political Economy*, 11(1), 155–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229042000179794>
- Keohane, R. (2011). Forum: Global governance and legitimacy. *Review of International Political Economy*, 18(1), 99–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2011.545222>
- Khan, L. (2017). Amazon's antitrust paradox. *Yale Law Journal*, 126(3), 710–805.
- Kolcava, D., Rudolph, L., & Bernauer, T. (2021). Voluntary business initiatives can reduce public pressure for regulating firm behaviour abroad. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28(4), 591–614. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1751244>
- LeBaron, G. (2018). *The global business of forced labour: Report of findings*. Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute. [globalbusinessofforcedlabour.ac.uk](http://globalbusinessofforcedlabour.ac.uk).
- LeBaron, G. (2020). *Combatting modern slavery: Why labour governance is broken and what we can do about it*. Polity.
- LeBaron, G., & Lister, J. (2015). Benchmarking global supply chains: The power of the 'ethical audit' regime. *Review of International Studies*, 41(5), 905–924. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210515000388>
- LeBaron, G., Lister, J., & Dauvergne, P. (2017). Governing global supply chain sustainability through the ethical audit regime. *Globalizations*, 14(6), 958–975. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1304008>
- LeBaron, G., & Rühmkorf, A. (2019). The domestic politics of corporate accountability legislation. *Socio-Economic Review*, 17(3), 709–743. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwx047>
- Le Billon, P., & Spiegel, S. (2021). Cleaning mineral supply chains? Political economies of exploitation and hidden costs of technical fixes. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2021.1899959>.
- Levy, D., & Newell, P. (Eds.). (2004). *The business of global environmental governance*. The MIT Press.
- Locke, R. (2013). *The promise and limits of private power: Promoting labor standards in a global economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Locke, R., Qin, F., & Brause, A. (2007). Does monitoring improve labor standards? *ILR Review*, 61(1), 3–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001979390706100101>
- Mayer, F. W., & Phillips, N. (2017). Outsourcing governance: States and the politics of a 'global value chain world'. *New Political Economy*, 22(2), 134–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2016.1273341>
- Mayer, F. W., Phillips, N., & Posthuma, A. (2017). The political economy of governance in a 'global value chain world'. *New Political Economy*, 22(2), 129–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2016.1273343>
- Milberg, W., & Winkler, D. (2013). *Outsourcing economics: Global value chains in capitalist development*. Cambridge University Press.
- Monciardini, D., Bernaz, N., & Andhov, A. (2021). The organizational dynamics of compliance with the UK modern slavery act in the food and tobacco sector. *Business & Society*, 60(2), 288–340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650319898195>
- Murcia, M. J., Panwar, R., & Tarzijan, J. (2021). Socially responsible firms outsource less. *Business & Society*, 60(6), 1507–1545. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650319898490>
- Oya, C., Schaefer, F., & Skolidou, D. (2018). The effectiveness of agricultural certification in developing countries: A systematic review. *World Development*, 112, 282–312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.08.001>
- Peck, J. (2017). *Offshore: Exploring the worlds of global outsourcing*. Oxford University Press.
- Petty, J., Fichtner, J., & Heemskerk, E. (2021). Steering capital: The growing private authority of index providers in the age of passive asset management. *Review of International Political Economy*, 28(1), 152–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1699147>
- Phillips, A., & Sharman, J. (2020). *Outsourcing empire: How company-states made the modern world*. Princeton University Press.
- Ponte, S. (2008). Greener than Thou: The political economy of fish ecolabelling and its local manifestations in South Africa. *World Development*, 36(1), 159–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.02.014>

- Ponte, S. (2020). The hidden costs of environmental upgrading in global value chains. *Review of International Political Economy*. Current issue. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1816199>.
- Porter, M., & Kramer, M. (2011). The big idea creating shared value. *Harvard Business Review*, 89, 2–17.
- Rende Taylor, L., & Shih, E. (2019). Worker feedback technologies and combatting modern slavery in global supply chains: Examining the effectiveness of remediation-oriented and due-diligence-oriented technologies in identifying and addressing forced labour and human trafficking. *Journal of the British Academy*, 7(s1), 131–165. <https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/007s1.131>
- Schleifer, P. (2019). Varieties of multi-stakeholder governance: Selecting legitimization strategies in transnational sustainability politics. *Globalizations*, 16(1), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1518863>
- Seabrooke, L., & Wigan, D. (2017). The governance of global wealth chains. *Review of International Political Economy*, 24(1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2016.1268189>
- Selwyn, B. (2019). Poverty chains and global capitalism. *Competition & Change*, 23(1), 71–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529418809067>
- Selwyn, B., Musiolek, B., & Ijarja, A. (2020). Making a global poverty chain: Export footwear production and gendered labor exploitation in Eastern and Central Europe. *Review of International Political Economy*, 27(2), 377–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1640124>
- Singh, J. P. (2021). Race, culture, and economics: An example from North-South trade relations. *Review of International Political Economy*, 28(2), 323–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1771612>
- Smith, W. K., Nelson, E., Johnson, J. A., Polasky, S., Milder, J. C., Gerber, J. S., West, P. C., Siebert, S., Brauman, K. A., Carlson, K. M., Arbutnot, M., Rozza, J. P., & Pennington, D. N. (2019). Voluntary sustainability standards could significantly reduce detrimental impacts of global agriculture. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(6), 2130–2137. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1707812116>
- Soederberg, S. (2010). *Corporate power and ownership in contemporary capitalism: The politics of resistance and domination*. Routledge.
- Strange, S. (1996). *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the global economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Subramanian, S. (2019, July 23). Is fair trade finished?. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jul/23/fairtrade-ethical-certification-supermarkets-sainsburys>.
- Sung, M., & Lee, W.-Y. (2016). What makes an effective CSR program? An analysis of the constructs of a cause-related participant sport sponsorship event. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(1), 56–77. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-02-2016-004>
- Tilley, L. (2020). Extractive investibility in historical colonial perspective: The emerging market and its antecedents in Indonesia. *Review of International Political Economy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1763423>.
- Urry, J. (2014). *Offshoring*. Polity.
- Vandergeest, P., & Unno, A. (2012). A new extraterritoriality? *Political Geography*, 31(6), 358–367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2012.05.005>
- van der Ven, H., Rothacker, C., & Cashore, B. (2018). Do eco-labels prevent deforestation? Lessons from non-state market driven governance in the soy, palm oil, and cocoa sectors. *Global Environmental Change*, 52, 141–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.07.002>
- Van Holt, T., Weisman, W., Johnson, J., Käll, S., Whalen, J., Spear, B., & Sousa, P. (2016). A social wellbeing in fisheries tool (SWIFT) to help improve fisheries performance. *Sustainability*, 8(8), 667. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8080667>
- Vaughan-Whitehead, D., & Caro, L. P. (2017). *Purchasing practices and working conditions in global supply chains: Global survey results*. ILO.
- Vogel, D. (2010). The private regulation of global corporate conduct: Achievements and limitations. *Business & Society*, 49(1), 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650309343407>
- Walker, M., Hills, S., & Heere, B. (2017). Evaluating a socially responsible employment program: Beneficiary impacts and stakeholder perceptions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 143(1), 53–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2801-3>