

T12P02 / Global Corporate Power in an Age of Globalisation

Topic : T12 / Policy, Business and Interest Groups

Chair : John Mikler (The University of Sydney)

Second Chair : Karsten Ronit (Department of Political Science)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

While states and civil society are well drawn in terms of their institutions and ideologies, multinational corporations (MNCs) are all too often more simply sketched as mechanisms of profit maximisation. The power they wield is then seen in these terms. The result is often a rather disembodied analysis of corporate power which focuses on the role of *markets* versus the state, the power of *capital* over labour and democratically elected state representatives, and the way assumed corporate *interests* are served that clash with citizens' aspirations. We have long been told that the rise of MNCs means they potentially 'rule the world' given the size and global scope of their operations, yet there remains a relative dearth of contemporary analysis on what their 'ruling' means in a policy and governance sense. The central aim of this panel will be to address the comparative lack of study of corporations and their power in the public policy process by explicitly casting them as political, rather than simply market actors, and to present case studies that illustrate what this means in practice.

While it is observed that governance is now a matter for non-state transnational actors instead of/in addition to states, often the focus for analysis then returns to what this means for states. Given the aim of this panel, the intention is to explicitly re-focus debates regarding corporate power on MNCs themselves. The state is seen as legitimately 'in charge' if democratically elected/representative of its citizens' aspirations and governs in light of these. In what sense are MNCs? To answer this question the panel will focus on the extent to which they set the public policy agenda because they possess the capacity to do so, but also because they are seen as possessing the legitimacy to do so. As such, MNCs will be studied for the way they influence governments and exert leverage through lobbying, as well as because of their size and economic dominance. But in addition, this panel will welcome papers that consider the extent to which they create their interests in others – ie. a belief that what serves them also serves the public interest nationally, regionally and globally.

If a central question for public policy scholars is 'who governs?', then the power of global corporations is a question of how they influence others in the policy process (eg. governments, regulatory bodies and international organisations) as well as whether they are seen as possessing the legitimacy to set the agenda and self-regulate in their own right. In casting corporations as political actors with complex identities and strategies to be examined, rather than assumed (eg. as a result of applying traditional theories of international political economy), the panel will consider how their interests and operations have explanatory power for how markets are structured, the outcomes produced for society, and the nature of the public policy process that produces these outcomes.

CALL FOR PAPERS

While states and civil society are well drawn in terms of their institutions and ideologies, multinational corporations (MNCs) are all too often more simply sketched as mechanisms of profit maximisation. The power they wield is then seen in these terms for the way that it impacts on the public policy process and the outcomes produced for society. The result is often a rather disembodied analysis of corporate power which focuses on the role of *markets* versus the state, the power of *capital* over labour and democratically elected state representatives, and the way (assumed) corporate *interests* are served that clash with citizens' aspirations. We have long been told that the rise of MNCs means that they now potentially 'rule the world' given the size and scope of their operations. What does this mean in a policy and governance sense? Paper proposals are invited that re-cast MNCs as political actors with complex identities and strategies to be examined, rather than assumed. Their identities and strategies have explanatory power for how markets are structured, the outcomes produced for society, and the nature of the public policy process in respect of these. Recognising this, papers should address their capacity to exert influence on the public policy process, as well as why and whether MNCs should be perceived as legitimate self-regulators in a globalised world. They may do so as a theoretical contribution to questions of national, regional and global governance, as well as in respect of cases that illustrate the impact of corporations on issues areas such as

global development, gender, inequality, environmental sustainability, security and human rights.

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 4 - 6)

Discussants

Karsten Ronit (Department of Political Science)

The Limits of Global Corporations as Self-Governors

John Mikler (The University of Sydney)

Corporations in Foreign Policy: Extending Nonmarket Strategy into International Relations

Ceyhun Emre Dogru (Koc University)

Between cooperation and competition: global corporate power and the State. The case of Apple Inc.

Rosalba Belmonte (University of Perugia)

Multinational corporations in the making of lesbians, gays and transgenders' rights in Brazil

Joao Gois (Universidade Federal Fluminense)

Francisco Duarte (Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro)

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 4 - 6)

Discussants

John Mikler (The University of Sydney)

MNCs and Their Role in Global Business Associations:

Karsten Ronit (Department of Political Science)

Business Interests, Energy Competition, Climate Change and Norms-based Actors

Aynsley Kellow (University of Tasmania)

Analyzing Corporate Agency in Global Resource Politics: An Analytical Framework and Lessons Learned From the US Lacey Act Amendment

Sina Leipold (Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research - UFZ)

State capitalism and corporate power in the global food system: a case study of China's state-owned agri-food and chemical companies 'going global'

Belesky Paul (International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU))