

**FROM THE FIRM TO THE NETWORK:
GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS THEORY**

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Abstract

We posit that traditional employment relations theories that focus on individual firms embedded in distinct national institutional contexts are no longer adequate for the analysis of employment relations in a globalized era where production and services are increasingly coordinated across countries and firms. Building on Global Value Chain theory, we introduce a configurational framework that explicitly addresses the employment relations implications of the interconnections within and between firms in the global economy. We argue that different value chain configurations will evidence different employment relations patterns and we validate our framework by applying it to the study of three contemporary global issues. In sum, the framework permits a shift in the focus of employment relations scholarship away from the individual firm to the global networks in which they belong, and hence provides a new theoretical lens for the analysis of employment relations in the global economy.