

# GPN@NUS SEMINAR SERIES

## Topic: Governing Sustainability in a World of Global Value Chains

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a mainstream concern in the operation of the global economy, as indicated by the reframing of the international development agenda from the Millennium Development Goals to the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change will have important implications on economic activity as well, and potentially offers the private sector a core role in implementing its objectives. The SDGs and Paris Agreement goals have to be attained in a world that over the past century has truly trans-nationalised economic activity. Global trade has not only grown exponentially (far outpacing GDP growth) but has also undergone a marked transformation, with the emergence and consolidation of Global Value Chains (GVCs) as one of its key organizational features.

Parallel to this reorientation, there has been a rapid proliferation of multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships (MSIs) focused on sustainability, currently leading to large structural shifts in market demand. As MSIs continue to extend their influence in global markets, there has been increased interest in understanding how they are transforming GVCs and whether and how they actually address distributive, social and environmental problems. Research has shown that regulation and support from governments and international organizations still play an important part in facilitating sustainability governance, both directly (e.g. through regulation, partnerships, facilitation and endorsement) and indirectly (e.g. through changing the institutional context of the sustainability transitions). Therefore, the interaction of sustainability governance and GVC dynamics is not only of interest for an academic audience, but has important implications for public policy, business strategy and civil society activism.

This presentation draws on parts of a draft of a book examining sustainability governance as it unfolds through a complex overlap of private and public instruments that seek to address pressing social and environmental problems, such as increasing global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, deforestation, deteriorating work conditions, increasing inequality, and loss of biodiversity. On the basis of over 15 years of theoretical engagement and field research, the book draws from several case studies of labour-intensive value chains in the agro-food sector (coffee, wine, fish, biofuels, palm oil), but also from experiences in capital-intensive value chains (shipping and aviation).



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### SPEAKER:

Professor Stefano Ponte  
Professor of International Political  
Economy  
Department of Business and  
Politics  
Copenhagen Business School (CBS)

### CHAIR:

Professor Neil Coe  
Department of Geography  
National University of Singapore

### DATE:

Tuesday, 24 May 2016

### TIME:

3.30pm – 5pm

### VENUE:

Seminar Room 06-42  
The Shaw Foundation Building,  
Block AS7, Level 6  
5 Arts Link  
Singapore 117570

**Governing Sustainability** examines sustainability governance as the overlap of: (1) government regulation at various levels (local, national, regional, international); (2) governance and upgrading in global value chains; and (3) the governance of sustainability multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships. It assesses how sustainability governance shapes selected sustainability outcomes, with focus on environmental aspects, as it unfolds in connection to the operation of GVCs. Finally, it explores how governments and international organizations can orchestrate private and multi-stakeholder initiatives, and shape GVC dynamics, so that they align with public regulatory objectives.

*Stefano Ponte is visiting the Global Production Networks Centre (GPN@NUS) and Department of Geography, as Visiting Professor from 3-26 May 2016.*



## Stefano Ponte

Stefano Ponte is Professor of International Political Economy in the Department of Business and Politics, Copenhagen Business School (CBS). He is also the co-director of the CBS Sustainability Platform.

He is primarily interested in transnational economic and environmental governance, with focus on overlaps and tensions between private governance and public regulation. He analyzes governance dynamics and economic and environmental upgrading trajectories in global value chains. He is particularly interested in how sustainability standards, labels and certifications shape agro-food value chains, and in how different forms of partnerships affect sustainability outcomes.

Stefano is the author of 7 books, 7 edited special issues, and over 65 peer-reviewed articles on these issues. His most recent work appeared in *Global Environmental Change*, *Environmental Politics*, *Environment and Planning A*, *Geoforum*, *Review of International Political Economy*, and *Science*. Stefano holds degrees from the University of Padova (Italy) in political science, the University of Chicago in international relations, and the University of East Anglia (UK) in development studies. He is currently the principal investigator of the New Partnerships for Sustainability (NEPSUS) research programme.