

***A review of Geographical Dynamics and Firm Spatial Strategy in China* by Shengjun Zhu, John Pickles and Canfei He**

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Shengjun Zhu, John Pickles and Canfei He's *Geographical Dynamics and Firm Spatial Strategy in China* is a critical contribution to economic geography and broader human geography. Rather than being the output from a single research project, the book is a compilation and reanalysis of materials from a range of projects that Zhu, Pickles and He carried out between 2012–2015 in Ningbo, Yongkang, and Shangyu, Zhejiang Province. Interview findings are supplemented with secondary information collected from sector-specific publications, company reports, and websites. One database on firm-specific economic and financial variables is central to the firm level analysis in this research: China's Annual Survey of Industrial Firms (1998–2009).

The two main audiences that this book should appeal to are economic geography and economic sociology. The topics covered in the book are also relevant to post-socialist geography, development studies, economics, economic sociology and international studies, offering academics, international researchers, post-graduate and advanced undergraduate students in these fields an accessible, grounded, yet theoretically-sophisticated account of the geographies of global production networks, value chains, and regional development in developing countries and emerging economies. The book should be of particular interest to economic geographers and economic sociologists connecting to growing debates over local clusters, embeddedness, global sourcing and global production, and over evolutionary economic geography and global value chain/global production network.

The book is organized into seven thematic chapters, an introduction that provides context, and an afterword summarizing the entire book. The seven main chapters are arranged around three themes: (1) Government: this part sets the stage by introducing the ways in which national economic regulation and new industrial policies from various levels of governments are affecting the spatial patterns, organizational structure and value segments of the Chinese apparel industry; (2) Firm: this part then analyzes the effect of emerging firm strategies over industrial dynamics; (3) Spatial articulation: this part seeks to understand the different and interconnected roles of government policies and firm strategies and their effects on the geographies of Chinese apparel production networks.

The book provides the first book-length, systematic treatment of the articulations between the public and private economic governance in global value chains and global production networks in China. It should be the first book examining the role played by the apparel industry in China's integration into and repositioning within the global economy. The research also provides perhaps the first detailed account of the complex geographical dynamics currently restructuring China's export-oriented industries in the post-crisis era. In examining these issues, this book contributes in relation to the following areas:

(1) The importance of this research lies mainly in its attempt to understand the different and interconnected roles of government policies and firm strategies and their effects on the geogra-

phies of Chinese apparel production networks. As a result, this research develops a strategic relational theorization to understand the articulations between the public and private economic governance in global value chains and global production networks.

(2) These geographical and industrial shifts emerging in China have enormous implications in and beyond China for what is possible in post-crisis global value chains. At the heart of these changes are the millions of migrant workers whose livelihoods depend on the industry and who, with industrial upgrading and delocalization will find new opportunities and constraints as the geographies of employment change.

(3) The book addresses at different scales (global, regional and local) the legacies and social structures of the command economy, the changing structure of production and trade networks, and the ways in which global, regional and local factors have produced differentiated forms of industrial and regional upgrading, relocation and delocalization.

(4) In this research, they open up a broader field for the discussion of firm tactics and regional strategies, highlighting in the process the contingent and conjunctural nature of economic decision-making, rather than seeing upgrading in linear terms.

(5) This book demonstrates that the interface between evolutionary economic geography approaches and global value chain/global production network approaches could be a fertile area for further consideration.

As such, the book builds on but is distinct from a number of books examining global value chain and global production network in Geography and Sociology, such as Bair's (2009) *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*; Cattaneo, Gereffi and Staritz's (2010) *Global Value Chains in a Post-crisis World: A Development Perspective*; Neilson and Pritchard's (2009) *Value Chain Struggles: Institutions and Governance in the Plantation Districts of South India*. The first book is a recent contribution to reviewing the wide range of work on global value and commodity chains. It underscores the wide and interdisciplinary appeal of chain approaches for analyzing the economic, social, and political dimensions of international trade and production networks. The second book assesses the impact of the crisis on global trade, production, and demand in a variety of sectors and offers insights on the challenges and opportunities for developing countries, with a particular focus on entry and upgrading possibilities in post-crisis global value chains. The empirical focus of the third book is on Indian tea production networks. It focuses on an institutional reading of global production networks and emphasizes embeddedness. Zhu, Pickles and He's book draws upon these ideas in its discussion of the different and interconnected roles of government policies and firm strategies and their effects on the geographies of Chinese apparel production networks in the post-crisis era. However their book further illuminates these geographies by systematically examining evolution and restructuring of the apparel industry in China, and by predicating the discussion on debates around the role of national economic regulation and industrial policies; articulation of local clusters, networks and social formations with global value chains and regional production networks; diverse set of upgrading and downgrading strategies in conditions of changing global economy; and lock-in and path-dependence in post-crisis global value chains and global production networks. It also provides an industrial focus on several different sectors with contrasting dynamics and does so within the context of much wider conceptual and political-economic frameworks.

References

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