



Social Problems and Global Issues

SSSP Global Division Newsletter

FALL 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE GLOBAL DIVISION CHAIR

Dear Members,

Let me begin by saying how happy I am to be serving as chair of this great division. We had a really good meeting in Las Vegas and are already starting to gear up for the annual gathering next year in Denver. We have what I think is a very exciting program, including a thematic session on the “Art of Activism”. The Global Division is sponsoring three of its own sessions including this one, and another six in partnership with other divisions. The thematic session, entitled “*Transnational Social Movements and the Making of Social Change*,” is meant to focus on the creative ways social movements engage in political struggle.

The Division will also be sponsoring two competitions again this year, the Outstanding Book Award and the Graduate Student Paper Competition. We are very happy that the SAGE journal *Critical Sociology* has again agreed to co-sponsor the paper competition and has generously contributed to that award. Each of these has become a very exciting competition, drawing truly critical and innovative submissions. The nomination and submission processes are now open. More information on all of the action in the coming year can be found inside the newsletter and on the SSSP [website](#).

Also inside this issue you’ll find a short essay by Erica Blom, the winner of this year’s

graduate student paper competition, drawn from her research on the influence of actors in the developing world on social and political change globally. Finally, you’ll find news on recent publications by Division members.

In closing, the Division is doing really well and we encourage you to help us grow over the next year. Encourage your students to consider submitting their papers to the competition, nominate a colleague for the book award, and keep your eye out for folks who might be interested in joining us. And for any current members interested in getting more involved, just send me an email!

On behalf of the Global Division, thank you to our session organizers, chairs of the award committees, and co-sponsoring divisions for your work so far, and for your continuing commitment in the coming new year. A special thanks to our newsletter editor, Jason Smith, a PhD student in sociology at George Mason University. If you run into him in Denver, make sure to thank him.

Warm regards,
Tony Roshan Samara

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DEVELOPING WORLD INFLUENCES ON NORTH AMERICAN POLICYMAKING: LESSONS FROM PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS DEBATES IN CANADA

By Erica Blom

Powerful groups backed by the world's largest agro-businesses, pharmaceutical companies, and biotechnology-based industries have helped foster the application of intellectual property rights to biological materials through legislative and legal initiatives spanning the globe. Yet applying exclusive rights to what have traditionally been understood as common goods has generated substantial conflict. My research examines this conflict in the context of plant breeders' rights (PBRs), a form of intellectual property rights that facilitates patenting plant genetic materials such as seeds. Mechanisms advancing PBRs are required for member states of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and have thus been at the forefront of the debates over intellectual property, globalization and trade surrounding these treaties.

PBRs have historically been accepted across North America and Western Europe, but this began to change in 2004 when the Canadian government proposed amending its Plant Breeders' Rights Act (PBR Act) to strengthen PBRs by lengthening the time for which patents on plant material are valid and broadening the type of plant material to which PBRs apply. Once the amendments were introduced, contention quickly broke out across Canada. A financially and politically powerful coalition of business associations, farmers and producers—who I term the intellectual property movement—supported the amendments for providing better rewards to breeders who invest resources into improving plant varieties. Meanwhile, a comparably weaker network of small farmers, anti-globalization activists, and union members—who I term the farmers' rights movement—opposed the amendments for strengthening exclusive rights at the expense of public access to essential components of food supplies and livelihoods. Ultimately, the farmers' rights movement's framing of the PBR Act amendments dominated public debates, shifting popular opinion, causing widespread mobilization and forcing the government to kill the amendments or risk its own legitimacy.

The success of the farmers' rights movement is surprising. The intellectual property movement had more economic and political strength: its members were supported by the world's largest agro-businesses, including Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta, and they sat on the very government Seed Sector Advisory Committee responsible for drafting and introducing the PBR Act amendments. Additionally, Canada has a strong history of supporting initiatives that foster PBRs both at home and abroad.

What, then, explains the success of farmers' rights movement? To address this question, I compared the intellectual property and farmers' rights movements by analyzing archival documents—from government reports on PBRs to movement fliers—and interviewing twenty government officials, movement leaders and “informal” constituents. My research demonstrates

that alternative transnational networks provided differing resources to assist each movement and, in turn, explain the movements' uneven success.

The intellectual property movement's transnational networks were comprised largely of agriculture industry associations across the developed world. These networks provided the movement with vocabularies and norms to frame the PBR Act amendments as critical to ensuring Canada's global competitiveness. The networks then provided the movement with technical facts to support this frame by, for example, explaining that TRIPS requires Canada to have a *sui generis* system for the protection of intellectual property embodied in plant varieties. Yet much of the public found these 'expert' explanations difficult to understand and were left with more unanswered questions rather than with a desire to mobilize around the protection of intellectual property.

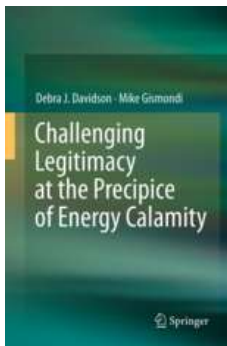
Meanwhile, through international farmer organizations such as Via Campesina, the farmers' rights movement developed transnational network linkages across the developing world. These networks provided vocabularies for the movement to frame the PBR Act amendments as a common heritage issue, emphasizing that plant genetic materials are a natural resource which should remain equally shared and never denied to any people or peoples. These developing world networks then supplied the movement with accessible information and compelling first-hand testimony to lend persuasive empirical support to this frame—a delegation of farmers and scientists from Mexico, Ethiopia, and India even traveled to Canada to explain the negative impacts of PBRs at a weeklong series of public forums and political meetings in Saskatoon, Montreal, and Ottawa. Additionally, these networks provided feasible solutions for change—e.g. encouraging Canadians to make a link to global struggles by protesting the PBR Act amendments at home—which fostered further support for the movement and mobilization against the amendments.

The transformative power that developing world actors can have in developed regions is often overlooked. My analysis explicitly explores these less-studied developing-to-developed world flows of influence. I demonstrate that actors based in the developing world had the expertise and preparedness to provide the assistance necessary for the farmers' rights movement to triumph in opposing the PBR Act amendments while networks based across the developed world left the intellectual property movement struggling to generate backing for their position. These findings prove that transnational networks based in the developing world can play a larger role in influencing movement behavior and political outcomes in advanced democracies than previously considered. My research thus urges us to take more seriously the influence of developing world actors—including the most marginalized and poor—on political and social change worldwide and encourages us to devote more resources to facilitating the transfer of knowledge, rhetoric, and material assistance from developing countries to other regions.



Erica Blom is the winner of the 2011 Graduate Student Paper Competition, sponsored by the Global Division and Critical Sociology. This essay is drawn from her winning paper. She is currently a PhD Candidate in Public Policy and Sociology at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and the Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED BY MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL DIVISION



Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity by **Debra J. Davidson and Mike Gismondi** (Springer, 2011)

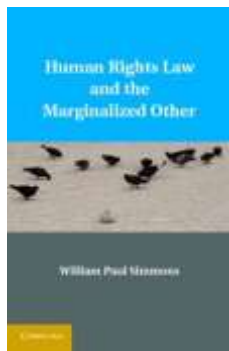
Two intersecting moments of the Twenty-first Century define our politics, economies, and future prospects for civilization: the mounting evidence for global climate change, now unequivocally attributed to socio-economic activities, and its de-stabilizing effects on our biosphere, combined with the end of easy oil and the easy wealth it generates. On the energy question, non-conventional fossil fuels have been promoted by political elites as the next most attractive development option. The development of nonconventional fuels, however, does nothing to alleviate either climate change or the falling rate of energy supply, and generates multiple social and environmental consequences. The largest endeavor marking this historic nexus—indeed the largest industrial project in history, is the extraction and processing of the Athabasca tar sands in Alberta, Canada. The social, environmental, and most importantly political outcomes of this grand experiment will reverberate throughout the global polity, and either encourage or caution against increasing our dependence on such non-conventional fuels and assuming the multiple costs such dependence will entail. Planning for reflexive societal change requires that we first ask how such giga-projects are legitimated, and who is challenging this legitimacy? In this book we trace how language and visual representations are used to reinforce or challenge the legitimacy of development of the Athabasca tar sands, and draw on our insights to contemplate likely energy and climate futures.



Globalization and Beyond: New Examinations of Global Power and its Alternatives edited by **Jon Shefner and Patricia Fernández-Kelly** (Penn State University Press, 2011)

If ever there was a tangible demonstration of the desire of people worldwide for a new world order, it was the enormous turnout in Washington, D.C., for the presidential inauguration and the rejoicing throughout the world at this signal of change in the offing. The neoliberal project was dealt a critical blow in the waning months of the Bush administration by the crushing tide of recession sweeping the globe. But the hegemony of the United States and of the international institutions it has used to maintain its economic dominance has been in decline for some years now, suggesting the need to explore alternative ways to carry out globalization's imperatives. In *Globalization and Beyond*, leading scholars take up the challenge of examining the current state of economic crisis and the variety of ways in which different countries (as well as different groups) are responding to it.

Aside from the editors, the contributors are: Giovanni Arrighi, Walden Bello, Fred Block, James M. Cypher, Raúl Delgado Wise, Cristina Escobar, Frances Fox Piven, Gary Gereffi, Alejandro Portes, William I. Robinson, Catherine Walsh, Alexandria Walton Radford, and Lu Zhang.



Human Rights Law and the Marginalized Other by **William Paul Simmons** (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

This is a groundbreaking application of contemporary philosophy to human rights law that proposes several significant innovations for the progressive development of human rights. Drawing on the works of prominent "philosophers of the Other" including Emmanuel Levinas, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Judith Butler, and most centrally the Argentine philosopher of liberation Enrique Dussel, this book develops an ethics based on concrete face-to-face relationships with the Marginalized Other. It proposes that this ethics should inspire a human rights law that is grounded in transcendental justice and framed from the perspective of marginalized groups. Such law would continuously deconstruct the original violence found in all human rights treaties and tribunals and promote preferential treatment for the marginalized. It would be especially attentive to such issues as access to justice, voice, representation, agency, and responsibility. This approach differs markedly from more conventional theories of human rights that prioritize the autonomy of the ego, state sovereignty, democracy, and/or equality.



Benchmarking Muslim Wellbeing in Europe: Reducing Disparities and Polarizations by **Pamela Irving Jackson** and **Peter Doerschler** (The Policy Press, Forthcoming).

The debate about Muslim integration throughout Europe has been increased by the recent shocking events in Norway. This highly topical book aims to undermine unsubstantiated myths by examining Muslim integration in Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, states which dominate the debate on minority integration and the practice of Muslim religious traditions. These nations have a range of alternative relationships between religion and the state, as well as strategies for coordinating individuals' ethnic and state identities. Using the European Parliament's benchmarking guidelines, surveys and other non-official data, the authors find that in some areas Muslims are in fact more integrated than popularly assumed and suggest that, instead of failing to integrate, Muslims find their access to integration blocked in ways that reduce their life chances in the societies in which they are now permanent residents.

The book will have an impact on research and policy especially with the commencement of the EU-wide integration benchmarking effort and will be an excellent resource for researchers, academics and policy makers.

NEW ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS PUBLISHED BY MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL DIVISION

Edward Gaier and Jason Smith. 2011. "Improving Governance through Symbiotic Media Structures." *Democracy & Society*, 8(2).

Heidi Hoefinger. 2011. "'Professional Girlfriends': An Ethnography of Sexuality, Solidarity, and Subculture in Cambodia." *Cultural Studies*, 25(2).

Tony Roshan Samara. 2011. "Building coliseums, living in shacks: construction workers in the shadow of the world class city," in Eddie Cottle (ed.) *South Africa's World Cup: A Legacy for Whom?* University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Jon Shefner and Julie Stewart. 2011. "Neoliberalism, Grievances and Democratization: An Exploration of the Role of Material Hardships in Shaping Mexico's Democratic Transition." *Journal of World Systems Research*, 17(2).

Jason Smith. 2011. "Book Review: *The Politics of Global Regulation*, edited by Walter Mattli and Ngaire Woods." *Humanity & Society*, 35(1&2).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AWARD

The Global Division in cooperation with the Sage journal *Critical Sociology* announces its 2012 Graduate Student Paper Competition. The goal is to encourage critical scholarship in the areas of global or transnational studies and social problems. **Deadline: 5/1/12**

Suggested paper topics include but are not limited to the following themes:

- Transnational Public Sociology
- Knowledge Production about Globalization
- Democratizing Globalization
- The Politics of Human Rights
- Re-imagining Community
- Critical and/or Institutional Ethnography and Global Governance
- Transnational Corporate Accountability
- Immigration, Citizenship, and Global Justice
- Globalization and Environmental Justice
- Transnational Movements
- Transnational Organizing within the Global South
- Gender Issues in Globalization
- Transnational Families

OUTSTANDING BOOK AWARD

The Global Division is pleased to announce its 2012 Outstanding Book Award. Given the massive growth of interest and research in the areas of global studies and social problems over the last decade, the Award is intended to recognize published work of exceptional quality in these areas and to encourage further critical scholarship about them. We are particularly interested in books that link critical politics and activism with analytical and theoretical rigor.

Deadline: 4/9/12

Accordingly, books on a variety of topics and themes will be considered for the Award:

- Alternative models of globalization
- Global dynamics and forms of resistance to neoliberalism (including the post-Washington Consensus era in Latin America, Asia, Africa, or the Middle East)
- Transnational social movements
- Human rights struggles and global activism (around gender, indigeneity, migration, peace, social justice, etc.)
- Transnational communities and cultural politics
- Global cities

SSSP GENERAL ELECTIONS

The 2013 General Election is currently available online. We are looking for candidates to run for President-Elect, Vice President Elect, Board of Directors, Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee, Editorial and Publications Committee, Membership and Outreach Committee, and Committee on Committees. If you are interested in running for one of these positions, please follow the [link](#) and submit the form.

NEW RESOURCE FOR RESEARCH ON GLOBAL MEDIA

Internews is pleased to launch the [Global Internet Digest](#), a weekly publication highlighting trends in digital and social media that intersect with freedom of expression, policy, privacy and censorship. The Digest features information about relevant news, research and online resources. It also includes an interactive calendar highlighting important events taking place around the world. The Digest is available on our website and via email.

**PLANNED GLOBAL DIVISION SPONSORED AND CO-SPONSORED
SESSIONS FOR THE 2012 CONFERENCE IN DENVER**

*Submissions/inquires should be sent to
corresponding session organizers' emails*

SESSION 20

*Assessing Stereotypes of Immigrants as
Offenders*

Organizer: Peter Ibarra (pibarra@uic.edu)

*Co-sponsored with the Crime and Juvenile
Delinquency and Racial and Ethnic
Minorities Divisions

SESSION 55

Emerging Frontiers in Globalization Theory

Organizer: John G. Dale (jdale@gmu.edu)

SESSION 56

*New Developments in Development and
Inequality*

Organizers: David A. Smith
(dasmith@uci.edu) and Bhavani Arabandi
(barabandi@ithaca.edu)

SESSION 57

*Transnational Social Movements and the
Making of Social Change*

Organizer: Tony Roshan Samara
(tsamara@gmu.edu)

SESSION 58

*Sustainability, Ecological Justice and
Globalization*

Organizer: Jennifer J. Reed
(reedj32@unlv.nevada.edu)
*Co-sponsored with the Health, Health
Policy, and Health Services Division

SESSION 59

*Institutional Ethnographic Approaches to
Governance*

Organizers: Lauri J. Grace
(lauri.grace@deakin.edu.au) and Lauren E.
Eastwood (eastwole@plattsburgh.edu)

*Co-sponsored with the Institutional
Ethnography Division

SESSION 60

Immigrant Workers and the State

Organizer: Daniel Tope (dtope@fsu.edu)

*Co-sponsored with the Labor Studies and
Racial and Ethnic Minorities Divisions

SESSION 61

*Egypt, Wisconsin, and the UK: Class 'Acts'
in a Digital Age*

Organizer: Shawn A. Cassiman
(shawncassiman@gmail.com)

*Co-sponsored with the Labor Studies and
Poverty, Class, and Inequality Divisions

SESSION 62

*Sporting Ideals vs. Realities: Activism and
International Sport - THEMATIC*

Organizer: Elizabeth Cavalier
(bethcavalier@gmail.com)

*Co-sponsored with the Sport, Leisure and
the Body Division

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