

Dear Participants,

I am really excited to meet you all at the Reading International Business Masterclass. I am Vivek Soundararajan. I'm an Associate Professor of International Management and a Deputy Director of the [Centre for Business, Organisations, and Society](#) at the University of Bath School of Management, UK. I also lead a research initiative called [Embed-Dignity](#).

I conduct research on two interconnected areas, namely a) working conditions and b) inequalities in organisations, with the overarching objective of embedding dignity in organisational practices. Under the theme of working conditions, my research focuses on improving working conditions in the international business operations and supply chains of organisations. In my empirical research, I employ various qualitative methods such as interviews and observations to collect data from a diverse group of stakeholders. My fieldwork mainly took place in India and the UK, but I am currently working on ongoing projects in Thailand and Bangladesh with my collaborators. While I have primarily focused on the textile and garment sectors, my ongoing research projects include fisheries and information technology. Some papers on this topic:

- Locke, R., Amengual, M., & Mangla, A. (2009). Virtue out of necessity? Compliance, commitment, and the improvement of labor conditions in global supply chains. *Politics & Society*, 37(3), 319-351.
- Crane, A., Soundararajan, V., Bloomfield, M. J., LeBaron, G., & Spence, L. J., (2022). Hybrid freedom: Worker hostels and the problem of freedom and unfreedom in South Indian garment supply chains. *Human Relations*. 75(10): 1928-1960.
- Soundararajan, V., Khan, Z., Sahasranaman, S., & Jain, T. (2021). Multinational enterprises and the governance of sustainability in emerging market supply chains: An agile governance perspective. *Journal of World Business*. 56 (2): 101149.

Research on working conditions requires a deeper understanding of societal and organisational inequalities. So, I cover various inequalities in my research on working conditions. Additionally, I have developed a parallel research stream specifically focused on inequalities. My current focus is on inequalities in developing countries, particularly India, and their influence on organisations and global supply chains. Here are some papers on this topic:

- Bapuji, H., Ertug, G., & Shaw, J. D. (2020). Organizations and societal economic inequality: A review and way forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 60-91.
- Bapuji, H., Chrispal, S., Vissa, B., & Ertug, G. (2023). Local, yet global: Implications of caste for MNEs and international business. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 1-34.
- Jamali, D., Karam, C., Yin, J., & Soundararajan, V. (2017). CSR logics in developing countries: Translation, adaptation and stalled development. *Journal of World Business*, 52 (3): 343-359.

These two research themes will create exciting and valuable discussions that I look forward to having with you.



Vivek Soundararajan

Dear masterclass participants,

On March 30, I will be meeting you (online) in the PhD Masterclass, which I very much look forward to. My name is Khadija van der Straaten. I am Assistant Professor of International Business and Sustainability at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands. I am also a former masterclass participant and PhD Candidate at the University of Amsterdam Business School.

To introduce my research; it examines how the activities of MNEs affect larger development issues such as poverty and inequality, and the role that institutions play in this context. My work is strongly embedded in the international business field, but directly relates to its interdisciplinary interests, which are very prominent with regard to societal issues. I hence also draw on institutional theory, sociology and development economics. I'm particularly interested in how MNEs affect inequality, in general, and in terms of gender in particular. For instance, questions I have been working on are: Is there a difference in how MNEs treat men, women, immigrants and locals, compared to domestic firms? Do external stakeholder pressure and/or MNE internal CSR policies have an effect on wages and working conditions in MNEs and their GVCs? Do women in countries with high levels of gender inequality benefit from working for an MNE from a more gender egalitarian country?

My line of research ties into the recent academic, and political, debate on the impact of MNEs' activities on their host countries' (sustainable) development. Background papers on this debate, including one of my own, include:

1. Buckley, P. J., Doh, J. P., & Benischke, M. H. (2017). Towards a renaissance in international business research? Big questions, grand challenges, and the future of IB scholarship. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 48(9), 1045-1064.
2. Kolk, A. (2016). The social responsibility of international business: From ethics and the environment to CSR and sustainable development. *Journal of World Business*, 51(1), 23-34.
3. Brandl, K., Moore, E., Meyer, C., & Doh, J. (2021). The impact of multinational enterprises on community informal institutions and rural poverty. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1-20.
4. van der Straaten, K., Pisani, N., & Kolk, A. (2020). Unraveling the MNE wage premium. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 51(9), 1355-1390.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions on this debate.

Kind regards,



Khadija van der Straaten

Dear participants,

I am looking forward to sharing several days with you at the Reading International Business Masterclasses. My name is Ari Van Assche. I am a Full Professor of International Business at HEC Montréal (Canada) and Visiting Professor at the University of Reading. I am also Editor-in-chief-elect of the *Journal of International Business Policy* and Director of the International Institute for Economic Diplomacy. A recipient of a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I generally (but not always!) take an economic angle to look at questions related to International Business, Development and Policy.

The leitmotif throughout my research is that IB has the transformative power to alleviate or exacerbate societal challenges, ranging from economic issues such as development to social concerns such as inequality, and that IB scholars should therefore study (1) how IB relates to societal challenges; and (2) what actions governments can take to shape international business for the good.

Two streams of recent research demonstrate my interest in these questions. A first stream examines how global value chains (GVCs) influence economic development, and what this means for IB policy. I look at this from different angles: How have GVCs transformed cities, regions and clusters? When does a region's participation in GVCs lead to economic development? How do supply chain practices influence social outcomes (e.g. inequality, labor conditions)? Which capabilities should lead firms develop to promote sustainability along their GVCs? Here are two papers in this research areas:

- Gereffi, G. (2019). Global value chains and international development policy: Bringing firms, networks and policy-engaged scholarship back in. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 2(3), 195-210.
- Turkina, E., & Van Assche, A. (2018). Global connectedness and local innovation in industrial clusters. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 49(6), 706-728.

A second stream analyzes how geopolitics influence international business. As recent economic tensions between the US and China illustrate, IB policies are always implemented in a political context, and so there is a need for IB scholarship to integrate political economy notions in their analysis. My own work has focused on China's Belt Road Initiative and the US Chips & Science Act but there are many other areas where this can be applied. Here are two papers in this research area:

- Li, J., Van Assche, A., Li, L., & Qian, G. (2022). Foreign direct investment along the Belt Road: A political economy perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1-18.
- Farrell, H., & Newman, A. L. (2019). Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion. *International Security*, 44(1), 42-79.

These research areas are bound to generate heated discussions given today's turbulent geopolitical context. I am much looking forward to having them with you.

Best regards,



Ari Van Assche

Dear IB and Development Masterclass,

It is a pleasure and honour for me to be part of this Masterclass, as I was a PhD student at Reading some years ago!! My name is Pavida Pananond. I am a Professor of International Business at Thammasat Business School of Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand, where I have been based since my return from Reading (don't ask me how many years!!). In addition to my academic work, I also serve as a director on the Board of PSL, a Thailand-based bulk carrier company, an experience that allows me to see first-hand the impacts of international business on business.

My main research interest is global strategy, with specific reference to how companies in emerging markets develop and expand overseas. As a Thai who is based in Southeast Asia, where many of these companies began as suppliers in the value chain of foreign multinationals prior to their own international expansion, my interest also covers how these firms upgrade and navigate their roles within the value chain of their industries. So, in academic parlance, you might say that my research is the intersection of two key areas—the international expansion strategy of emerging market multinationals and the role of emerging market firms in global value chains. This view provides a different angle to the studies on global value chains, in contrast to the traditional view looked through the lens of global lead firms. These two articles address these points further:

1. Lee, J. and Gereffi, G., 2015. Global value chains, rising power firms and economic and social upgrading. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 11(3/4), pp. 319-339.
2. Pananond, P., Gereffi, G. and Pedersen, T., 2020. An integrative typology of global strategy and global value chains: the management and organization of cross-border activities. *Global Strategy Journal*, 10(3), pp.421-443.

As recent challenges on globalisation from the pandemic and other geopolitical/geo-economic tensions cast doubt on the future directions of global value chains, issues concerning resilience and sustainability increasingly attract more attention. Questions on what resilience is and what it means for different stakeholders along the value chain are widely discussed in various circles, from academic to managers and policy makers. Concerns are also growing on whether resilience and sustainability might bear different impacts on suppliers in developing economies. These two articles provide different perspectives that we can be further discuss:

3. Gereffi, G., Pananond, P. and Pedersen, T., 2022. Resilience decoded: the role of firms, global value chains, and the state in COVID-19 medical supplies. *California Management Review*, 64(2), pp.46-70.
4. Ponte, S., 2022. The hidden costs of environmental upgrading in global value chains. *Review of International Political Economy*, 29(3), pp.818-843.

I very much look forward to meeting and discussing all these issues with you. See you (virtually) soon!!

Best regards and Sawasdee ka,

Pavida

## Xiaolan Fu

Xiaolan Fu is the Founding Director of the Technology and Management Centre for Development, Professor of Technology and International Development at the University of Oxford, and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She is currently Director of Research of Oxford Department of International Development at the University.

Her research interests include innovation, technology and industrialisation; trade, foreign direct investment and economic development; and emerging Asian economies. She is appointed by the Secretary-General of United Nations to the Governing Council of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed the Counties and to the Ten-Member High Level Advisory Group of the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism. She is a winner of 2021 Falling Walls Scientific Breakthrough Award.

She has published extensively in leading international journals. Her recent books include *Oxford Handbook of China Innovation* (2022), *Innovation Under the Radar: The Nature and Source of Innovation in Africa* (2020), *China's Path to Innovation* (2015), *China's Role in Global Economic Recovery* (2011), *The Rise of Technological Power in the South* (2010), and *Exports, FDI and Economic Development in China* (2003).

In particular, she is interested in the role of trade and FDI in international technology diffusion and development in the host developing countries. Some of her work include:

### Multinationals, technology transfer and development

1. Fu, Pietrobelli, and Soete, (2011) 'The role of foreign technology and indigenous innovation in emerging economies: technological change and catch-up', *World Development*, v39, no 7, 1203-1212.
2. Fu, X., Emes, D. and J. Hou, (2021) Multinational enterprises and structural change in developing countries: A survey of literature. *International Business Review*. vol 30, issue 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2021.101801>
3. Fu, X. and Ghauri, P. (2020) Trade in intangibles and global trade imbalance, *World Economy*, Vol. 44, Issue 5, 1448-1469 <https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.13038>
4. Fu, X., Buckley, P., Sanchez-Ancochea, D. and Hasan, I. (2021) 'The World has a Unique Opportunity', *J of International Business Policy*. 5, 406–415 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s42214-021-00124-7>

### The impact of FDI from the Global South

5. Fu, X., Buckley, P. and X. M. Fu (2020) The Growth Impact of Chinese Direct Investment on Host Developing Countries, *International Business Review*. Vol 29, issue 2. 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.101658
6. Li, J., Van Assche, A., Fu, X. et al. The Belt and Road Initiative and international business policy: A kaleidoscopic perspective. *J Int Bus Policy* 5, 135–151 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-022-00136-x>