

The Rising Powers and Global Standards Research Network

The global economy is being transformed by the 'Rising Powers' – especially China, India and Brazil. One aspect of this transformation is how these economies are challenging the rules that govern international trade and global production, in particular global environmental and labour standards. For the developing world, meeting international standards is increasingly critical. We are now more aware about the food we eat and how it came to our plates, or whether what we wear implied sweatshop labour. Yet, gains from compliance – especially for workers and poor producers – remain unclear. Expanding trade between the RP economies, their growing domestic consumer markets and the emergence of leading firms from China, India and Brazil raise questions on how global standards will be shaped in the future, who the key drivers will be, and what implications arise for small producers and poor workers in the developing world. Understanding these processes, and their policy implications, are important if we are to avert a 'race to the bottom' with declining labour and environmental standards.

The Rising Powers and Global Standards (RPGS) Research Network assembles an international group of experienced researchers and policy actors to formulate a comparative research programme to address this agenda. It is led by Dr Khalid Nadvi (IDPM, SED) and brings together colleagues from SED, MBS and SoSS within Manchester as well academics from other UK institutions, the US, Europe and from the developing world. Visiting Fellows from Brazil, China and India will spend time in Manchester working on the research programme and a number of international and regional research workshops will be organised – including a research conference in Manchester in summer 2010. The network, in addition to producing research output in the form of journal submissions, will work towards developing a research proposal for submission to the ESRC in late 2010 for the next funding round of the ESRC's Rising Powers programme.