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MAPPING NETWORKS: LABOR, SPACE, AND GLOBALIZATION

In this paper I seek to do three things. First, I argue that globalization is a geographical process which is connecting different parts of the planet together in new and different ways and that this has implications for how workers are connected together (or not). Part of this involves considering how globalization has been viewed as a process of spatial rescaling (e.g., that it marks the "delocalization" and/or the "denationalization" of social life). In particular, the metaphors which have been used to understand and represent this rescaling have important implications for how the relationships between different scales – the local, the regional, the national, the global – are comprehended and so for how GPNs are understood. Second, I take GPNs to be networks of embodied labor which is geographically situated and show that labor's spatial embeddedness in place and how workers are connected across space have implications for GPN dynamics. Finally, I provide brief overviews of two cases of labor organizing across GPNs, these being that of the International Research Network on Autowork in the Americas (IRNAA) and the 1998 labor dispute between General Motors and the United Auto Workers union which virtually shut down GM's North American operations for several weeks and caused the company to lose more than $1 billion in profits.