Women Workers and the Politics of Claims-Making: The Local and the Global

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the evolving politics of claims making in relation to women workers in the global South. It asks what claims are being made and by whom, who these claims are addressed to and what strategies are being employed to press these claims. It distinguishes between women working for global markets and those working for domestic markets in order to identify possible differences in constraints, priorities and opportunities underlying these strategies. It also distinguishes between the different kinds of organizations involved in making claims: organizations *of* women workers, organizations working *with* women workers and organizations working *on behalf* of women workers. The article is one of several papers forming a cluster on feminist mobilizations.

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INTRODUCTION

The Changing Context of Claims Making in a Globalizing Economy

This article analyses the evolving politics of claims making by women workers in the global South in an era of increasing globalization. It argues that the global context is an integral element in this politics, regardless of the geographical location of the workers concerned or their relationship to the global economy. Consequently, the conceptual tools developed to understand labour activism when it was largely confined to national boundaries need to be revised to take account of the new terrain within which the politics of claims making is playing out.

Wright's (2000) distinction between the structural and associational power of the working class is a useful place to start this process of reconceptualization. He defined *structural* power as externally determined, deriving from the strategic location occupied by particular groups of workers within the economy. *Associational* power referred to forms of power that emerged out of the collective organisation of workers. Structural and associational sources of power tended to converge in the early phase of industrialization in the global North. Privileged sections of the working class, predominantly white and male, were able to form their own trade unions, drawing on their strategic location in their economies and the associative potential generated by the geographically concentrated, mass-production systems of the Fordist era. Their ability to exercise collective strategies, such as the closed shop, collective bargaining and strike action, garnered material gains for their membership, which in turn meant that they could rely on its financial contributions and collective backing to pursue further gains. There was thus a strong productivist bias to the politics associated with the trade unions that flourished in that era.

Trade unionism was transplanted with relative ease to the large public sector enterprises and capital-intensive forms of production which characterised the earlier import-substituting phase of industrialization in developing countries. The unions failed, however, to reach out to the vast majority of working men and women in these countries who were concentrated in informal activities characterised by easy entry, precarious earnings and the absence of a clear-cut employer-employee relationship.

Since the 1970s, changes in the world economy have eroded the power of the old trade union movement. The ascendancy of neo-liberal ideologies has made the pursuit of market-led growth the central driving force in shaping the pace and pattern of globalization. It has put pressure on countries to hone their international competitiveness through the deregulation of their labour markets in what has been termed 'a race to the welfare bottom'. The fragmentation of production processes made possible by new technologies and the outsourcing of labour-intensive stages of production to low-wage locations in different parts of the world has replaced the concentrated and stable workforce of the Fordist era with an increasingly dispersed and flexible one. The new hyper-mobility of capital and its ability to to pursue cost-cutting strategies on a global scale has meant that transnational companies can now relocate, or use the threat of relocation, to discipline the workforce and to force cost-cutting strategies on local employers. These changes have not only undermined the effectiveness of existing unions but also impeded the emergence of collective identities and interests among the post-Fordist labour force.

Women have increased their labour force participation rates throughout much of this period. Their most visible gains have been in labour-intensive export sectors in developing countries where they have been the preferred source of labour for obvious reasons. They are 'free' from the 'fixed costs' associated with organized labour; hegemonic ideologies of the male breadwinner can be drawn on to justify paying them lower wages relative to men; and the continued gender stratification of occupational structure limits their livelihood options and hence their bargaining power. Furthermore, the fact that the work opportunities opened up to them by globalisation are concentrated in precisely those sectors that are characterised by highly mobile global capital has curtailed their capacity to organize (Seguino, 2000).

The barriers to collective action that women workers in developing country contexts faced in the Fordist era by virtue of their location in precarious forms of work have thus been compounded by the changes wrought by neo-liberal globalization. At the same time, other changes, many rooted in the processes of globalization itself, have opened up new possibilities for claims making. These changes include the internationalization of the women's movement, the proliferation of efforts to organize women workers in explicit response to the history of neglect by the official trade union movement as well as growing acknowledgement on the part of unions themselves that their future survival depends on their capacity to reach out to informal workers.

Reconceptualizing the Politics of Claims Making

The article will draw on some recent theoretical contributions in its attempt to reconceptualise the gendered politics of claims making within this changing global context. Fraser's work (2005) on the intersecting politics of recognition, redistribution and representation offers a useful framework for thinking through the distinctive nature of the claims likely to be made in relation to women workers. For instance, we would expect their claims for recognition to reflect their specific identities and experiences as a category of workers who straddle both market and family economy, who must reconcile their unpaid familial responsibilities with the demands of earning a living and whose economic contributions are likely to be culturally devalued by their society as well as by themselves.

We would expect their claims for redistribution to be inflected by gender, encompassing both generic class concerns that they share with male workers, such as poor wages and exploitative working conditions as well as gender-specific concerns such as wage discrimination, sexual harassment and occupational segregation. Finally, we would expect that the general failure of the trade union movement to reach out to women workers to have given rise to a gendered politics of representation as alternative forms of organization emerge in its place. This paper focuses on three broad categories of such organizations: organizations *of* women workers, where women make up a majority of members and hold leading positions; organizations working *with* women workers, generally NGOs of various kinds; and finally organizations that make claims *on behalf* of women workers and include a wide variety of labour, consumer and rights-based organizations.

Analysis of transnational advocacy networks and social movements provide important insights into the strategies deployed by organizations which lack the structural power traditionally associated with the trade union movement. It suggests that such organizations tend to pursue the 'soft power' strategies of persuasion and influence, making skilful use of information, symbols, leverage and accountability politics (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Of critical importance within these strategies is the 'framing' of ideas and meanings (Benford and Snow, 2000). The experience on the ground shows that the capacity of such organizations to get their claims heard does not only depend on the resources they are able to marshall. Equally important is their ability to shape the information, arguments, statistics, symbols and images at their disposal into compelling narratives that have the capacity to mobilize broad-

based support for these claims and that resonate with those who have the power to act on them. Keck and Sikkink also note the importance of interaction between the local and global efforts through ‘boomerang’ tactics whereby local organisations seek support at the international level in order to put pressure on their own recalcitrant governments.

Adding to this literature, analysis of the gendered politics of representation in relation to women workers suggests that we need to factor in the construction and consolidation of the associational power of certain categories of women workers as a strategy in itself. Studies of the claims-making strategies of already-existing organizations and networks have tended to miss this dimension but it has particular relevance to an important category of women workers that feature in our analysis, those working in the informal economy who have hitherto lacked voice and organizational capacity.

WOMEN WORKERS IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS: THE INTERNATIONALLY DRIVEN POLITICS OF CLAIMS MAKING

The Anti-sweatshop Movement and the Politics of Consumption

This study begins the analysis with the politics of claims making as it has played out in relation to women working for the global economy. The concept of global value chains (GVCs) is relevant here. It was developed to map the distribution of roles, responsibilities and value-addition in relation to goods and services whose production, distribution and consumption cut across national boundaries (Gereffi, 1994). GVCs in labour-intensive production of consumer goods (such as garments and footwear) and non-traditional agricultural exports (fruits and flowers) tend to be driven by large retailers and branded manufacturers who draw their profits from high-value research, design, sales and marketing stages which are characterised by high barriers to entry. The production end of the chain, on the other hand, is characterised by low barriers to entry and decentralized networks of highly competitive workshops, farms and factories, generally located in low-wage countries. It is at this end that most women workers producing for global markets are located.

The profitability of lead firms within these buyer-driven chains lies in their ability to carve out a niche for themselves in markets that are flooded with uniform, mass-produced consumption goods frequently indistinguishable from each other. To achieve this, they have

drawn on the power of advertising. They have transformed its role from the relatively mundane one of providing information about their products to the far more ambitous one of building a 'way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea' around their brands so as to transform them into objects of consumer desire (Klein, 2000: 23). Corporate advertising strategies have extended this branding process beyond the product itself to the 'branding' of entire aspects of the wider culture through, for instance, the corporate sponsorship of cultural events, the strategic placing of logos in the popular media and endorsements by celebrities considered to epitomize the spirit of the brand. This strategy has not only allowed them to reap huge rents but has also rendered the production process almost incidental to the enterprise 'It is the logo that matters, and hence it is to the owner of the logo that the profits accrue' (Ercel, 2006: 301).

Paradoxically, the central place assigned to brand image in these corporate strategies has proved to be their Achilles heel. Coalitions of civil society actors, including trade unions, NGOs, church organisations, human rights activists, consumer and student groups have come together in what has come to be known as the 'anti-sweatshop movement', based mainly in Europe and North America where most of the products within these GVCs are sold. They draw on the same power of publicity that endows essentially standard products with unique brand appeal and turn it on its head to illuminate what the corporations had successfully hidden from view: the conditions in which these products are made.

This has given rise to an imaginative, often humorous, repertoire of tactics revolving around the strategic use of information, symbols and action to exercise leverage over reputation-conscious firms. These include media exposés of high profile brands, parodies of advertisements, the drastic alteration of messages on billboards, national days of protest, leafleting relevant stores, bringing workers from off-shore locations on speaking tours, petitions, letters, email and telephone campaigns aimed at CEOs of brand companies.

The anti-sweatshop movement has been extremely effective in raising consumer consciousness and investing hitherto private acts of consumption with political meaning (Balsiger, 2010). It has mobilized a far larger and more diverse constituency of supporters than had been the case with traditional unions. Moreover, it has had an impact beyond the transnational corporations (TNCs) that are its direct targets. Most corporations with a brand image to protect now seek to pre-empt such campaigns or to gain competitive advantage by building their own reputation for corporate social responsibility. This has generally entailed

incorporating their own codes of conduct, based on some or all of the 'core labour standards' of the International Labour Office (ILO), into contracts with their suppliers in low-wage economies.

However, critics have pointed to the marginal role assigned within these campaigns to the largely female workforce on whose behalf these campaigns are conducted. The 'boomerang effect' as it operates in these campaigns tends to consist of northern actors bringing pressure to bear on globally mobile capital on behalf of globally immobile workers in the South (Wells, 2009). While representatives of these workers may be brought on speaking tours to give the consuming public a first-hand account of their oppressive working conditions, this does little to dispel the image of the sweatshop worker as passive victim of global capital, the hallmark of most of these campaigns.

Nor is it accidental that this image dominates the anti-sweatshop discourse. Research suggests that it is far easier to persuade consumers to avoid commodities that have been produced under negative conditions than to seek out those that have been produced in conditions that respect workers' rights (Elliot and Freeman, 2003). This means that anti-sweatshop discourses are more far effective when they frame Third World women workers as victims of ruthless global capitalism than as agents capable of protesting their conditions of work in solidarity with others. As Brooks (2002: 107) comments: 'Within the politics of the sweatshop, the hierarchies that are a part of production regimes are both shifted and deployed for the use of protestors in North America and Europe. Garment workers and sweatshops have become part of a circulation of signs and symbols, of virtual factories and permanent victimhood'.

What is frequently lost sight of in this cultural version of the politics of representation are the local-level struggles for voice and organization in the global South which may have sparked off these campaigns in the first place. Indeed, one of the critiques levelled at the anti-sweatshop movement is that it frequently bypasses the need to build the organizational capacity of the workers whose needs and rights they seek to represent and hence their ability to represent themselves. For instance, Brooks (2002) points out that the strategy of the Gap campaign of bringing workers from the Mandarin factory in El Salvador to tour the US to testify to their exploitative working conditions was extremely successful in capturing international attention, culminating in a monitoring agreement between Gap and the US-based National Labour Coalition. With the signing of the agreement, Mandarin workers dropped off

the agenda of anti-sweatshop movement and off the radar of the US consumer. Most of the women who had led the drive to unionize the factory and consequently lost their jobs were never rehired. Two years after her successful tour of the US on behalf of Mandarin workers, Brooks (2002) discovered Judith Viera, the 'poster child of the Gap campaign', working at a gasoline station outside San Salvador.

Moreover, while critics acknowledge that the anti-sweatshop campaign has been the main force behind the widespread adoption of codes of conduct by TNCs, they also point out that the impact of these codes has been uneven. One problem is that these codes are generally introduced in a top-down fashion by corporations so the workers they are meant to benefit play little role in formulating or monitoring them – and indeed may know very little about them (Prieto-Carrón, 2006). Research in China, for example, found that workers knew very little about the codes and feared loss of production orders were they to speak out (Ngai, 2005). In Vietnam, there was little different in the freedom enjoyed by trade unions in companies that had adopted codes of conduct and those that had not (Wang, 2005). Other studies suggest improvements in the working conditions of directly employed permanent workers, but less progress in relation to subcontracted or casual workers and also more progress on some conditions than others (Barrientos, 2008; Barrientos and Smith, 2007).

There are other limits to anti-sweatshop activism. First, not all TNCs are equally responsive to their 'naming and shaming' tactics. Multinationals that have invested in their brand image and claim to be socially responsible are more vulnerable (Bartley and Child, 2014; Oka, 2010). What also matters is the extent to which these corporations are located in countries where there is a strong labour movement and high levels of civil society activism. Those based in East Asia, for instance, may be relatively immune to anti-sweatshop politics because civil society activism is weak and there is less pressure from their governments to respect workers' rights along their value chains (Ambruster-Sandoval, 2005; Wang, 2005).

Second, the global mobility of capital means that TNCs can, and often do, 'cut and run' in the face of demands that appear to threaten their profits (Armbruster-Sandoval, 1999; 2005). Workers do not enjoy anywhere near the same degree of mobility and hence cannot exercise this exit option. Finally, divisions within the movement itself weaken its efforts to hold multinationals accountable. There are divisions, for instance, between trade unions who tend to prioritize unionisation as their key strategy and NGOs who seek independent monitoring by multi-stakeholder groups. There are divisions between northern and southern

groups, reflecting the unequal division of power and resources between them and the greater role assumed by northern groups in determining the priorities of campaigns (Wells, 2009).

Then there are divisions among southern-based labour organizations that reflect the gendered politics of class and the weight attached to feminist concerns with recognition within redistributive struggles. This in turn has given rise to a differentiated politics of representation among women workers, with some opting to work within existing unions, some working alongside them and some establishing their own autonomous organizations.

Local Politics in Global Value Chains

Working within the Unions

Women labour activists who are reluctant to break with the mainstream union movement have sought to reform it from within. One of the more positive examples of such efforts comes from the the banana sector in Central America. Frank (2005) documents how women unionists in Honduras were able to set up a separate Women's Committees within their unions and later gained separate structures to represent women members when banana unions came together to form, first a national coalition and then a regional federation of banana unions. The story was not one of linear progress. The few women who attained leadership positions had to find ways to reconcile their roles as union leaders, as women's advocates and as family breadwinners. But active antagonism from male members was held in check by supportive male unionists and what Frank (2005: 79) described as 'the growing legitimacy of women's presence' so that most men in leadership positons confined themselves to a 'vague, passive acceptance'.

Other studies of women's experiences within unions are less positive. In the Indonesian context, Ford (2008) found that while almost all national unions had separate structures for women, at least at the national level, women were largely absent from leadership positions, even in predominantly female unions. The challenges they faced echoed those faced by women unionists across the world: their joint responsibities at work and at home, resistance from husbands and the union's 'harsh environment – the territory of men' (Ford, 2004: 22). An entrenched male-dominated leadership monopolized power, assigning

women to note-taking roles within union meetings. Ford notes the way in which cultural expectations created a 'catch-22' situation for women activists: on the one hand, women's concerns could not become serious organizational issues unless women were prepared to become 'a *cukup* fighter' or 'quite a fighter' (Ford, 2004: 24) but this brought its own problems since such assertive behaviour went against socially prescribed norms of femininity.

Working alongside Unions

The Women's Centre in Sri Lanka, set up in 1982, is an example of an autonomous women's organization that works alongside unions in export-processing zones (Gunawardana, 2007). It was set up by women workers in response to the women workers' need to create a space to meet and discuss their particular problems. Unlike some of the other women's organizations active in the free trade zones, which confined themselves to training and service provision, the Centre actively sought to involve its members in union activities and to train potential trade union leaders through a gradual process of 'participation, confidence building and raising awarness' (Gunawardana, 2007: 92).

It played a leading role in encouraging women workers to join an independent trade union active in the export processing zones (EPZs). The refusal of the management to recognise the union led to the demand for a referendum to decide the issue. The Women's Centre used its contacts among the factory workers to mobilize their support for the referendum. It also mobilized support from transnational advocacy networks including No Sweat, the Clean Clothes Campaign, the Solidarity Centre and the Committee for Asian Women. The campaign was taken up with the EU and US in discussions about whether trade concessions under the Generalized System of Preferences should be linked to workers' rights. Not only was the union finally recognized but lessons from this experience led the Sri Lankan apparel industry to formally adopt the slogan of 'Garments without guilt' as a means of differentiating its products in global markets.

The Mexico City Network (MCN) is another example of an autonomous women's organization that has been working alongside unions since 1985 (Brickner, 2010). Its activities are oriented to women working in domestic markets as those in the maquilodoras. It

stood firm against efforts in the post-NAFTA period to displace early community-based activism in the maquilodoras in the drive for unionisation by powerful trade unions from the US and Canada seeking to forge solidarity with their counterparts in Mexico. The danger was that women's voices and interests, their concerns with sexual harrassment, gender discrimination, pregnancy testing, childcare, domestic violence and juvenile delinquency was being overshadowed by the traditional union focus on a narrowly workplace-defined politics of redistribution (Bandy, 2004).

The MCN pursued a number of different strategies to strengthen the voice and political agency of women workers so that their concerns remained on the agenda. First, it conducted programs to conscientize women workers about labour rights, women's rights, sexual harrassment, occupational health and discrimination, both within the unions and in the workplace. Second, it provided leadership training to women workers in order to enable them to take up positions of authority within the unions. This has been an uphill task: while some of those trained were able to bring specific issues to the union agenda, most found that 'the masculine character of labour unions remain(ed) intact and difficult to change' (Brickner, 2010: 11).

Third, it sought to raise public awareness about issues affecting women workers, particularly the issue of sexual harrassment. This took the form of public campaigns, publications and a weekly radio program. Finally, it engaged with the state to bring about policy change. It developed its own proposals for labour reform and lobbied members of left-leaning party to include some of these in the party's own proposals. It was active in pushing for legislative protection of domestic workers. It also trained union women in the skills they needed to run for electoral office so that more women workers would be involved in shaping public policy.

Building Alternative Unions

The other response to the difficulties of promoting gender issues within the mainstream unions has been the setting up of alternative women's unions. The Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation (BIGUF) was set up in 1994 by four ex-garment workers as an alternative to the partisan politics of the country's main trade unions. Of course, the fact

that it was set up with the support of Solidarity Centre, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), and funded by US Aid Agency (USAID) has raised questions about its 'independence' from US foreign policy goals (Rahman and Langford, 2014). Notwithstanding these allegations, BIGUF's track record suggests far greater responsiveness to the needs of women workers than much of the traditional trade union movement.

It supported its members in their attempts to improve their terms and conditions of employment as well as in their daily struggles at home and in the community (Dannecker, 2002). It employed two lawyers on a part-time basis to advise workers, established evening classes offering literacy and language skills and provided medical clinics in three centres. It also sought to avoid militant tactics, such as processions and street protests to address workers's grievances, opting instead for dialogue and arbitration between workers and employers, taking recourse to the law if this method failed. While this was perceived by Rahman and Langford (2014) as a 'bureaucratic model of union action', consistent with US interests in internal political stability, studies of women-led organizational initiatives in various countries reveal a similar reluctance to engage in more militant trade union tactics and a similar emphasis on the law and arbitration to resolve conflicts (Kabeer et al., 2013). This appears to reflect a form of unionizing that is more in keeping with the interests and priorities of women workers than forms of militant action that Rahman and Langford (2014) associate with 'authentic' unionism.

The Working and Unemployed Women's Movement (MEC) in Nicaragua is an example of a women's union that emerged out of internal struggle rather than as an externally facilitated intervention. It was set up in 1994 after repeated conflicts between women members of the CST (Sandanista's Workers Central), the country's largest trade union federation, and its largely male leadership (Bickham-Mendez, 2005; Prieto-Carrón, 2006). The women members objected to CST's hierarchical decision-making processes, the secondary importance given to women's issues (day care, health clinics) and its practice of channelling funds donated by international NGOs for the promotion of gender equality goals into more general projects.

The MEC set out to build an alternative ('for and by women') to the traditional trade union model. It eschewed CST's reliance on the 'old' tactics of strikes, collective bargaining and unionization combined with the 'new' transnational tactics of boycotts associated with the

anti-sweatshop movement, fearing that such actions jeopardized jobs and alienated factory owners and state officials. It opted instead for what it described as a strategy of 'self-limiting radicalism' (Bickham-Mendez, 2005: p. 139).

It worked with maquila women in their communities, conducting workshops to raise awareness of their rights and the state's role as primary duty bearer as well as 'private' issues such as domestic violence and reproductive health. It provided practical support in the form of income-generating activities, job training and micro-credit to unemployed women. It developed a Code of Ethics framed in terms of gender discrimination and human rights rather than ILO labour standards. Its campaign 'Jobs…Yes, but with Dignity' summarised what it believed to be the priorities of its membership: the right to work and rights at work. The campaign was launched at local and national levels but MEC was able to take it to the regional level as well. The campaign resulted eventually in a binding Ministerial Agreement on its Code of Ethics signed by all Free Trade Zones owners.

WOMEN WORKERS AND DOMESTIC MARKETS: THE LOCALLY DRIVEN POLITICS OF CLAIMS MAKING

This analysis turns now to the politics of claims making among women workers producing for domestic markets where the production chains tend to be extremely short or non-existent and where the work involved is largely informal. The politics of claims making among these workers presents its own challenges. Unlike the workers in GVCs who worked in physcially concentrated locations for clearly identifiable local employers or highly visible TNCs, women workers in domestic markets are extremely heterogenous. They may work as own-account workers, as unpaid family labour, as wage labour in small and medium enterprises or as subcontracted labour. Some are home-based piece workers in the least visible segments of global value chains (Carr et al, 2000). They may work on full time or part-time, regularly or irregularly, as temporary or permanent workers, on seasonal or year-round basis, within their homes or outside them; in geographically dispersed or concentrated locations; for employers, middlemen, the government, subcontractors or for themselves. They are often from groups that occupy a culturally devalued status in their society. What unifies them is that they fall

outside the definition of 'the standard worker' that dominates official policy discourse and below the radar of governments, trade unions and the anti-sweatshop movement.

Building Associational Power

New Forms of Organization

These conditions explain why building the associational power of these hitherto unorganized workers is often seen a necessary precondition for building their capacity to articulate their needs and interests and to mobilize around their claims, the politics of self-representaion. Given the precarious nature of the work and the marginalized social status of the workers, and the effort and risks associated with organizing, this process is typically initiated by NGO activists who are not necessarily drawn from the ranks of the workers themselves. One of the first challenges they face is the fact that the work the women do is very often regarded by the workers themselves and by the larger society as an extension of their familial roles and hence not 'real' work at all. Many of those organizing informal workers make a conscious political decision to register their organizations as unions in order to emphasize their collective identity as workers, although they interpret the concept of unionism in a way that seeks to align it more closely to the realities of their members' lives.

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was one of the first to adopt this strategy (Rose, 1992). It broke away from the Textile Labour Assocation in Gujerat in 1971 when it becme clear that its male dominated membership had very little interest in women working in the industry, and even less in those who worked on a casual, frequently self-employed basis. The fledgling organisation had to fight a major battle to register itself as a trade union. According to the Registrar of Trade Unions, the essence of trade unionism lay in collective bargaining between employers and employees: self-employed women, by definition, had no employers (Bhatt, 2013). SEWA organizers were able to prevail by arguing that self-employed women needed a union precisely in order to engage in collective bargaining but that their bargaining was with a wide range of actors, including employers, local government officials and middlemen. Once registered, it lobbied for state-certified

identity cards for its members to officialize their status as workers and give greater legitimacy to their collective identity.

SEWA set a precedent for other organisations of self-employed workers in India and elsewhere to opt for union registration. For instance, in the early 1990s, a group of university activists in the city of Pune in India began to organize waste pickers, largely women from the 'untouchable castes'. They opted to register the organization as Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) or the Trade Union of Waste-Pickers, in order to encourage members to regard themselves as 'workers' rather than as people 'rummaging through garbage', a common perception among the general public as well as among waste pickers themselves (Narayan and Chikarmane, 2013: 208).

Waste picking in India, as in other parts of the world, is not an exclusively female occupation and men have also joined KKPKP. The logo of the union, which features a stylized representation of a woman wastepicker, was contentious in the early years as many of the male members refused to accept the identity card which bore a logo which they believed demeaned them. Union members won the argument by pointing out that women represented the majority of the membership and faced greater challenges in their working conditions than men.

The Self-Employed Women's Union in South Africa modelled itself explicitly on SEWA and registered as a women-only union in 1993 (Devenish and Skinner, 2004). While its membership was largely made up of black women in various forms of informal self-employment, SEWU defined its members as workers rather than 'embyonic business women' because 'they are dependent on their work in order to survive and do not have access to key productive resources' (cited in Pillay 2008: 59). From the outset, SEWU's leadership sought to position the organization as part of the broader labour movement but its attempts to affiliate to COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), the largest trade union federation in the country, met with resistance from the largely male leadership who accused it of discriminating against men. It was liquidated in 2004 as the result of a financially crippling lawsuit.

That same year saw the registration of Sikhula Sonkhe, a union of women agricultural workers in South Africa's southern Cape province. This was the result of several years of organisation building by the Women on Farms Project (WFP), a women's rights NGO, itself set up by a legal rights organisation (Solomon, 2013). WFP organised women agricultural

workers into Women's Rights Groups through which it channelled its efforts to strengthen their capacity to voice demands and claim rights.

Registering these groups as a formal trade union allowed the workers to represent themselves since South African labour legislation required workers to be represented by registered trade unions. Sikhula Sonke is open to male members, but insists on women in leadership positions arguing that gender issues had been neglected by mainstream unions and female leadership was necessary if this was to be rectified (Schiphorst, 2011).

However, not all these newly emerging organizations opted for a union identity. In Latin America, for instance, extended periods of military rule meant that many workers' organisations began out as associations or co-operatives, often with the support of progressive clergy. With the end of military rule and lifting of the ban on unions, some categories of workers formed unions while others opted to remain as co-operatives. Domestic workers were an example of the former category, while street vendors and waste prickers were examples of the latter.

Uruguay has one of the most powerful movements of domestic workers. The restoration of democracy saw the establishment of the SUTD (Sole Union of Domestic Workers) which affiliated to the PIT-CNT (Inter-Union Assembly of Workers – National Convention of Workers), the country's only labour federation. While it has occasional rifts over sexism within the PIT-CNT, the latter remains their main political ally. In Brazil, the return to democracy in 1985 saw heightened social activism, including by domestic workers organizations (Anderfuhren, 1994). As a result, the progressive new constitution adopted in 1988 extended labour rights, including the right to unionize, to domestic workers for the first time in their history. Formal unions of domestic workers were set up in different regions. In 1988, the National Council of Domestic Workers sent four representatives to the first Latin American and Caribbean Domestic Workers' conference in Bogota, an important step in the growing internationalism of the Brazilian movement. In 1997, the different organisations came together as FENATRAD, the National Federation of Domestic Workers' Associations which subsequently affiliated to the National Confederation of the Workers of Commerce and Services and the Central Workers' Union.

In contrast to domestic workers, waste pickers and street vendors in Latin America – and elsewhere - have generally organized as co-operatives and associations. These are occupations in which both men and women are active but waste pickers, like domestic

workers, tend to be drawn from socially marginalized and economically vulnerable groups. Where the efforts of these categories of workers to organize have been successful, their demands have reflected the specific priorities of their members. For street traders, for instance, the priority has been to gain official recognition for their members' need for space in urban areas to carry out their activities as well as to provide access to finance for their businesss (StreetNet, 2012). Waste pickers organizations have sought to circumvent the middle-men who siphon off the profits that could be made from waste materials (Medina, 2008). This politics of recognition have brought with it intangible gains in terms of recognition: 'Working as part of a cooperative and wearing a uniform boosts waste pickers' self-esteem. In a recent survey in six Latin American countries more than 90 percent of waste pickers reported that they liked what they did and considered it decent work' (Medina 2008).

Some of these organizational efforts have grown over time. For instance, waste pickers co-operatives in the Latin American context initially came together in association at municipal level, but have grown into national movements and more recently begun to collaborate at the regional level. The Latin American Waste Pickers Network had its first meeting in Porto Alegre during the 2005 World Social Forum. It has played a vanguard role in the building of a Global Alliance of Waste Pickers, a networking process, with groups in more than 28 countries that began in 2005 and led to the First World Conference of Waste Pickers in 2008.

The 'Internal Politics of Information'

The other common thread woven into strategies for building the associational power of workers relates to what can be described as 'the internal politics of information'. This is part of the process of building women's recognition of the value of their work, their identity as workers and their knowledge of their rights. These discursive strategies are often combined with practical information and measures to provide members with the modicum of secrurity they need to translate awareness into collective action without jeopardizing their livelihoods.

The SEWA Academy provides its members with vocational training, and literacy classes as well as leadership skills and legal education to equip members for their encounters with police and the law. It also promotes co-operatives for a number of the occupations in

order to promote joint economic activities in marketing, storage and service provision. SEWA Bank is its largest co-operative and offers credit and savings services to members. Its second largerst co-operative, VimoSEWA, provides integrated insurance package while other co-operatives provide support services such as child-care and reproductive health.

KKPKP started out by offering formal training to its membership, albeit using participatory methods, but failed to capture their interest. The emphasis therefore shifted to field-based training. For instance, a member who complains about police harrassment is encouraged to register her complaint at the police station, accompanied by union staff and other members who have been through this experience and who can guide her through the process, thereby giving her a practical understanding of her rights and the processes of claiming them. The organization also addresses social issues thorugh its interaction with members, including child marriage, child labour, domestic violence and other forms of violence as and when these reach pivotal moments.

KKPKP combines its union builiding activities with measures to protect and promote livelihoods. It formed a credit cooperative which safeguards members' savings and provides loans, reducing their reliance on usurious money lenders. In 2006, it set up SwaCH (Solid Waste Collection and Handling), a cooperative run by members which has been authorized by the Pune Municipal Corporation to provide door-to-door waste collection and allied services to the citizens of Pune. This has helped to reduce the exploitative elements in waste picking as a livelihood activity and transform it into a profitable enterprise. It has also introduced a group life insurance scheme.

Sikhula Sonke made legal awareness the core of the early training it provided to the Women's Rights Groups (Solomon, 2013). The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 led to the passage of a raft of progressive laws and policies, many of which had direct implications for previously disadvantaged groups. WFP began to build awareness of these new provisions and to support their access to social protection entitlments, such as the Child Support Grant, for which they were eligible. Over time, its efforts expanded to include information on labour rights as well as the 'private' aspects of women's lives, particularly the high incidence of domestic violence.

Among domestic workers, the 'messy intimacy' characterising their working conditions, has made the struggle to build their identity as wage workers a difficult one, rendered even more challenging by the intersecting forms of inequality that make up their

social identity in many contexts. This has given rise to shifting political orientations over time. One reason that dometic workers' organizations in Brazil embarked on the trade union route was that its main supporters during military rule came from the progressive Left. Its class-theoretic analysis of domestic workers' conditions had far greater influence in shaping their political consciousness rather than the analysis of feminists and the black activists. Even when a leadership began to emerge within domestic workers' organizations, they felt that they had more in common with the black movement despite its *'machista'* orientation than with the primarily white and middle class feminist movement, many of whose members were their employers (Castro, 1993).

Initial mistrust of feminists gave way to closer alliance as interactions between domestic workers' associations and feminist organizations increased, and feminists became involved in advising domestic workers' associations. The feminist movement became the definitive national partner when a bill to protect domestic workers was rejected during the Constitutional Convention, partly due to the failure of the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Central—CUT), their main trade union ally, to provide the expected support. Instead, it was the feminist organizations who lobbied for the bill (Bernadino-Costa, 2011). Since 2001, the president of FENTRAD has been Creuza de Oliveira, an Afro-Brazilian woman who had been domestic worker since the age of 10 and a militant of the Unified Black Movement in Bahia since 1983. Under her leadership, the movement has forged stronger bonds with the feminist movement, acknowledging the tensions associated with the intersection of race, class and gender in shaping their experiences but stressing the need for solidarity (Cornwall et al 2013).

Strategies for Making Claims: Engaging with the State

A distinguishing feature of the strategies for claims making among organizations of women workers in the informal economy is their orientation towards national, local and municipal governments rather than employers and corporations. The logic for this is simple: these workers are either self-employed or, if in wage employment, work for many different employers or for small-scale employers and individuals who may not be in a position to address their claims.

SEWA's claims on behalf of its members have encompassed many typically trade union issues, such as wages, job security and better working conditions. But while it also uses direct forms of collective action, such as lobbying, demonstrations and sit ins, it tends to avoid the confrontational approaches typically associated with trade union activity in India (Bhowmik and Patel, 1997). Te Lintelo (2009) offers an interesting case study that traces the boomerang tactics through which SEWA was able to translate its claims on behalf of street vendors into public policy.

Street vendors were among the first group of informal workers to be organized by SEWA. One of its earliest demands on their behalf was the right to licenses issued by municipal authories allowing them to sell on publicly owned land. In the face of resistance from the municipal authorities, SEWA took their case to the Supreme Court in 1981 and won.

In 1988, Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA, was elected to the Indian Parliament and introduced a bill calling for a national policy for street vendors in India to integrate them into urban planning. The bill did not go through but it provided the template for later advocacy. SEWA began to build alliances with other groups working on street vending issues in India in order to amplify its influence in the policy domain. It also went international. In 1995, it convened a meeting of 27 street vendor representatives from 11 cities in five continents at Bellagio, Italy. The meeting led to the setting up of StreetNet, an international alliance of street vendors' organizations.

It also resulted in the Bellagio Declaration of Street Vendors whose policy objectives were substantially derived from Bhatt's parliamentary bill. These included a national policy for hawkers and vendors, the protection and expansion of existing livelihoods, legal access to use of appropriate and available space, legal status for vendors through licensing, provision of appropriate hawking zones and the need for mechanisms to enable dialogue between street vendors and state representatives.

The international status of the Declaration served to bolster street vendor policy advocacy in India. The National Alliance of Street Vendors India (NASVI) set up soon after adopted the guiding principles of the Bellagio Declaration. Growing attention to labour laws as part of economic reforms in the 1990s brought a greater focus on informal workers.

The first draft of the National Urban Street Vendors Policy in 2002 shows clear traces of preceding documents, including the 1988 parliamentary bill and the Bellagio Declaration. It acknowledged that current regulatory climate threatened the livelihoods of street vendors,

violating the constitutional duty of the Indian state to ‘protect the right of this segment of the population to earn their livelihood’ (see Te Lintelo, 2009). It accepted that street vending was a traditional Indian occupation that was beneficial to society and therefore entitled to the support of the state. These arguments had featured in SEWA’s advocacy efforts. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill was passed in 2014, incorporating many of the earlier demands, including representation of street vendors’ organisations in local governance.

Like SEWA, KKPKP draws on some of the tactics of traditional trade unions, such as mass rallies and sit-ins, in pressing its claims but distances itself from the more aggressive aspects of union politics. It is aware that the relationships of its members with middlemen in the ‘upstream’ sectors of waste processing are extremely exploitative but recognizes that these have been established over a period of time and have aspects of mutual interdependence. The costs of action which jeopardized these relationships would be borne by women whose livelihoods were extremely precarious and who had very little to fall back on.

Instead, KKPKP places a great deal of emphasis on empirical evidence and moral arguments to back up its claims. One of its early struggles was to seek recognition from the municipal government that waste pickers were ‘workers’ and waste picking was ‘work’. It argued that since the muncipalities were not required to segregate garbage into organic (biodegradable) and recyclable (non-biodegradable) waste, the performance of this task by waste pickers contributed to resource recovery and cost-saving for the municipality and to the broader goal of environmental protection. It backed this argument with evidence, first using data generated by the co-operative scrap store run by the union and later through an ILO-commissioned study on the contribution of waste pickers to the management of urban solid waste (Chikarmane et al., 2001).

The Pune Muncipal Corporation (PMC) conceded to their demands in 1996, becoming the first in the country to officially register waste pickers through the union. The Maharashtra State government subsequently directed municipalities to register waste pickers, issue them with identity cards and purse their integration into solid waste collection through their organisations or NGOs.

Once its members were recognized as municipal workers, KKPKP followed up with claims for welfare benefits for its members. Here too, it used evidence to back its claim, comparing the financial benefits of waste picking, which were largely reaped by the

municipalities, with the health costs associated with it, borne entirely by the waste pickers. It cited research showing that waste-pickers suffered from occupation-related musculo-skeletal problems, respiratory and gastro-intestinal ailments (Chikarmane et al., 2001). In 2002-03 the PMC became the first municipality in the country to institutionalise the Scheme for Medical Insurance for all Registered Waste-pickers in its jurisdiction.

KKPKP was part of an initiative in 2005 to form SWACHH (Solid Waste Collection Handling), a loose alliance of waste pickers' organisations from across the country (Samson, 2009). While some of these organizations are registered trade unions or co-operatives, most are NGOs registered as public trusts or societies. A number of these, like KKPKP, set up co-operatives or companies that complement their activities as a trust, society or union, reflecting an increasing trend to use business entities owned and run by waste pickers to achieve practical goals.

Organizations of waste pickers and their allies in other parts of the world have also engaged in legal battles to win policy and legislative change (Samson, 2009). With the backing of a sympathetic party in power, the waste pickers' movement in Brazil is one of the strongest in the world. It has combined formal engagement with the state with protest action to achieve important gains, including inclusion of the activity as an occupation in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations, charging government with providing alternative opportunities to co-operative members when closing a dump and requiring that all recyclable materials generated in state buildings be given to them. In Peru, waste pickers' co-operatives worked with supportive NGOs to bring about legislation that would formalize people, operators and enterprises involved in solid waste management, assigning work zones for co-operatives and other measures to integrate them into mumicipal waste management. In Colombia, an association of waste pickers overturned legislation that only permitted stock owned corporations to bid to provide cleaning services for urban municipalities, winning 'the right to compete'.

In the case of Sikhula Sonke, whose membership comprised of agricultural wage workers, claims have centred on economic issues such as unfair dismissal, unsafe working conditions, violation of minimum wage provisions, illegal deduction from wages, housing insecurity and intimidation of worker leaders. But it also addresses other 'private' aspects of its members' lives, including high rates of school drop-outs, food insecurity, violence against women and the legacy of alcoholism (Schiphorst, 2011). These involve demands on

employers, state as well as the local community. It has a strong stand on domestic violence which it communicates to men within the larger society as well as within its own membership. Men who want to join the union must sign a declaration that they will refrain from violence against women (Ericksson, 2008). WFP also supports its members to obtain interdictions again abusive partners.

Sikhula Sonke is not an affiliate of COSATU and prefers to distance itself from its partisan politics, although it does collaborate with the federation on selected issues relating to farm workers. It describes its own approach to labour disputes as direct but non-confrontional: 'We try to build relationships. It disadvantages members if you are constantly aggressive'. (General Secretary of Sikhula Sonke cited in White, 2010: 680). It is reluctant to advocate strike action: 'Workers have a right to strike, but striking can cause people to lose jobs and houses. There is always a way to bring parties together to try to solve the problems' (White, 2010: 681). If negotiation does not work, the organization seeks out the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). While these interactions have been extremely effective, with the majority of cases decided in the organization's favour, it reserves the option of referring cases to the Labour Court if it is not satisfied with the verdict.

Domestic workers, like farm workers, work for wages but their status as waged workers is more ambiguous, as we noted, because of the 'messy intimacy' associated with their location within the private sphere of the family. Their attempts to organize as workers have been slow and uneven in most countries. Uruguay and South Africa stand out as countries with some of the most progressive legislation on domestic work in the world. They provide useful case studies on the importance of workers' organizational capacity to translate progressive legislation into concrete improvements on the ground.

In Uruguay, the SUDT gained considerable momentum in 2002 when the Gender Department of the PIT-CNT, the country's only labour federation, took up the case of domestic workers, lobbying on their behalf with Frente Amplio, the left-wing party. When Frente Amplio won the presidential and congressional elections in 2004, the President announced his intention to create a wage council for domestic workers (Budlender, 2013).

The first law relating to domestic workers came onto the books in 2007 (Goldsmith, 2013). It gave domestic workers the same general labour and social security rights as other workers. This included provision for tripartite negotiation of wages and work categories in place of the Presidential Decree used for occupations that did not have wage councils. A wage

council for domestic service, Grupa 21, was created in 2008. The ministry invited the League of Housewives to represent the employers of domestic workers on the council. The demands presented by SUDT to Grupo 21, based on consultation with its members, covered an extraordinary range of issues: from a paid holiday on Domestic Workers' Day to equal opportunity and treatment with no distinctions nor exclusion on the basis of sex, race, colour, sexual orientation, religion. Negotiations over these demands extended over several months and not all the demands were accepted, but there was sufficient common ground by the end of 2008 to allow the government, employers and workers delegates to sign the first collective agreement for domestic service in the entire region.

The organization of domestic workers in South Africa followed a somewhat different trajectory (Ally, 2009). Efforts to organize domestic workers during the apartheid regime had not been very successful. Despite this, and partly due to the efforts of women's organizations to 'engender' democracy (Seidman, 2007), the post-apartheid democratic state introduced a raft of legislative interventions in an extensive effort to formalize, modernize and professionalize the occupation (Ally, 2009). Domestic work was recoded as domestic employment, domestic workers as employees, minimum wage legislation was passed and labour relations formalized to include efficient access to legal recourse in the case of unfair labour practices and inclusion in the government's Unemployment Insurance Fund.

In 2002, the state introduced Sectoral Determination Seven intended to set out terms and conditions of employment for workers in the Domestic Worker Sector as part of the formalizing process. However, despite some improvements in situation of domestic workers, expoitative wages and working conditions persisted. Ally suggests that this partly reflected the fact that the capacity of domestic workers to negotiate collectively on their own behalf was undermined by the fact that they were persistently positioned in official discourse as 'vulnerable' workers. Indeed, as domestic workers heard repeatedly from state officials, they were not just vulnerable, but 'the most vulnerable'.

This discourse of vulnerability had practical implications. For most formally recognized workers, collective bargaining arrangements were the primary vehicles through which wages and working conditions are negotiated. For those designated as vulnerable workers, on the other hand, wages and working conditions were the responsibility of the Employment Conditions Commission. While employers and workers opinions were solicited during investigation into the Determination and following its promulgation, the official

machinery was the final authority on minimum wages and workers' rights. The use of 'vulnerable worker' as the primary organizing trope of the state's efforts on their behalf, Ally suggests, had the practical effect of substituting state agency for the collective agency of the workers.

Local Organisations Go Global: Southern-led Transnational Activism

The location of informal women workers and their organizations within domestic markets has not prevented them from engaging in transnational networks and alliances in an effort to bring interntional pressures to bear on national governments. The setting up of WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) in 1997 represents an important milestone in the transnational evolution of this southern-led advocacy and activism. WIEGO emerged in the course of the efforts on the part of HomeNet, the global network of home-based workers, to persuade the ILO to pass an international convention on homework. The collaboration between HomeNet and SEWA with researchers from Harvard University to compile the evidence necessary to bolster their arguments with the ILO proved extremely effective. It gave rise to the creation of a global 'network of networks' that would build on the comparative strengths of activists and researchers.

WIEGO has focused its research efforts and policy advocacy on the working poor, particularly women among them, in the informal economy.[1] It attaches a great deal of significance to information politics, helping organisations of informal workers with research and statistics to strengthen their claims-making efforts in national policy processes. It has laso drawn on its associational power to provide support to its members in building national federations and regional networks, lobbying the ILO at its International Labour Conferences, linking its members with various international trade secretariats and influencing policy documents at national and international levels.

[1] Many of the studies drawn on in this paper have been published by WIEGO and can be retrieved from its website www.wiego.org (accessed on 26 January 2016).

However, not all categories of informal workers' organisations appear to be equally well positioned to make gains at the international level. A comparison of the challenges faced by street vendors and domestic workers illustrates why this might be the case. A key objective of StreetNet, which we noted was set up in the aftermath of the 1995 Bellagio meeting, has been to promote national policies and plans that recognize and protect the rights of urban street vendors. It encourages action by individual traders and their associations in pursuit of this goal along with lobbying city governments and international organisations, including the United Nations, the ILO and the World Bank.[2]

StreetNet faces a number of challenges in its efforts to mobilize its membership. One important challenge relates to the question of collective identity. StreetNet has sought to define street vendors as workers rather than entrepreneurs and to encourage this identity among its affiliates. Surveys suggest that many street vendors see their activity as an easy way to earn money rather than as an 'occupation' as such. They are often in direct competition with each other. They are also more likely to come together in defensive action in the face of crises, such as the threat of mass evictions, rather than as part of a collective committment to upgrading livelihoods and winning policy recognition (Mather, 2012).

Domestic workers' organizations offer a more successful example of transnational activism (Mather, 2013; Becker, 2012). Significant commonalities in their experiences and working conditions provided a strong basis for solidarity: their long history of social invisibility and economic undervaluation in most countries of the world, the personalized servitude which characterises their working relationships and largely female composition of the workforce.

Certain regions have progressed further than others in moving from national to regional mobilisation. Both SUDT and FENETRAD were among the domestic workers' groups from eleven countries from Latin America and the Caribbean who participated in the founding congress of the Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar (Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers) in 1988. In the Asian context, a workshop organized by the Committee for Asian Women in 2004 brought together domestic workers' organisations from five Asian countries to set up the Asian

[2] www.street.net (accessed on 26 January 2016).

Domestic Workers Network (ADWN) that includes domestic workers as well as NGOs working with them.

Growing interactions across national borders gave rise to the first ever global conference of domestic workers' organisations in Amsterdam in 2006. It attracted sixty participants from domestic workers' organisations across the world, along with global and national unions, migrant workers' support networks, labour support networks, ILO staff, concerned academics and, of particular significance, two global unions, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The conference ended with some key demands. The first was an international network of domestic workers' organisations: this led to the setting up of the International Domestic Workers' Network (IDWN) in 2008.

The second was a special ILO Convention for the rights of domestic workers. The IUF agreed to take a lead on the push for an international convention. This affiliation not only gave the new network political credibiltiy with trade unions across the world, it also meant that the IUF could represent the network within the ILO.

A critical concern of IDWN was to have domestic workers' representatives directly participating in the negotiations at the ILO's annual International Labour Conferences. Since only officially registered trade unions could participate in the workers' delegations from differnt countries at these conferences, there was a concerted effort to persuade trade unions to include a domestic workers' representative in their delegations. In 2010, around eleven domestic workers' leaders were members of the workers' delegation from their country, by 2011, this had increased to twenty. Others were included in the delegations of the IUF and ITUC global unions.

The convention was hard-fought, particularly during the first round of official negotiations in 2010. Many employer and government representatives resisted a Convention with legal obligations, and favoured a Recommendation that would merely offer guidance. The most supportive governments were those who had made most progress on legisation in their own countries, such as Uruguay, South Africa and Brazil but employers also became more constructive during the negotations of the 2011. The proposed Convention No 189 was accepted that year with a resounding majority.

CONCLUSION: REVISITING THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION, REDISTRIBUTION AND REPRESENTATION

This study has sought to analyse the politics of claims making among women workers in an era of accelerated globalization. Its analysis offers important insights into the way in which the earlier productivist bias of working class activism is being challenged by the intersecting politics of recognition, redistribution and representation by sections of the working poor that previously been largely excluded from organized processes of claims making. This concluding section summarizes some of these insights.

First of all, the paper highlights the relevance of the global context to the politics of claims-making among different categories of workers. While there is an inherently transnational dimension to this politics in the case of women working in global value chains, organizations of women working in domestic markets have also sought to combine transnational with local activism in order to address the multiple sites of power and authority that shape the terms and conditions of their work. At the same time, the structural location of these workers has been significant in differentiating the claims, strategies and organizations engaged in this politics.

The politics of claims making relating to women working in GVCs appears to be dominated by networks of largely northern-based organizations, including trade unions, labour rights activists, consumer groups and religious groups. These organizations have been particularly skilful in crafting a cultural politics of representation, drawing on information, images, testimonies and symbols, to advocate for labour rights on behalf of women workers in the global South. Their strategies are driven by the view that neo-liberal globalisation has forced countries to compete for investment and jobs through the steady erosion of labour standards and social protection across the world, the so-called 'race to the welfare bottom'. It is consequently in the interests of workers in the north as well as in the south to curtail the power of international capital.

The politics of representation plays out very differently in relation to women working for domestic markets in the global South, most often in the informal economy. Here it takes the form of building organizations of women workers who were previously unorganized and developing their capacity to articulate their needs and priorities. Official trade union

movements have not been prominent in these efforts. Instead, other kinds of labour associations and non-governmental organizations have taken the lead in working with these women and promoting their capacity for self-organization. It should be added that women-led organizations working with workers in GVCs (such as the MEC in Nicaragua and the Women's Centre in Sri Lanka) also appear to share this form of politics.

Secondly, while the different categories of women workers discussed in the paper have many needs and interests in common, there are important differences in the claims prioritized in different forms of collective action. Because the claims made by the anti-sweatshop movement in relation to women workers in GVCs have to cut across many different contexts across the world, they have been framed in universalistic terms, drawing on the core ILO labour standards. Their strong emphasis on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining claims resonate with the redistributive agenda associated with the formal trade unions, an important constituency within the ILO. The priority given to these particular rights reflects the fact that while they are considered a necessary precondition for achieving other rights, they are frequently suspended in export-oriented industries by governments in their attempt to attract foreign investment.

The claims made in relation to women working for domestic markets are more 'place-based', reflecting the working lives of specific categories of workers located in specific contexts. These are less likely to revolve around the right to organize, since there is less official interest in suspending their right to organize and the workers have a range of associational forms available to them. Instead, their claims encompass a broader range of needs and priorities, reinterpreting the politics of recognition from a redistributive perspective while reinterpreting the politics of redistribution through demands for recognition. Many of these women come from culturally devalued groups in their society, one of the reasons that they ended up in precarious informal work. The politics of recognition for these women has had to encompass both self and social recognition: their own acknowledgement of the value of the work they do, their identity as workers and their status as citizens and their demand for such acknowledgement from the rest of society. Such recognition is a precondition for engaging in the demands around redistribution.

Some of their claims around redistribution, such as better wages and working conditions, overlap with the productivist agenda of classic trade union movement. Others intersect with the politics of recognition to open up a much broader agenda for collective

action. Some of this reflects a gender-inflected politics of redistribution, concerns around sexual harassment, gender discrimination and pregnancy testing in the work place. Some of it brings issues conventionally deemed to be 'private' (such as domestic violence, male alcoholism, childcare support) onto the organizational agenda, suggesting that the public-private distinction had very little meaning in the lives of poor working women. And some of it relates to the specificity of particular occupations, such as demands aroud urban infrastructure (street vendors), paid leave (domestic workers) and occupational health and safety (waste pickers).

Claims around social protection, however, appear to be one set of claims that cut across different categories of workers, reflecting the shared precariousness that characterised their efforts to earn a living. As a result, along with practical measures to secure their membership's livelihoods, a number of organizations have sought state support for various forms of social protection for their members, including health insurance, social transfers of various kinds, pensions, housing security and minimum wages,

Third, there are important differences in the primary interlocutors who feature in this politics of claims making. While the anti-sweatshop movement relies heavily on consumer support to back its claims, and seeks government interventions on some occasions, their claims are addressed to transnational corporations whose behaviour they seek to influence. By contrast, while organizations associated with women workers in domestic markets have often sought to mobilize public sympathy for their cause, they generally address their claims to the state, at national, local and municipal levels. And as some of these organizations become active in transnational networks, they have sought to go beyond the core labour standards to promote conventions at the global level which address their membership's needs and can be used as leverage with their national governments.

While these differences in strategies reflect differences in the locations of the workers involved, they are also indicative of different perspectives about political opportunity structures. There is a widespread assumption in the globalization literature that global competition has seriously weakened the capacity and commitment of the state in protecting the rights of its workers. This explains the focus of the anti-sweatshop movement on promoting corporate social responsibility (Seidman, 2007). Yet claims addressed to the state have, in many contexts, resulted in sustained gains for women workers in domestic markets. The fact that states need to observe some degree of accountability to their citizens in any

miminally democratic context explains some of this responsiveness. Indeed, Goetz and Jenkins (this volume) point to the deliberative forums and monitoring mechanisms that have proliferated in recent decades precisely to improve responsiveness of public sector institutions. These have provided a range of entry points and possible locations for activists, including those representing women workers, to engage with the state on a range of different issues.

Such findings suggest the need for workers' organisations to invest more effort in working with the state. Legal mechanisms in place to protect workers from abuse and to arbitrate between workers and employers are accepted as legitimate in most contexts; making greater use of these mechanisms may go some way towards testing and strengthening them. Such a strategy resonates with the argument made by Seidman (2007: 133) that 'transnational campaigns might create more lasting protections for citizens at work if they reconceptualize their targets, seeking…to strengthen democratic states and their capacity to enforce national labour laws'.

The fourth point follows from this and relates to differences in the approaches taken with regard to the organizational capabilities of women workers themselves. As we noted, the anti-sweatshop movement has been criticized for bypassing the workers whose needs and rights they seek to represent rather than seeking to build these workers' capacity to represent themselves. The Asian Monitor Resource Centre (2006), a labour-based organization in Hong Kong that has been working on these issues since 1976, has spelt out this critique in some detail. It expressed its reservations about 'the current form of external solidarity driven by the consumer movement, in which the development of a workers' movement was increasingly dependent on external pressure on the basis of corporate codes of conduct while local organizing initiatives took second priority'. And it pointed out that 'one concern with the top-down strategy of engaging the global North is that although international pressure campaigns can generate quick results, they do not resolve the issue of maintaining workers' organisations at the local level. Empowerment of workers in workplaces and worker communities is vital …particularly where organizing is constrained'.

This takes us to our fifth and final point. We have noted that trade unions are making greater efforts to recruit women members and there is data to suggest that they are succeeding (UN Women 2015). At the same time, very few women occupy leadership positions: around 1 per cent in 2002, according to UN Women (2015; see also Cobble, 2007; Prieto and

Quinteras, 2004). A consistent theme that runs through the literature reviewed for this paper is the deep-seated fraternal and masculine orientation of much of the trade union movement: 'It is not uncommon to witness union tendencies towards macho bravado, paternalism, fraternal cultures of leadership, gendered divisions of labour in activism and resentment towards women's public voice and organizational style….' (Bandy and Mendez, 2003: 177). While these may be, as Bandy (2004) points out, expressions of 'defensive masculinity' that typify moments of labour history when male power is threatened by competition from women in the workforce or unions, they still constitute a major barrier to women's ability to participate as equals within the union movement.

The other side of the coin is the vital role played by autonomous women's organizations in promoting a more representative politics of claims making among women workers, regardless of their structural location. Here again the analysis in this paper resonates with that of Goetz and Jenkins (this volume) who seek to identify the factors that contribute to success in claims making efforts on the part of gender advocates and activists more generally. They attach particular significance to the strategic capacities of the claims makers in question, in particular, to their ability to frame issues in ways that will attract political support; their efforts to build coalitions; their willingness to exploit avenues for engaging with state authorities: in short, a move away from confronation to more productive forms of engagement.

The analysis here finds a similar 'strategic pragmatism' (Kabeer, 2008: 256) on the part of the autonomous women's organizations of, or working with, women workers, a form of politics that begins from ground-level realities. These organizations provide a space for women workers to develop a critical consciousness about the taken-for-granted inequalities that characterise their lives and livelihoods, to identify their own needs and priorities and then seek to devise strategies that are most likely to take these needs and priorities forward without jeopardizing their capacity to earn a living for themselves and their families. The studies reviewed in this paper strongly suggest that, given the fewer livelihood options available to women relative to men, they attach as much significance to protecting their right to work as to winning their rights at work: 'Jobs…Yes, but with Dignity'.

This may explain why they tend to avoid the confrontational tactics traditionally associated with trade unions– pickets, strikes, stoppages – or else treat them as a last resort. They turn instead to alternative strategies of 'soft power'of the kind discussed earlier in the

paper. They use the politics of information to promote women's self-recognition of the value of the work they do and to demand its recognition by government and society. They emphasise practical interventions that provide their members with the basic security they need to pursue strategic longer-term goals. They engage with relevant state actors at local and national level in order to leverage influence in the political and policy domain. They turn to the law and national arbitration mechanisms to resolve conflict and demand justice. Finally, they come together with other sections of civil society to amplify their voice and influence in the public domain.

What is needed in the longer run, of course, is a more democratic trade union movement that allows women workers to participate at all levels on an equal basis with men. But till then, the needs and interests of these women workers are likely to be better served through their own organizations at local, national and international level. As the experience of WIEGO suggests, these offer them a position of strength from which to build effective alliances with other labour-based organizations and networks. They may also help to build the female leadership that is necessary for the longer-term transformation of the trade union movement.

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