Organising IFAs in India, Russia, and South Africa

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IFAs and organising

- IFAs: tool to build transnational social dialogue; core labour rights

- Cases of successful implementation; in fairly integrated MNCs or captive value chains (Fichter et al; Locke et al)

- Wide range of forms of value chain coordination/governance; rising informality; questions basic concepts of work and management-labour relations

- Argument: difficulties for the referential forms of collective organising that we find beyond MNCs to integrate lead firm- and complaint-driven tools into their repertoires of collective action, to use them as a power resource
Fallacies of composition

- That ‘rights’ are akin to practices
- That they can be implemented/transfered (through the organisational layers of MNCs and their value chains)
- That an institutional context exists for implementation, complaints, social dialogue
- That established local/societal forms of collective organising slot into the complaint-driven logic of IFAs
India

- Contract-based mobilisation
- outside the workplace
- for citizenship and welfare resources
- from the state
- transcends the unitarist or neo-bonded character of work group
Russia

- Social partnership vs ethnic networks/groups of informal/irregular migrants
- advice and legal support through diaspora organisations and human rights organisations
- Representation within unitarist social partnership framework vs human rights/citizenship
South Africa

- Breakdown of cohesive identity: central union focus on national/institutional relations; fragmentation of local solidarity.
- Repertoire of action re-focused on political gains. ‘Paradox of victory’ is that restructuring has weakened industrial organisation (Buhlunugu, 2010).
- NUM aim of regularising informal/casual workers. Campaign to ban labour brokers – temporary/casual labour defined as unorganisable.
- Undermining of structural power; prospects for re-constituting associational power.
Conclusions

• Limits of IFAs and other private social standards; the model of lead firm implementation and complaint-driven conflict resolution does not travel well along value chains

• Role of product and labour market segmentation

• Market making and institution building; despite difficulties to build workplace power forms of collective organising have resulted in strategic capacity for institution building

• What transnational strategies to support/complement referential forms of collective organising in informal employment
IFA

- CI: industrial unionism; lead firm holding or supply chain integrator
- RA: supply chain micropolitics; essentially complaint-driven conflict resolution; some more proactive fact-finding and capacity projects
- R: social dialogue, risk management of value chain (does not include IFA in all cases); close links betw IG BAU, FNV Bouw and BWI
- RC:
- SC:
Referential forms of collective organising

• (adapting Murray et al 2010)

• collective identities
• repertoires of action
• power resources
• representative capacity
• strategic capacity
Collective identities

- Workplace: labour point, labour intermediaries/LOSC (on what social/economic bases do they build authority)
Repertoires of action

- RU: ‘traditional social partnership; isolated/spontaneous protest about effort-wage bargain; individual advice and legal support through diaspora organisations
- SA
Resources
Representative capacity
Strategic capacity
Organising Strategies

“Although IFAs continue to be used to solve problems, they are often linked to organising strategies, in two senses. The first is to target organising based on the fact that there should be less company resistance. The second is that they are seen as part of building organisations inside companies; in other words, an IFA may allow trade union representatives inside the company to come together, sometimes with the support of the company. Many agreements provide for such support.”