



Women in Informal Employment  
Globalizing and Organizing

# Informality and Development: Summary of Key Points from Panels

# Order of presentations

1. Informal economy: Renana
2. Informality & economics: Jeemol
3. Informal employment: Ravi
4. Labor law & enforcement: Marlese
5. Informal workers & the state: Sally
6. Urban planning & design: Sally
7. Street vending: politics & inclusion: Caroline
8. Waste pickers: concept of 'The Public': Sonia
9. Homeworkers in global value chains: Francie
10. Informal workers & social policy: Lin

# Informal Economy (Renana)

3

## 1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years: *Jan*

- Earlier informal 'sector' was seen as the marginal sector in developing countries where working poor waited for industrialization.
- Today 'North has followed the South' (or West followed the rest) and it is recognized that informal work is the global norm, and informality is the globalizing principle. It is a way to prevent organising.

# Informal Economy (Renana)

4

## 1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years: *Barbara*

1. Original politics of framing of the factories acts and labour law have deliberately “unorganised” labour and
2. Neo-liberalized regimes are both calling for “formalising” the informal sector but also “informalising” the formal sector by outsourcing, contract labour etc.
3. The deliberate conflation of informality and illegality.
4. Through WIEGO and other work, the triple burden of women..two or more informal jobs and reproductive work.. Therefore the difficulties of their lives as well as of organising.
5. Order in the informal economy through social authority, now known to form new kinds of regions – new project for explanation because not patterned in states
6. Work on the ‘solidarity’ economy...collectives of all types as alternatives to or niched within the IE.

# Informal Economy (Renana)

5

2/3. Critical challenges going forward & research gaps: *Jan*

1. Informality is not only about labour but about the relationship with capital. So not 'precarity' but 'informality'.

- The opaqueness of capital in the informal economy, the way it is accrued, collected, spent, saved and above all drained off, needs to be unveiled.
- Studies focused on the role of intermediaries (sub-contractors, jobbers, touts and other agents) are of crucial importance to highlight the way labor is linked to capital.

2. What are the relationships/mechanisms that prevent organising

3. Focus more on unemployment in the informal economy

# Informal Economy (Renana)

6

## 2/3. Critical challenges going forward: Barbara

1. Better understanding of status of self employment today.
  - Why does so much self-employment multiply rather than grow?
  - How many are disguised wage work and how many are genuine self employment affects action for their futures.
2. The informal economy and transitions to green economy...does informal work increase or decrease pollution? How transition to green?

# Informal Economy (Renana)

7

## 3. Most important research gaps

WIEGO has focused on statistics, and heavily dependent on economics as a discipline:

- Need to be more interdisciplinary ....anthropology, sociology
- More in-depth case studies.

Policy studies required on:

- informalisation and criminalisation of politics and how that interacts with the informal economy
- How financial policies are “culling” the informal economy
- Policies in implementation – their informalisation/criminalisation / and formal sedimentation because old policies not destroyed but linger on.

# Informality & Economics (Jeemol)

8

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Changing forms of work: old and new forms of informal work
  - Similarity of informal work in the developed and developing countries
  - Interest of ILO and developed countries in formalization of the informal



# Informality & Economics (Jeemol)

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- Measurement of non-standard work as a whole in developed countries
- Integration of the notion of formalization seen through the lens of capital and lens of labour
- Capital lens: formalization of enterprises to include to include in the tax net
- Labour lens: formalization of informal workers to include in the social security system

# Informality & Economics (Jeemol)

10

## 3. Most important research gaps

- Debate on the future of work: inclusion of the care and solidarity economy
- Macro structural understanding of existence of the informal sector and employment

# Informal Employment (Ravi)

11

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Broadening from “Informal Sector” to “Informal Economy”
  - National Level Statistics on Informality—Mexico is a best case example, but advances globally.
  - Greater recognition of commonalities between developing and developed country informal economy issues.

# Informal Employment (Ravi)

12

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- Keeping pace, in concepts and measurement, with the rapid changes in the nature of work as the result of new technology (e.g. dependent contractors).
- Organizing those who do not have a “conventional” employment relationship (old issue but appears in stronger and altered forms).
- How to use research to get the attention of policy makers? (Through “thought leaders”? What forms of dissemination?)

# Informal Employment (Ravi)

13

## 3. Most important research gap

- “De Jure and de Facto distinctions becomes more than ever a hot issue to deal with, creating an explicit tension between legalistic and non-legalistic ways of understanding informality” (Rodrigo)

# Labor Law and Enforcement (Marlese)

14

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - In the last 20 years Labour Law scholars thinking about ‘non-standard’/’atypical work’ and gendered nature of contract. Very recently, begun to consider informal employment, and acknowledge that informal work not ‘unregulated,’ but are regulated by informal norms.
  - Emerging transnational labour law
  - Debate on replacing institution of the Contract of employment with different analytics: work relationships and work activity
  - Enforcement – (a) role of state (incl. different inspection models) (b) participative enforcement models (not state centric)

# Labor Law and Enforcement (Marlese)

15

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- For labour law scholars from the global south to influence the re-imaging the discipline
- Enforcement – plural over-lapping models
- Inclusion of own account workers in labour law and collective bargaining (+ social dialogue)

# Labor Law and Enforcement (Marlese)

16

## 3. Most important research gaps

- How to cover atypical work in the legal regime in different countries
- Regulating global supply chains
- Case studies on enforcement



# Informal Workers & the State (Sally)

17

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Evolution of research on varieties of informal economies & varieties of state strategies in relation to producing them at different scales
  - Strategies and forms of power used by organizations and movements in generating recognition & forms of recognition and their effects
  - Identifying conditions for state responsiveness at local, national and global levels

# Informal Workers & the State (Sally)

18

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- Continuing to move beyond essentialist and homogenizing claims about the informal economy especially in the current context
- Deconstructing the state, its intentions & its own informal practices

# Informal Workers & the State (Sally)

19

## 3. Most important research gap

- More need for historical approaches to relationship between state and informal workers and enterprises
- In looking at role of regulation in relationship between state, capital and labour, looking also at regulations that IW organizations make efforts to establish (source of regulation)
- More understanding of rules that structure participation in multi-stakeholder forums (and otherwise)

# Urban Planning and Design (Sally)

20

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Role of dreaming in planning: what could cities be, what could planning be, what could public space be — and yet what damage dreams can do
  - Need for flexibility, incrementalism, dynamism, and differentiation in planning to acknowledge logics that are already there — as opposed to ‘impatient capital’
  - Sustainability and viability questions are becoming front and center in current context

# Urban Planning and Design (Sally)

21

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- How to enable bottom up planning/co-production to avoid the known pitfalls
- How to institutionalize different and new practices in planning education
- How to incorporate the notion of time and transition in planning

# Urban Planning and Design (Sally)

22

## 3. Most important research gaps

- Detailed case studies for southern theory-building to change planning laws and planning education
- Research framed around intersection of multiple informalities to inform opportunities to leverage arguments
- Experimentation with planning and design incorporating the kinds and sources of knowledge that historically have been excluded

# Street Vending: Politics & Inclusion (Caroline)

23

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Far more attention paid to these issues (sometimes as a subtheme broader urban studies debates).
  - Detailed analyses of cases of exclusion – the head line moments - and the conceptual and legal underpinnings of these processes are far better understood.
  - With the emergence of StreetNet, there is a strengthening of collective voice, internationally and in certain countries / cities.
  - SEWA's process of securing a national law is very significant.

# Street Vending: Politics & Inclusion (Caroline)

24

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- Inclusion continues to be transitory.
- The time between evictions is getting shorter (the role of land and property markets likely to be a key factor)
- The challenge is to re-imagine urban practice
- But also move from a more reactive stance - reconfigure what a desirable city is.



# Street Vending: Politics & Inclusion (Caroline)

25

## 3. Most important research gaps

- Rich ethnographic work alongside worker based movements (ideally in more than one location) with a greater focus on the times between evictions, with the analytical lens on both the movements but also 'the state' in all its complexity.
- Combine with a focus on the role of capital – property developers and land grabbers AND MNC and local retailers use of informal traders as the final point of distribution.
- Continued work to support legal reform and litigation.
- Challenging theoretical work – move away from binaries, what is 'success'; symbolic and discursive construction of urban order etc.

# Waste Pickers: Concept of “The Public” (Sonia)

26

1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years
  - Visibility in scholarly works and in policy
  - Detailed documentation of inclusive recycling experiences in – case studies on Bogota, BH, Pune
  - Growth in organizing and collective agency: Indian Waste Pickers Alliance, National movements in more than 15 countries in LA+ LA network, Global Alliance

# Waste Pickers: Concept of “The Public” (Sonia)

27

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- To broaden the understanding and interconnections between waste pickers, itinerant buyers, small junk shops owners and potential solidarity links btw these different groups
- Technological approach to waste rather than an integrated, holistic model – need to conceptualize how waste pickers are situated within integrated SW models
- How to balance efficiency and its social functions in wps coops, organizations is key to sustainability, and to transformative changes that lead to a paradigm shift

# Waste Pickers: Concept of “The Public” (Sonia)

28

## 3. Most important research gap

- Conceptualization of integration related to specific contexts – relational comparison

# Homeworkers in Global Value Chains (Francie)

29

1. Main advances/changes over last 20 years: *Meenu*
  - Emerging institutional arrangements in India are rooted in economic conditions, but take place, at first, outside the factory floor (in homes, not firms)
    - ▣ Work at community level, build general leadership
    - ▣ NTUI & GATWU work for raises in wages for all workers, and provision of social services
    - ▣ Other examples: IKEA, keeping carpet-making child free
  - Bring together economic & social lives of workers
  - Building new alliances with variety of actors
    - ▣ E.g., partnership between GAP and government

# Homeworkers in Global Value Chains (Francie)

30

## 1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years

- *Kamala:*
  - ▣ Cesses have ceased or are easing
  - ▣ Benefits are being removed
  - ▣ Costs are borne by home workers – home being used for work
- *Marlese:* On regulation of value chains for labour rights –
  - ▣ Suppliers sign contracts to produce goods at a loss

# Homeworkers in Global Value Chains (Francie)

31

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

- *Meenu*: Going forward, we need critical analysis of processes in which relationships of relative equality in power can be formed
- Needs deep discussion within ORP
- *Marlese*: 3 different approaches (p. 169, #3) should be widely read in WIEGO
  - ▣ Give more examples, practically, of how one situation get handled differently under different models

# Informal Workers & Social Policy (Lin)

32

## 1. Main advances/changes over the last 20 years

1. From an approach for inclusion into social policy based either on work status or on citizenship to a relational approach that considers the worker and the citizen as “dual aspects of a unity”.
2. Recognition that informal workers are often already included in urban systems but in adverse ways that disempower them and expose them to risks arising from their place of work. Integrated approach to social policy and urban policy and addressing not only national but also local government.
3. Social protection systems that combine contributory (“linked”) and non-contributory (“delinked”) elements and that take into account the specific needs and capacities of different groups of informal workers



# Informal Workers & Social Policy (Lin)

33

## 2. Critical challenges going forward

1. To ensure that the intended universality of the social protection floor does not divert attention from informal workers.
2. To develop social protection systems that address the multiple disadvantages faced by women migrant informal workers. Migration status can be a more important determinant of informality than work status.
3. To "attract, inform and inspire" regarding the impact and implications of unpaid care work on the earning capacity and reproductive role of women informal workers.

# Informal Workers & Social Policy (Lin)

34

## 3. Most important research gap

- What does “delinking” mean for the relationship between and respective responsibilities of and for the state, the market (employers) and individuals (different groups of informal workers) in social policy, specifically social protection?