Urbanisation, migration and social policy: Asian perspectives

Sarah Cook
WIEGO Research Conference, November 2017
• How do rapid urbanization and migration impact on social policy needs and financing for women informal workers and their families?

• What are the big conceptual and empirical issues for WIEGO?

• Asian perspectives - China as key reference
  • Concepts, definition, data and interpretation
  • Informality largely viewed as phenomenon of migrant worker
Migration, urbanization, informality

- Diverse patterns
- Domestic and international mobility
- Huge numbers...
- Megacities, small towns, periurban...
- Ecology and hierarchies of informality

Migrants face informality of...
- employment / work
- housing, space
- access to public/private goods and services
- security, status, rights

In contexts of staggering inequality – wealth and power
Implications for social policy

Needs?

• Security – legal status and protection, physical
• Access to public goods / space
• Reproduction, care
• Work, income
• Housing, transport
• Social services – health, education

• Informal social protection
  • Family, community and networks
• Wide range of economic, social, other policies can provide or undermine social protection – ‘functional equivalents’ and institutional complementarities
• Functions of social policy: need/protection, promotion, reproduction, distribution, cohesion
• Formal social protection in absence of other forms of security?
Access to social protection

• Work
• Residence

• Need (targeted)
• Right / citizenship (universal)

• Contributory
• Non-contributory

• Dual/multiple exclusions for migrants in situations of informality

• Barriers to formal SP:
  • Access, identification, design,
  • Portability, finance – contributions, cost (health, pensions)
  • Administrative boundaries, jurisdictions
  • Trust in system
  • Gaps – maternity, care…
Expansion of social protection in China
(Wang Zhen 2013)
Logic of social policy expansion in China

• Social stability (inclusion)
• Developmental / productivist (E Asia)
  • State sector restructuring
  • Economic restructuring – demand/consumption
• Crisis management 2008 – migrant worker as ‘shock absorber’
• Newer trends
  • End of labour surplus – facilitate migration
  • Integration of second generation migrants
  • Social investment?
• Demographic – aging: care and reproduction?
• (Diverse forms of provision – non-state actors)
(Some) Issues and challenges...

• Double vulnerability – what does protection look like? What kind of risks need to be covered?
• Protection – legal, social, other...
• Promotion:
  • removal of obstacles – relationships with K, state (local, central, different parts of..) and other citizens... (stigma/discrimination)
  • Investments – public goods, social infrastructure, individual
• Social security systems – rethinking needs and risks for 21C economies – work, aging, health, reproduction/demographic, environmental...
• EA – developmental SP: land, housing, education ... failed to address demography/gender ... in context of ‘national capital’
• Struggles for inclusion
Future research

1. Links between (macro) production and social reproduction systems
   • Reconceptualise critical links between social and economic systems/policies. Including the household economy and system of social reproduction as central part of the economy (engage with the right economists!) – potential and pitfalls of ‘delinking’?

2. Understanding emerging Asian social welfare/security/informality regimes...
   • Learning from variations, alternative pathways / trajectories, construction, state project and role of capital, negotiated over time – creation or institutionalization of forms of inclusion/exclusion... ; New and emerging risks, constraints
   • Current problem with SP evaluation methods, programmes vs historical/institutional analysis

3. Who pays for what?
   • Social investment and (more inclusive) development...
   • Financing of public and social goods and services; reproduction
   • Contribution (tax/contribution or hidden) of informal/migrant workers to state construction, capital..