



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS DECENT WORK Transcript

DRADAM FISHWICK Well I think that the way that development has been considered and practised to date is that it's development first in a very generic sense of growth and expansion of different types of work, and then it's the workers' interests second. Now what the SDG around Decent Work is trying to do is develop a more inclusive understanding that incorporates that need for good quality jobs, good quality working conditions, as integral to development.

What my research is trying to do is think about that even further, to reverse that relationship even further and think about, well we need to be putting interests of workers and labour first.

Not just how to incorporate good jobs into patterns of economic growth but about thinking about how can we make good livelihoods, good conditions of work, workers' voice and influence over that process of economic development as the primary motive and I focus on this in the context of Latin America and I've looked at these historical and contemporary relationships thinking about both how do workers gain that voice, gain that influence, gain that ability to push their own interests in to the development agenda but also how do they begin to construct their own kinds of alternatives.

One great example of this that I've written a little bit on is what are known as the recuperative enterprises in Argentina. This is a kind of contemporary phenomenon Basically workers that have taken control through various complicated legal mechanisms that exist in Argentina of factories or other types of workplaces that have been officially declared bankrupt.

It ranges from hotels to graphics companies to park services to medical facilities so a whole range of different types of enterprises and they have been around since the beginning of the 2000s after this big economic crisis of 2001. What's been interesting about that although it's relatively small I mean they number perhaps 300 in Argentina but it's been a number that's been stable and been growing. What the workers have done here is they've taken control of these workplaces and organised them in a different way.

Now they've had different elements of support from the state but it's been driven from the interests of those workers who've taken control of the factories and organised the way they do work in

What are the similarities and differences that exist in say, south Asia and Latin America or increasingly China and Middle East? What is it we can learn from these experiences or workers, what is it that the workers themselves are doing to address these issues? Do activists play a role in it? What can we as academics do? So the whole purpose of this network is to take the research forward, to develop networks, other networks, with other academics, activists, workers themselves.

Adam: I think what's interesting about the dialogue we have been having as part of developing this network is that we are seeing the different ways in which groups of workers organise, mobilise, try and gain this kind of political, social and economic voice and rights within the process of development and the different barriers that are in place.

For ex, we have talked a lot about different organising traditions in Latin America as opposed to South Asia, the capacity to develop these kind of more collective experiments, the different kinds of challenges they face both in terms of the role of the State in trying to suppress them or the capacity of employers to move them outside the workplace and limit their capacity to influence and to challenge these working conditions that they face.

But also, in terms of the overall transformations we're seeing in terms of the way of the world of work is changing, so the heightening precarity, heightening flexibilisation, heightening insecurity through the informal economy and how that is changing, becoming similar, becoming different in different regions of the world and what is it we can learn across these often different sites. I think one of the main motivations behind that is when you focus your research on these very much more micro areas of social life, there's a potential you end up siloed in the region. So my understanding of labour organising comes very much from my research on labour organising in Latin America, which is very different to the experience that workers in South Asia have.

Thinking about how this is different in different parts of the globe I think is very useful in beginning to answer these questions of what can be done and how can more international and transnational ways of thinking about these issues can be developed. I know what an ambition saying that but I think that's the kind of thing we are trying to push towards through the network.

ANITA: And it's not as if what we're doing is just restructured to the global south, although that's our primary focus. Because informalisation, precarisation, feminisation of the workforce, the kind of insecure, poorly paid jobs that's unfortunately increasingly happening in the global north also. So we hope that there would be lessons learned on all sides and for all interested parties through the network and our research.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE NETWORK:

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www.labouranddevelopment.wordpress.com