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*Informal Workers and Collective Action: A Global Perspective*,  
Edited by Adrienne E. Eaton, Susan J. Schurman and Martha A.  
Chen (2017) Ithaca/London: ILR Press/Cornell University Press,  
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will be some tangible level of IWP in all studied jurisdictions (since income dispersion occurs everywhere). Does being well below average necessarily mean poverty? Of course, defining a boundary between (generally) working versus (generally) not working is a subjective one, as is the choice to use a relative versus absolute measure of being low-income (or living in poverty) within a given country (see Chapters 2 and 4 for explorations of these issues).

As a final thought, it is difficult to identify specifically when and where this book *could* be used within academia. It seems unlikely that it could be used as the assigned text for any existing course within North American business, economics, or public policy programs. But, as a detailed and convincing analysis of the inequities that exist today, this book would be an invaluable reference source for anyone studying contemporary labour markets or employment issues, and public policy remedies.

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**Informal Workers and Collective Action: A Global Perspective**

Edited by Adrienne E. Eaton, Susan J. Schurman and Martha A. Chen (2017) Ithaca/London: ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 284 pages. ISBN: 978-1501-705564.

Instead of asking whether informal workers (IW) are able to organize themselves, the time has come to ask what lessons can be learned from the way they organize and act collectively. This is probably the main point of this book, which is to report on «success stories», i.e. struggles led by informal workers, salaried or self-employed, that have led to the improvement of their working conditions or the acquisition of rights.

The nine examples in this book each take place in a different country: street

vendors in Monrovia, Libya; waste pickers in Brazil; young Cambodian women working on commission from Cambrew brewing company in cafés and restaurants and being harassed; port workers in Colombia; informalized retail and hotel workers in South Africa; salaried but informal or self-employed minibus drivers in Georgia; domestic workers in Uruguay; low-wage Tunisian government workers subcontracted to multiple labour intermediaries; Haitian immigrants working informally in construction and private households.

As already shown in a growing literature on this subject, informal workers' struggles are based on a wide variety of ways of organizing themselves, ranging from forms of unionism—by joining existing unions or by creating new ones—to member associations or cooperatives. The case studies presented in this book are no exception. Sometimes conducted over several years, they also shed light on how different types of populations, sometimes very young, such as street vendors in Monrovia, Libya—often women, in some cases victims of harassment—manage to be recognized as workers, that is, as people worthy of rights because they make a useful contribution to society. In this way, we could express this “moral claim” that the authors see going through all the cases reported. These cases also show the importance of the support provided, whether from traditional trade unions and/or the State apparatus, through different channels, thus supporting the bargaining power first and foremost, as well as the associative power, of informal workers.

However, the cases presented were not selected from any form of organisation, despite the initial temptation. The cases were chosen at the request of Solidarity Center (created by the AFL-CIO to support the development of workers' empowerment for their dignity and rights). Solidarity Center has assigned the selection of cases of informal workers' organizations to Rutgers University, while the identifica-

tion of self-employed workers engaged in collective bargaining has been assigned to WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), an international network of informal workers' associations, researchers and statisticians, and practitioners of development agencies (governmental and non-governmental). The idea was that this would distinguish cases of collective bargaining where IW are rather organized by trade unions (salaried informal workers) from those where IW are organized with the help of structures other than traditional trade unions.

The presentation of the success stories follows this line of reference. However, the coordinating team, which also constitutes the editors of this book, has chosen to make this case comparison more revealing by presenting the comparable unit of analysis differently. Thus, the case studies carried out by nine collaborators, most of whom are also researchers, have been analysed by focusing on forms of collective bargaining, rather than on campaigns in the broad sense. Even if they appear different, but demonstrate the pertinence of the definition of trade unionism described by the Webbs, according to the editorial team (which appears to believe the expansion of the repertoire of collective actions observed merely confirms the practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries), the forms of collective bargaining presented here are a particularly interesting empirical contribution. In seeking to identify the common causal variables or processes that feed the conditions for the success of these cases, however, the theoretical framework adopted here remains conventional, incorporating in particular the mainstream concepts of the political process. After reading the cases, it becomes clear that the use of this limited framework of analysis partly amounts to mitigating what these cases are capable of bringing out.

The richness of this book therefore lies in its empirical contribution, which is impor-

tant to discover for those interested in mobilizing informal workers. The various cases highlight that it is the notion of collective bargaining that needs to be reviewed or renewed. In other words, the case studies show, each in its own way, how much collective bargaining inherited from Fordism (which constitutes a social and institutional construction). They also reveal to what extent we take this for granted when it simply corresponds to a historical period of capitalism, in contexts where the state or the state apparatus (at different scales of intervention) has played a facilitating role. In the various examples discussed, it is the intervention of the State, which cannot be reduced to a structure of opportunity, that determines the possibility of social actors. That is workers' representatives but also employers who agree to assume this role (who agree to guarantee compliance with the agreements made), even though they do not necessarily recognize themselves as such (even when they pay a salary). These employers may be private or public legal entities. It is important to understand that there is an entire system around an objective or a vision of compromise or coexistence, which enables one form or another of collective bargaining. It is this institutional construction that has been rendered invisible by normalizing collective bargaining as part of a bilateral employment relationship.

The various cases dealt with in this book show how costly it can be in terms of time and energy for the workers concerned to enter into this framework in order to obtain decent wages and working conditions. Even for workers organized in cooperatives, such as recyclable waste pickers in the State of Minas Gerais (Brazil), the process of "formalizing the informal" is far from simply declaring activities to tax authorities, as sometimes the oversimplified statements in the documents of major international organizations seem to give the impression. For example, in the case of the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, the municipalities that

are the interlocutors of cooperatives require them to comply with high standards—standards that cooperative workers negotiate, seeking to preserve an autonomy that is part of their collective commitment. Even in the face of municipalities close to the Workers' Party, and therefore benevolent a priori in recognizing the rights of cooperative workers, autonomy is and remains an issue under close scrutiny. Could it be otherwise when it is a major issue in the conflict between capital and labour? In other words, collective bargaining is a way of policing this conflict but does not go beyond it. The various examples discussed here raise the question again and again as to whether other institutional constructions, other forms of compromise than that inherited from Fordism and widely challenged in the world, are possible and desirable. In any case, the richness of the empirical evidences presented here allows us to raise some questions.

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**Practical Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War**

By Kristopher A. Teters (2018) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 240 pages. ISBN: 978-1-46963-886-7.

When he began his study of Union officers in the Western Theater of the U.S. Civil War, Kristopher A. Teters hoped to find that many embraced emancipation for moral reasons. However, what he discovered was that “pragmatism, far more than morality, motivated western officers to support emancipation” (p. 2). Although many officers eventually accepted emancipation because they believed it helped the Union war effort, Teters contends that their racial attitudes barely changed at all. *Practical Liberators* focuses on 410 Union officers in the Western Theater, and how they conducted the

work of emancipation. During the first year and a half of the war, the army manifested inconsistent policies toward fugitive slaves. Some officers returned fugitive slaves; others did not. After President Abraham Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation*, the army focused heavily on liberating able-bodied adult male slaves. Thus, according to Teters, “the army proved to be practical liberators” (p. 4). Teters makes an important point about the Western Theater. This theater included Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina, as well as portions of Louisiana and Florida and, thus, contained the vast majority of the slaves in the South. Teters correctly asserts that the Western Theater, rather than the Eastern Theater, is the critical arena for understanding how emancipation unfolded on the ground and officer attitudes.

In the early months of the war, Union armies did not fight to liberate slaves. However, the slaves themselves forced the issue by fleeing to the Union lines. As Teters notes, officers responded inconsistently: “Top commanders in the West adopted generally very conservative or moderately conservative approaches in dealing with fugitive slaves” (p. 8). This often meant protecting slavery in border States like Missouri so as to not alienate Missouri Unionists. Interestingly, even as he spins a story of practical army commanders who refused to confiscate slaves and returned fugitive slaves, Teters turns up, again and again, stories of soldiers, lower-ranking officers, and sometimes entire regiments, who rebelled against the policies of their commanders. As he notes, in a revealing statement, “through Grant and Halleck tried to keep slaves away from Union lines during the 1862 campaign into western Tennessee, they faced challenges from below” (p. 18). Officers routinely defied the orders of their commanders. Charles Wills, an adjutant in the Seventh Illinois Cavalry, for example, “contended that army generals assured the slave owners that the slaves