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Scaling Up? TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISING IN GLOBALISED PRODUCTION

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Signe Moe,
Cornelia Staritz

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KARINDA FLAVELL, SAMANTHI J. GUNAWARDANA
“Nothing about us without us” or “The most effective way to get it implemented”? Global South Workers’ Power in Australian Civil Society Initiatives in the Garment Sector

ABSTRACT Australian NGO and trade union initiatives seek to improve conditions for women garment workers in the global South. This small-scale study sought perceptions of Australian-based civil society staff about the power of garment workers within such initiatives. Deploying a feminist political economy perspective, the study draws on feminist notions of power and the power resources approach. It looks beyond long-established sources of power (structural, associational, and institutional) to explore coalitional and discursive power. The theoretical framework emphasises the importance of discursive power, including social norms that impact power. The study highlights the potential for Australian civil society groups to perpetuate the dominant discourse of women worker’s ‘docility’ or to challenge it, including through amplifying worker voice. The findings indicate that obtaining coalitional power (power workers gain by joining with allies other than workers) requires workers to have some associational (collective) power among themselves, highlighting the interrelations of power resources and the limitations of substituting associational with coalitional power. These findings have implications for global North groups seeking to prevent garment worker exploitation.

KEYWORDS feminist political economy, power resources, garment workers, global supply chains

I. Introduction

“Getting the worker voice...stops that...imperialism; ‘we know what’s best’...But once you’ve got... knowledge [about what workers want]...it’s just about pushing a campaign in the most effective way to get it implemented.” (Participant 4, P4)

“We have key principles,...one of the main ones is ‘nothing about us without us.’” (Participant 1, P1)

Both mainstream media and academic literature have detailed employment issues in global garment manufacturing, including curtailment of worker voice, low wages and health and safety issues (Wells 2009). Global competition between both garment manufacturing countries and manufacturing companies results in pressure on employers to keep labour costs low and on governments to limit labour regulation (Anner 2012). Relationships of power, such as gender or ethnicity, further entrench the disempowerment of garment workers (Elias 2005). Despite this, in the Asia-Pacific region, though conditions may be exploitative, garment manufacturing still may offer women workers greater autonomy than other employment options (Siddiqi 2009).

In response to issues for garment workers, transnational campaigns have connected local worker struggles to consumer campaigns worldwide, affecting consumers’ and brands’ actions. However, the extent to which worker power is exercised in shaping campaign claims is questioned (Kabeer 2015). As evidenced in the opening quotes, attitudes amongst participants in this study varied. Whilst both reflect a commitment to listening to workers, P4 (consumer campaigning) prioritises campaign effectiveness over worker involvement, in contrast to P1 (an Australian funded project dealing directly with garment workers).

This paper poses the following key questions: How do Australian trade unions and non-government organisations (NGOs), seeking to improve working conditions for global South¹ workers in supply chains view workers’ power within their campaigns and projects? To what extent is building worker power a goal of their work? In this small-scale study, we examine perceptions of individuals working in Australian-based civil society organisations (ACSOs)² seeking to end labour exploitation in the

garment industry through advocacy and campaigning in Australia or through funding projects with global South garment worker organisations (GSWOs). This study is limited to perceptions of ACSO participants. It is acknowledged that workers and GSWOs are best placed to comment on their own power in order to prevent perpetuating potential power imbalances between the global North and South. However, the limitations of this research prevented seeking their perspectives.

We adopt a feminist political economy (FPE) approach to explore the gendered nature of the garment industry and the potential impact on campaigns and initiatives. FPE demonstrates how garment manufacturing is socially constructed as “women’s work” (Elson/Pearson 1981: 92), leading to the undervaluing of skills, lower pay (Elias 2005) and the construction and enforcement of the myth of women workers “docility” (Wright 2006). To understand worker power from a gender perspective, we draw on feminist notions of power. We also employ the power resources approach (PRA) found in some “transnational labour alliance” (TLA) literature (see Brookes 2013). We explore perceptions of ACSO employees about regarding worker power within their campaigns or funded projects through this unique framework.

This article first draws on FPE literature to outline the gendered nature of the garment industry. We then explore sources of worker power in PRA, before discussing relevant feminist notions of power that can expand the PRA. This is followed by an overview of the methods of the research. An analysis of interviews is then outlined, and key conclusions provided.

2. FPE and global garment manufacturing

FPE explores the gendered dimensions of the relationship between both political and economic elements of globalisation; this paper looks at how gender has shaped the global garment industry. In an early study, Elson and Pearson (1981) argued that multinational corporations manufacturing in the global South used and reinforced existing local gender norms that undervalued women’s skills to pay women less than men in order to keep production costs low. Since then, FPE ethnographic research in various cultural contexts have demonstrated that conceptions of women

as innately “dextrous” and “docile” have been pervasive (Elias 2005; Wright 2006). This has led to the delineation of sewing as “women’s work”, in the process undervaluing workers’ skills (Gunawardana 2018). “Docility” is enforced for women workers and resistance is curtailed (Wright 2006). For example, Melissa W. Wright (2006: 34) found Chinese factory managers paternalistic in enforcing docility: “We have naïve girls. Here we are like their parents. They have to obey us...When workers make problems, we find other girls.” Local cultural norms that are used and re-created in global production arrangements dictate how the myth of women’s docility is perceived and enforced, but have been found in multiple studies in different locations and cultures (see Dedeoglu 2014; Elias 2005).

Early FPE approaches to export-orientated manufacturing are critiqued for not paying attention to how workers are represented. Siddiqi (2009: 156) argues that whilst “ground breaking”, some literature paints workers as “homogenous, faceless and voiceless creatures” (Siddiqi 2009: 157). Ethnographic literature in multiple contexts demonstrates the diversity of garment workers’ experience; for example, family run workshops in Turkey (Dedeoglu 2014) are a different experience to migration to Economic Processing Zones in Sri Lanka (Gunawardana 2011). Studies also demonstrate that, despite challenges, garment workers exercise voice and resistance (Marslev et al. 2021). Thus, how academics and campaigners working from the global North (including ourselves) write about global South garment workers matters. In the context of transnational campaigning, this also involves an opportunity for women worker’s leadership and to define key issues, input into strategy, and control public narrative.

3. The Power Resources Approach

The Power Resources Approach (PRA) comes from labour studies literature and has been adopted in some TLA literature (i.e. Brookes 2013). PRA research examines sources of worker power in order to aid union strategising (Schmalz et al. 2018). In this study, we seek to understand perceptions of worker power within, and as a goal of, transnational campaigns and projects in a largely unorganised sector. Thus, we apply this approach differently, as we examine the internal dimensions of societal power. In

doing so, we focus on associational, and societal power. Societal power includes coalitional and discursive power. We then draw on feminist literature on power to advance the PRA by demonstrating how social categories (including gender) affect power resources.

3.1 Associational and structural power

A key source of worker power has traditionally been associational power, defined as “the various forms of power that result from the formation of collective organisations of workers” (Wright 2000: 962) such as trade unions. Where workers join together in an organised fashion, they have more power than as individuals – this power is associational. Another key source of worker power has traditionally been structural power. Structural power comes “from the location of workers within the economic system” (Wright 2000: 962). This includes workers in high demand. It also includes workers whose absence can impact broadly when they take action, i.e., a dock worker strike impacts numerous industries, as goods are left on ships.

In some instances (including Vietnam and Cambodia), garment workers have used associational and structural power to improve working conditions (Marslev et al. 2021). However, changes to the global economy and the garment industry, including the globalisation of production, have generally diminished workers’ associational and structural power (Reinecke/Donaghey 2015). For example, if garment workers build associational power and successfully push their employer or government for higher wages, brands can source from another factory or country with lower labour costs; even the threat to relocate production can reduce worker power.

3.2 Societal power

Discursive and coalitional power are types of “societal power” of workers. Webster (2015), argues that worker power has not been lost but is changing, from traditional sources to societal power. Discursive power, as one of those new sources, employs narrative creation by workers and unions, as discussed in PRA literature (Lévesque/Murray 2010). Coalitional power is more often discussed in TLA literature and denotes the power workers obtain through alliances with non-labour actors including

consumers, investors or the community (Brookes 2013). PRA literature specifies that workers need some associational power to obtain coalitional power (Schmalz et al. 2018).

An example of coalitional power is highlighted in consumer campaigns. As power in garment supply chains rests with brands rather than manufacturers or workers (Gereffi 1994), IndustriALL, the garment workers Global Union Federation, has cooperated with consumer campaigns to influence brands (i.e., the Bangladesh Accord). Consumer campaigns exert pressure on brands to improve conditions or otherwise risk losing their custom (Connor 2004). Consumer campaigning referred to in the TLA literature is often described as the ‘boomerang’ model of campaigning (Keck/Sikkink 1999), whereby workers and GSWOs appeal to groups in other countries (i.e., consumers) to target relevant actors (i.e. brands) to pressure the brand, and by extension the factory employer. Thus, workers with low associational or structural power may gain power through such coalitions.

The boomerang model presumes that the campaign emanates from workers but case study research by Hertel (2006) and Brooks (2007) demonstrate that some consumer campaigns emerge from the global North. Kabeer (2015: iv) notes that “claims relating to workers...have been largely made on their behalf by anti-sweatshop campaigns led by Northern-based organisations.” Wells (2009) contends that global North contributions to outcomes largely resulting from local activism have often been overstated in joint campaigns.

3.3 Institutional power

Institutional power of workers comes from “formal and informal rules” (Brookes 2013: 187), including labour laws and to a weaker extent corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards, established over time. Although there has been some success in initiating wage setting institutions in countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam (Marslev et al. 2021), in the globally competitive garment industry there is significant market pressure on states to keep labour costs low and thus to have weak labour laws with limited power to for workers (Anner 2012). Similarly, whilst there are some good examples of CSR (particularly when in conjunction with civil society), evidence indicates enduring continuing difficulty for workers to build power using CSR initiatives (Rennie et al. 2017).

4. Feminist approaches to power

Above we drew on PRA literature which enables the analysis of worker power sources. However, it often assumes workers are a homogeneous group, without recognising power differentials between workers. We assert that worker power cannot be adequately understood without recognising intersecting social categories (including gender) which create power differentials between workers. Recognising how social categories interact with power is important in better understanding the power resources of workers. It is in accounting for the gendered nature of the industry that the importance of discursive power becomes apparent. Where dominant discourse (such as the perception and enforcement of women's docility) suppresses worker power, we argue that acts which challenge this discourse, e.g., the exercise of voice and collective organising contrary to being docile, may potentially provide discursive power.

Within feminist literature, the concept of power has been understood in various ways. For example, McGee (2016) seeks to understand power and resistance. She borrows Lukes' (1974) notion of "invisible power", described as "socially embedded norms, values and practices" (McGee 2016: 104). Thus, the construction of a discourse of women workers as docile is an exercise of invisible power. McGee draws on Scott's (1989) notion of "everyday resistance", where progressive acts of everyday resistance create a "constant pressure" until norms are changed (Scott 1989).

Empowerment, originally a feminist response to power differentials, also seeks to change norms. The transformative process of 'empowerment' allowed women to recognise existing power structures, personally and collectively, and then challenge those structures (Gaventa/Corwell 2015). Thus, focusing on consciousness-raising to expose and change social norms included overturning invisible power (Weldon 2019). Batliwala (2007) argues that empowerment has become a term co-opted as a verb for individual power, but we use empowerment to refer to a collective process seeking to challenge power structures.

Thus, though the PRA includes discursive power, we argue for a much greater focus on understanding the way this type of power (exercised through dominant social norms) can adversely affect a particular group of workers. Overturning dominant social norms that adversely affect

workers could increase their discursive power. Everyday resistance which challenges the dominant discourse may have the potential to change who has discursive power. Thus, we argue that when women garment workers exercise resistance and voice, the disempowering discourse of women's 'docility' (a form of discursive power) may be challenged. This also has the potential to occur where GNCSOs amplify such acts to a broader audience in campaigning.

A further relevant contribution from feminist literature about power comes from criticism within feminism. Critiquing the homogenous and simplistic discussion of women's oppression in second-wave feminism that arose from the 1970s in the global North, a range of diverse perspectives emerged, including those of transnational, postcolonial, third world and intersectional feminism. Whilst different, each seeks to understand how gender and other social categories, including race, sexuality and class, intersect in power relations (Crenshaw 1991). Intersecting social categories may produce different kinds and levels of power that are "interdependent and interrelated" (Patil 2013: 850). They may also be "mutually constituted, formed, and transformed" by "power-laden processes" such as colonisation and globalisation (Patil 2013: 847).

Pointing to discursive power, Mohanty (2003) argues that Western feminists writing about women from the global South can "discursively colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Third World" (Mohanty 2003: 19), robbing them of their "historical and political agency" (Mohanty 2003: 40) through writing about them only as victims (object status). This important critique has a two-fold relevance in this paper, as, with a similar point outlined earlier within FPE literature, it is a caution for us writing from the global North. Thus, we recognise the absence of worker voice within this study and have not tried to fill that gap by speaking on their behalf. It also points to the potential for ACSOs to "discursively colonize" rather than enable discursive power for garment workers, if their campaigns rob workers of agency (as per Mohanty above).

We argue that PRA does not account sufficiently for power differences between workers, differences that emanate from social categories. We have drawn on FPE and feminist discussions of power to demon-

strate how discourse can impact the power of particular groups of workers. We demonstrate this by examining the social construction of women's 'docility', which we recognise as a limitation to women's power resources. We therefore argue there is power to be gained (a power resource) from challenging discourses that oppress and disempower particular groups of workers. This is not recognised when workers are seen as a homogenous group and so creates a unique theoretical framework.

5. Methods

We take a constructivist approach in order to understand ACSO staff's perceptions about the power of global South garment workers within campaigns or projects. Eight key informants participated in a one-hour semi-structured qualitative interview in 2018. Participants included two academics, two union officials, two people working for NGOs campaigning in Australia, and two working for Australian NGOs funding (but not directly implementing) projects with garment workers. Many participants had traversed multiple relevant roles. We asked participants to reflect on their broader experience, not limited to their current role. Participants and ACSOs are anonymised and data presentation avoids identification. Thus, we have limited the detail about specific participants, projects and campaigns.

Interviews were coded using NVivo. Deductive coding included barriers and enablers to worker power, worker voice and definitions of power. Inductive coding indicated the importance of networks and differences between boomerang and systems campaigns. After further developing the theoretical framework, data was deductively coded for mention of activities that perpetuate or challenge the dominant discourse (women's docility) within or by campaigns and projects, as well as any mention of norms, culture and discourse that may limit worker power.

In focusing on perceptions of the worker power of staff at ACSOs, the study is clearly limited in scope. It does not assess worker power within campaigns or projects or the impact on improving working conditions.

The research also did not elicit perceptions of GSWOs, despite the importance of their perspectives.

6. Building associational power

Two participants were employed by ACSOs that provided funding to global South worker organisations. For both, building collective worker power was the “central thesis” (P1). Both described projects that aimed to increase power by building capacity to take collective action; one at the workplace and one at the community level. For example, they both funded projects that trained workers to be leaders in collective organising. Thus, though they did not use the term, projects sought to build associational power. Both projects included consciousness-raising amongst workers, consistent with empowerment. For participant 7 (P7), this was a precursor to building associational power: “the issue [the project is trying to address] is a lack of workers power, or a lack of knowledge that they have the power....The workers...are in a good bargaining position but they’re very unaware of what they can do as a collective.” However, participant 8 (P8) noted projects funded by GNCSOs centred on building collective power are “atypical”. Even where they may seek to build power, P1 critiqued some Australian NGO-backed projects that “develop resources... then leave women alone to use them, which we know doesn’t work...You can’t achieve anything without collective bargaining, without freedom of association, without the right to a written contract.” Enabling rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) can be a precursor to, or an outcome of, building associational power.

All participants working for organisations campaigning in Australia sought power for workers as a goal, including through advocating for enabling rights. However, the extent to which participants prioritised this varied. Participant 3 (P3) noted a divide in Australian campaigners between those that prioritised enabling rights and others that thought “it was less important than ensuring the companies... have auditing systems.” Auditing systems are less likely to detect violations of enabling rights than other workplace rights (Rennie et al. 2017). Violations of enabling rights are also less likely to be remedied than other rights (Anner 2012).

7. Building conditional power

A difference in the involvement of GSWOs, dependent on the type of advocacy campaign, was identified. This impacts on the potential to develop coalitional power. We found GSWOs were decision makers in boomerang-style campaigns, but in 'system level' campaigns the role of workers varied. 'System level' campaigns include those around broad issues (such as a living wage) and improving supply chain practices of brands (as a group) through consumer pressure or legislation.

Whilst no participants used the term 'boomerang-style' campaigning, some described undertaking such work. Participants speaking about such campaigning in Australia described workers and GSWOs as decision-makers. For example, P₃ noted: "they will have the last say. We could advise them because we may know the company...but certainly it's up to them." This is consistent with other research on boomerang campaigning that indicates workers are involved in campaign decision making even when such campaigning occurs in the global North (den Hond et al. 2014). In this style of campaigning, where workers gain power in part because of initiatives in Australia, a growth in worker power through coalitional power would have occurred.

However, in system level campaigns, worker voice was "more filtered" (Participant 6, P₆). P₃ also recognised this pattern, noting that campaigning on accountability legislation (e.g., the Modern Slavery Act) occurs without worker involvement. Participant 5 (P₅) questioned the importance of worker power when campaigning on accountability, noting that various parties (e.g., workers, brands, employers, and consumers) have responsibilities: "I'm not saying that...[workers] should be disempowered but what we would say [is]...we all have a shared responsibility...and that...is both about what is our role in this piece, but also, how do we keep other parts of the system accountable." Participants working on system level corporate accountability campaigns listened to workers and GSWOs. However, participants did not speak of the ongoing participation of GSWOs within campaigns. P₄ noted that a GSWO critique of brands was more likely to occur in more transparent supply chains, as transparency made breaches more visible. P₄'s ACSOs were seeking brand transparency and thus were unlikely to alter their campaign based on a GSWO critique of brands.

Where there is no defined role or ongoing active participation of GSWOs, there is little opportunity for workers to gain coalitional power from campaigns. This supports literature that argues that, in consumer campaigning, power lies with global North groups (Kabeer 2015; Wells 2009) and is a significant limitation on the potential of coalitional power to replace traditional sources of worker power.

8. Barriers and enablers of worker power

“We all need to improve on [ensuring worker voice]. I don’t think anybody’s got it sorted...It’s just so hard to do...it’s just extraordinarily complex.” (P5)

It can be difficult for ACSOs to ensure worker power in campaigns and projects. Participants noted several factors that acted as enablers or barriers to worker power. The most significant were whether workers were organised (a prerequisite for ACSOs to link with GSWOs) and the day-to-day challenges faced by ACSOs in building networks. This points to the inherent challenges of building coalitional power.

As no participants worked directly with workers, a crucial enabler of worker power within their campaigns and projects were formal and informal networks with GSWOs. Without such networks there would be no potential for growth in workers’ coalitional power. Both P5 and P6 described a long, deliberate effort to build relationships with GSWOs. These relationships were complex. Language and cultural barriers, competition between GSWOs and some GSWOs that were not truly representative of workers, posed challenges. Working through a non-representative GSWO to enable worker voice and power could compound disempowering gender norms and reinforce relations of intersectional power, as noted by P5 and P6. For example, P5 stated: “If it’s mediated through a union in India, it’s going to be mediated through men who are probably of a different caste to the women whose stories are being told.” The complexities of operating through formal and informal networks with GSWOs demonstrate the significant challenges ACSOs face in enabling garment worker power in campaigns.

Organised workers (thus, those with some associational power) were an essential enabler of worker power in campaigns and projects. Participant 2 (P2) described a non-garment transnational campaign related to goods consumed in Australia that enabled worker power. It included a “well organised [global South] union” and leaders that were skilled at working internationally and “are very committed to rank-and-file control.” Conversely, the lack of a well-organised workforce (thus without associational power) in the garment sector was noted as a barrier to worker power in international campaigns. P8 highlighted the possibility that if GNCSOs exposed issues in a specific region it may create a “flurry of attention” which could create opportunities for organised workers but, in some instances, could have negative consequences for unorganised workers (i.e. brands may stop sourcing from the area without listening to workers). P8 argued that “if campaign groups are going to work with marginalised women workers, they...have to support them to build something... to have a voice in that process and if they’re not organised in any way, they can’t have a voice.” As noted previously, two participants’ organisations funded global South groups doing such work; other participants suggested greater Australian funding for GSWOs. P5, however, argued that GNCSO funding could change the nature of small, effective GSWOs “and not necessarily for the better.” Regardless, being organised, and thus having some associational power, was viewed as a precondition for workers having power in campaigns (thus developing coalitional power).

As noted earlier, Webster (2015) argues that sources of worker power are changing as traditional associational and structural power diminish. Coalitional power can grow as local and international alliances emerge (Brookes 2013). However, there are challenges involved in building and maintaining networks, including but not limited to the representation of particular groups of workers. Our study also shows that where workers cannot access associational power, ACSOs have little capacity to work with them to enable coalitional power. This is consistent with the PRA literature. In many locations where garment manufacturing occurs, labour activism is suppressed (Wells 2009); therefore, workers have greater difficulty developing associational power. This limits the potential of coalitional power.

9. Discursive power

ACSOs and GSWOs have the potential to challenge the dominant discourse of women's 'docility' and to use discursive power as a power resource for garment workers. However, as outlined, there is also potential for campaigns and initiatives to perpetuate, rather than challenge, this harmful dominant social norm.

In some instances, groups may deliberately seek to change the dominant discourse. For example, P1 described an attempt to change the discourse about garment workers from "poor rural women" that "now have jobs" (workers as passive beneficiaries of the industry) to the country has shifted to a middle-income country and has "international trade gains because of these women" (workers as active contributors to the nation's economy).

The idea that women garment workers are 'docile' (an exercise of discursive power) is challenged in FPE scholarship that documents how workers organise, lead, resist and activate voice (Gunawardana 2011). As outlined above, ACSOs have supported this by funding GSWOs that organise workers. Whether intentional or not, they are countering the dominant discourse that women workers are 'docile'. For example, P1 outlined how garment workers (through the Australian funded GSWO) were actively seeking to influence government policy. Garment workers that campaign and speak up challenge perceptions of their docility. Many participants spoke of activities that facilitated or amplified worker voice to a broader audience through research, campaigns, networks and media. Three participants organised direct contact between workers and brands in Australia or in the worker's locality. P8 noted: "being in the room together...[with] small groups of suppliers and brands about issues affecting their lives is giving them some symbolic power because they...for a temporary arrangement, have voice." Even where, as noted previously, such actions may not, on their own, have a dramatic effect, these actions can act as a form of everyday resistance, gradually shifting discursive power.

Nonetheless, power relations are present within any project or campaign activity. For example, mediation occurs when an ACSO produces a research report, even where the report amplifies worker voice (recognised by P8). P2

and P8 both noted the challenge of including emotive stories to gain media and campaign attention without portraying workers as victims. P2 said: “There is always an issue in this industry about people being constantly portrayed as victims and nothing else...I don’t think it helps build workers’ power.” One participant (speaking about forced labour) interchangeably used the words “victim” and “worker” within the interview. An important mitigation measure noted by P2 was to ensure that “as much as possible the direct voice of workers is heard.”

Within interviews, unprompted, participants spoke of norms, culture and discourse, including gender norms, rural origins and caste, that limited worker power. In this analysis, we have focused on the potential of ACSOs to counter the constraining myth of garment workers’ docility that is apparent in existing FPE literature. There are other dominant discourses (e.g. tropes about migrant workers) that can act to constrain the power of particular groups of workers. Thus, we argue that discursive power may be a valuable source of power for other workers where dominant discourse has acted to limit their power; and is worthy of greater exploration within PRA research.

10. Conclusion

This research contributes to TLA literature about sources of worker power. Relationships between ACSOs and GSWOs are a prerequisite for coalitional power to ensue. This limits the potential to develop such power in system level campaigns where GSWOs are not engaged. In addition, if workers are unorganised, it is not possible to establish relationships. Thus, the findings support the position of the PRA literature that the development of coalitional power requires a level of associational power. Hence, it problematises somewhat the assertion that new sources of worker power may compensate for the loss of traditional sources, given that one of the new sources (coalitional power) relies on the existence of a traditional source (associational power).

We further problematise the often-prevailing assumption within the PRA that workers are a homogenous group. We argue that gender and

other attributes, e.g. migrant status, impact power resources of particular workers where the dominant discourse acts to limit their power. Where there is a challenge to the dominant discourse, this may enable greater discursive power for workers. Thus, we contribute to PRA literature by outlining the potential to examine social norms and discourse which may disempower particular groups of workers, and overturn these as a source of worker power.

This is a small-scale study and further research is required. Research that includes the perspective of GWSOs and workers about whether they have power in transnational campaigns concerning their work would be beneficial. In addition, research that tests the framework in other industries with different worker attributes and oppressive social norms would add greatly to PRA literature.

- 1 In this paper the terms global North/South are used, though the problematic nature of the terms is recognised.
- 2 We include trade unions as civil society organisations (CSOs). This is consistent with the definition of CSOs by Salamon et al (2004), which includes groups that are organised, private, non-profit, self-governing, and voluntary.

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*ABSTRACT Australische NGO- und Gewerkschaftsinitiativen bemühen sich, die Bedingungen für Arbeiterinnen im Bekleidungssektor im Globalen Süden zu verbessern. Die Studie untersucht, wie zivilgesellschaftliche Aktivist*innen in Australien die Macht der Arbeiterinnen im Bekleidungssektor in solchen Initiativen einschätzen. Ausgehend von einer feministischen Perspektive der Politischen Ökonomie stützen sich die Autorinnen auf feministische Konzeptionen von Macht und den Machtressourcenansatz. Die Studie geht über die in der Arbeitsforschung gemeinhin verwendeten Machtressourcen (strukturelle, institutionelle und Organisationsmacht) hinaus und bezieht auch Koalitionsmacht und diskursive Macht mit ein. Der theoretische Rahmen unterstreicht die Bedeutung diskursiver Macht, die unter anderem in sozialen Normen angelegt ist. Die Studie verdeutlicht das Potenzial australischer zivilgesellschaftlicher Akteure, den herrschenden Diskurs über die „Fügsamkeit“ von Arbeitnehmerinnen fortzuschreiben oder ihn herauszufordern. Letzteres, indem sie insbesondere die Stimme der Arbeiter*innen selbst stärken. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass Arbeiter*innen über ein gewisses Maß an Organisationsmacht im eigenen Umfeld verfügen müssen, um Koalitionsmacht – also Macht, die durch Bündnisse mit anderen gesell-*

*schaftlichen Akteuren entsteht – zu erlangen. Das Ergebnis verdeutlicht die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen den Machtressourcen. Der Artikel zeigt auf, dass Organisationsmacht nur begrenzt durch Koalitionsmacht ersetzt werden kann. Diese Einsichten sind für alle von Bedeutung, die mit Arbeiter*innen zusammenarbeiten und für ihre Belange eintreten wollen.*

Karinda Flavell
School of Social Sciences, Monash University
karinda.flavell@monash.edu

Samanthi J. Gunawardana
School of Social Sciences, Monash University
samanthi.gunawardana@monash.edu