



Global Labour News

For Labour Internationalism and Globalizing Resistance

Newsletter of the Global Labour University Alumni Network

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Introductory Note

by Harald Kröck (LPG 1)

In the 5th issue of our GLU alumni newsletter Ely invites more alumni to join the newly established GLU research group "Environment and Labour", Euan and Baba share their views about the occupy movement in Canada and other countries, Steffi reports about the discussions during the last GLU Steering Committee Meeting in Johannesburg, Joel comments on how artists are rallying for democracy, human rights and freedom in Swaziland, Dom describes the problems and situation of overseas domestic workers from the Philippines in Geneva and Laura analyses the "Decisions for Life Campaign" in Brazil, a trade union strategy that has incorporated Gender Equality and Work-Care balance approach with positive outcomes for female workers. We hope you enjoy reading. We thank all persons for submitting articles and pictures. Special thanks for editing parts of this issue goes to Dan Hawkins, Euan Gibb and Ely Fair.

A few general announcements:

The next GLU alumni summer school will take place end of Sept./ beginning of Oct. 2012 at Unicamp in Brazil. You will soon be informed about the exact dates and how to apply for it.

We recently sent out the link to the GLU alumni evaluation survey, established by the alumni. The information we want to collect there shall help us to strengthen and improve the GLU network for the future. So, in case you did not fill it out so far, please do so as soon as possible.

For the improvement of our GLN newsletter, we urgently need your feedback and more contributions (articles, ideas, pictures etc.) from your side. Please feel free to send any contributions to the GLN editorial board at GLN.edit@global-labour-university.org

For your feedback, please use the GLN newsletter topic in the discussion forum of our Moodle group *GLU alumni network*. Your feedback will then be visible for all group members. Many of you are still not registered in Moodle — please contact me at harald.kroeck@global-labour-university.org for getting your login data.

Invitation to join the GLU

"Environment and Labour Research Group"

by Ely Fair (LPG 6)

At last year's Global Labour University Summer School in Johannesburg it was agreed to start a research group on the subject of the Environment and Labour.

The main questions of the research group were as follows:

- How is Labour currently positioned regarding the environment?

- What challenges does the environment pose to Labour Movements?
- Can the environment be used as an organising/ campaigning tool for the Labour movement?

These questions would be considered both from a theoretical perspective, considering the main economic and environmental debates that impact on labour movements. This would be coupled with specific case studies about labour movement's current activity related to the environment.

The group envisioned three stages for this research project running over 2 years.

Stage 1 - Literature review and case studies overviews

Stage 2 - Detailed case studies

Stage 3 - Report

If you are interested in joining this group and contributing a case study please email Ely at boskierwoods@googlemail.com

Occupy Toronto

by Euan Gibb (LPG 1)

The 40-day occupation of St. James Park on the edge of Toronto's financial district is over. Occupiers at the park were slowly and methodically evicted over the course of 12 hours on November 23rd. While Toronto cops did use force against some occupiers that refused to vacate voluntarily, the violence and force that have been mobilized by various states in the case of evictions in so many other cities – particularly those in the US – did not materialize in Toronto.



It felt like more teach-ins, meetings, general assemblies, workshops, demonstrations, & temporary occupations were organized in those 40 days than in the previous 4 years. Left-political organizing and activity in the city was heightened for the duration of the occupation. (Right-wing, reactionary political rhetoric and organizing also dramatically increased.) Activ-

ists from a wide spectrum of backgrounds looked to 'plug-in', connect-to and somehow participate in the 'Occupy' Movement. This raised obvious and ongoing questions about the sustainability of the Occupy Movement and what form the movement was taking locally.

The Occupy Movement was seen as a 'young people's' movement by many in the union/labour movement in Toronto and beyond. Countless union activists joined in that variety of meetings, assemblies, demonstrations etc. Notably, CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers) and the OFL (Ontario Federation of Labour) had previously scheduled conventions in Toronto. Both organizations proved themselves agile and politically engaged enough that they didn't miss the 'political moment' that the Occupy Movement offered. The OFL & CUPW joined and organized large marches into (and temporary disruptions of) the heart of Toronto's financial sector. Additionally, a couple of major unions in Ontario provided much-needed logistical support for occupiers. These forms of concrete, substantive solidarity from the labour movement were significant and highly valuable contributions.

Union activists and others that joined Occupy demonstrations and meetings were able to experience and often participate in open, direct deliberation (in contrast to the delegating processes common in the union movement) and horizontal, democratic decision making practices. These are instructive and invaluable experiences for anyone, but particularly for trade unionists already familiar with at least one model of democracy from their own organizations.

However, similar to the course of development of the Occupy Movements in other cities, the traditional union/labour movement's contributions can be interpreted in retrospect as charitable donations. This could be taken as a criticism of current leadership, but it is more important to highlight the limits of trade unionists' engagement with the Occupy Movement as yet another clear symptom of the current state of our labour movement.

The clear demands of the Occupy Movement were not seized upon and built-upon by the union movement. The potential to substantively disrupt the many versions of the incessant (and thoroughly discredited) neoliberal refrains of 'less government, less taxes leads to more wealth for everybody', indicate the loss of a real political opportunity.

The fact that trade unionists did not attempt to 'seize' anything in the Occupy Movement is explained in part by the respect that many non-sectarian, veteran trade unionists had (and continue to have) for the Movement. Trade unionists made active choices not to jump in or 'take over' anything. This authentic, respectful inclination contributed to the stalled progress of taking the Occupy agenda into the heart of the union movement. It contributed to the self-imposed limits the union movement accepted despite the genuine sentiment repeated by union activists that 'Worker are the 99%!'

Important exceptions certainly did exist in Canada. The postal workers of Edmonton, Alberta presented, debated and passed a

resolution calling for a general strike as a central method for workers to join the Occupy Movement. Acceptance of this model or its strategic implications did not spread throughout the union movement in Canada. But what would a true integration of the union movement and Occupy Movement's agenda have looked like? Primarily, it would involve democratizing production. A starting point involves trade unions structurally opening space for workers to discuss and debate what democracy at work and in the economy could look like.

Integrating the demands of the Occupy Movement is about using the particular and specific space that the union movement maintains for the purpose of opening workers' imagination and hopes about the future. Hopes for a future that we can take beyond the often self-imposed limits of what's possible in our economy and society. Opening the space for this kind of discussion is an invaluable and timely contribution of the Occupy Movement.

Occupying together; a "democratic awakening"

by Baba Aye (LPG 5)*

When Zuccotti Park was taken over on September 17 by a few hundreds of protesters, marking the beginning of what would become the *Occupy Movement*, the mainstream press where it gave the event any attention at all considered it as "irrelevant" and a sort of "circus". The billionaire Mayor of New York Michael Bloomberg felt the occupation demonstration was harmless enough and could be easily kettled. With ease then he had said "people have a right to protest, and if they want to protest, we'll be happy to make sure they have locations to do it." Today, the call to "*Occupy Everything*" rings across some 80 countries in the world sparking actions of protesters taking over streets with tents in well over a hundred countries at some time or the other. The apogee of this *global protest occupation* was on October 15 commencing the generalisation of the occupy movement as an international trend of alternative politics, in a sense and more aptly as an alternative narrative signifier in world discourse.



The earlier benign acceptance of the phenomenon and even verbally expressed support by representatives of the American and a dozen other states, not to talk of the papacy literally evaporated. It has been replaced with ill-disguised caution, chastisement (disguised as chastisement of a few bad apples, but invariably condemning the entire basket) and outright repression. On No-

November 14, in a near simultaneous wave of suppression, in city after city, the police moved in to disperse occupy movement camps. While protesters still stood defiant, the creeping in of winter equally limited the physical space of this movement which the African-American academic and activist, Cornel West describes as a “democratic awakening”. The tongues of the embers of imagination it has brought into on-going and unfolding resistance across the world can however not be doused.

In Nigeria for example, the recent wave of mass protests that marked a January of popular awakening has often been described with the empty signifier of a phrase; *Occupy Nigeria*. There are indeed a few disparate groups that identify themselves as “occupy Nigeria”, but to a great extent, except for Nigerians in the diaspora whose intervention has been based mainly on that real myth, it has been more of a framing of the events of the January awakening by many who believe the protest movement had to be made to fit into the dominant alternative narrative, globally.



The beginning is quite often the best place to start, as water tends to be clearest at its font. It would thus be useful to look at the origins of the occupy movement, at this juncture.

The call for the first shot of OWS was made by the Canadian-based network of information age activist known as *Adbusters* in August. The Arab Spring and the May 15 Movement (15-M) of *los Indignados* in Spain were its primary sources of inspiration. The democracy village of activists in front of the British Parliament in November 2010 was a key element of the model of resistance it has constructed, and the wave of sit-ins against attacks on workers benefits and rights, which started at Wisconsin earlier last year was the soil on which this model germinated.

It is worthwhile to point out though, that, the first *Occupy* initiatives had actually started on July 30 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This was *Occupy Dataran* summoned to coincide with a vigil for the EO6 including international socialist Dr. Michael Jeyakumar Deveraj, a leader of the Malaysian Socialist Party (PSM), who were however released a day to this. It was equally influenced by the M-15's strategy of resistance.

It is thus rather pertinent to have a perspective of the 15-M politics to understand the occupy movement in general. On May 15, a few thousands of youths had demonstrated across Spain “for real democracy now”. They had categorically stated that “we are not

commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers” and were not equivocal in pointing out that despite the formal representativeness of subsisting bourgeois democracy in the country, essentially, “no one represents us”. This first spark ignited a movement that would swell to involve millions of indignant youths and working people in demonstrations and Assemblies across more than 50 countries in the country, within the space of one month.



As with the Asian Spring, youths are the moving spirit of organising the 15-M movement, many of them former students' union activists. With youth unemployment rate that near equals that of Nigeria, a great proportion of youths in the country are indignant and rightly so. But the road to the ignition of their indignation into action is littered with mass strikes, sensitization using diverse means

of which new communication technology was a useful component and of course, the spread of fierce resistance against austerity measures that had rocked countries like Greece, Portugal and Italy, earlier.

The dominant ideas in the 15-M are autonomist or as is common to call the same thing now, *movementist*. It has also been quite an influential current in the broader occupy movement, along with Anarchism which however lost some ground with the provocative politics of the *black bloc* in *Occupy Auckland*. Autonomism with its origins in the 1960s *Operaismo* is itself a form of hybridization of Marxism and Anarchism which presents the possibility of the 99% winning control of their lives without taking over the state. It has been rife within the alter-globalisation movement that had declared its place in history with the Seattle re-claiming of the streets in 1999.

Back to the occupy movement in general though; it has drawn from the strategy of organising and claiming of space from the M-15. A key element of this for labour activists concerned with post-capitalist alternatives is that of *Popular Assemblies*. In recent times, this strategy and structure (which actually has its roots in the direct democracy of Athenian times), evolved in the Argentine turmoil of 1999-2002. It has left its imprint in the occupied enterprises movement that still remain across that country, run by the workers. In my view the generalisation of the primacy of the *Popular Assembly* principle for emancipatory politics, is the greatest significance



of the occupy movement. The dynamics between General Assemblies and their working groups as the assemblage of participatory democracy, give glimpses of the epoch of freedom over necessity which is that of a post-capitalist construction of another possible world.

We are indeed living through historic times which the Occupy Movement tries to capture. It is a moment in which we could dream dreams and see visions of how really human society could be like, based on solidarity and cooperation and not the cut-throat competition and individualism that is foisted on us through the machineries of the capitalist system. There are very similar trends from 1848 and 1968 in the current period we are in. Probably the closest to 1968 in the occupy movement in particular is the disdain (young) protesters hold parties in general in. This is a "heritage" of anger and distrust of the Stalinist methods which are not limited to "Stalinist" sects. But the limitations of vanguard politics within the myriad of resistance is the very death knell of this revolutionary moment, despite the beautiful insights it presents us with.



An example is with the *Popular Assemblies*. As Grigera who was very active in the direct democracy movement in 1999-2002 Argentina notes:

'no matter how progressive or 'advanced' the social relationships, forms of decision-making and activities of assemblies are said to be, their small scale, lack of influence and flawed co-ordination between themselves and other movements render this movement unable to overcome very narrow limitations.'

It takes a vanguard party rooted in the masses through work to overcome this "flawed coordination". A vanguard party as Mandel shows is not the same thing as vanguard organisations of sects and cannot be built outside the revolution, though in a sense it would rest on the work of such sects *before* the storm. Its cadres would also have to learn from the realities of the present and the poetry of the future and not merely cram lines and phrases from Marxist classics.

Does this mean that the decisive social force for moving society forward is a vanguard party? Definitely not! It is the working class. We can see that it played the role of tilting the revolution to fruition within each of the pathways of the Arab Spring. Within the

OWS as well, the trade unions and the broader labour movement's role was very pivotal. Indeed, even before the general strike and closure of ports at Auckland, the anarchist linguist and philosopher, Naom Chomsky had declared to the OWS that workers' power was of the essence to move forward. In Nigeria as well, much as many citizens felt let down by the eventual suspension of the indefinite general strike after 8 days, it was obvious that the entry of workers as a class into the anti-fuel subsidy struggle deepened and generalised it in a way no other social force could have brought about.



It is important in this light to realise the dynamics within the working class between workers and the trade unions. The trade unions do not equal the working class. But it is its primary associative organ and despite disillusionment with the politics of the labour aristocracy that constitutes union bureaucracy,

building relations with the trade unions is, I strongly believe a very important aspect of work for indignant youths and all social forces committed to changing the world.

In summing up, we are living in historic times. Capitalism will not be brought down in this hour though. This is as a result of weaknesses of linkages between working class revolutionary theory and practice as represented by the *partisan* and broader *social* manifestation of this most decisive force of bringing to birth a new world on the ashes of that morass which we now live in. But it is an hour in which great leaps forward can be made and are being made. Such hours come with lessons that would be invaluable for us living today and for generations coming after us that would eventually cleanse the life of humankind of the ugliness and pains that capitalism stamps on its beauty and fullness.

Vinceremos! We shall win!

* *Baba Aye, a trade unionist and Deputy National Secretary of the Labour Party (Nigeria) is the National Chairperson of the Socialist Workers League*

Report from the GLU Steering Committee Meeting in Johannesburg, September 2011

by Stefanie A. Wahl (LPG 5)

It was the first time I had the chance to represent the Alumni at the International Steering Committee Meeting. On the part of the alumni representatives, it was Harald and me who could address alumni topics at this meeting. Below you find a report and summary of the meeting. It includes parts of the official minutes (om), but also my own view on the meeting and its results.

The first TOP on the agenda was "Crisis 2.0: Influencing the Debate - possible GLU contributions". It was discussed how contributions from the GLU, like the Global Labour Column, are able to

influence debates about policy alternatives. It was agreed to use the existing tools, the GLU conference, the Global Labour Column, the GLU working papers, etc. for this purpose. Several commitments were made by the Professors in terms of focusing on alternative debates (see official minutes (om)).

TOP 2 was about “**Cooperation with Trade Unions at global and national level**”. The committee started talking about the main challenges the GLU is facing regarding trade union cooperation. It seems like information about the GLU is reaching the trade unions via their organizational channels. Ideas that were discussed are, for instance: inviting more trade union leaders as speakers to GLU events, involving the GLU alumni network more actively in sharing knowledge about the programme, offering joint trade union workshop at the beginning of each course. Philip Bowyer offered to cover an introduction on the work of Global Unions (full list see om). The Brazilian programme for instance is facing since the beginning a language barrier problem. The committee discussed that a more formal offer to support language training should be developed. “Another option to improve outreach is the possibility to use the GLU students and scholars as resource persons for meeting with trade unions. It would be good to institutionalize these forms of collaboration, like guest speakers at trade union seminars. The GLU working papers are a good instrument to publish GLU research and in particular research of the Alumni research groups. Further to this type of working papers there would be great value in more actionable material. Donna McGuire started an alumni research group that is focusing on the structural opportunities approach that some trade unions take in designing campaigns. As part of her PhD research, she has transformed this model into a practical tool for trade unions. The GLU could consider doing trainings with trade unions on these practical applications of research.” (om)

Thirdly, the recent developments and new challenges at the different campuses were presented by the coordinators and professors. In **Brazil** a new course has started. “The Brazilian government is providing 6 scholarships for students from developing countries. This will help to consolidate the programme. The programme will organize a conference in March together with the regional organization of the ITUC to discuss the progressive government’s impact on trade in Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador and Bolivia. This will be used to develop some common projects for the future. The GLU Conference will be another key activity in 2012. Finally, the Brazilian colleagues will further pursue possibilities to strengthen South-South cooperation within the ILO and IBSA context.”(om)

In **Germany** the new LPG intake started with 19 participants. “The course time was reduced from 13 to 12 months as the introductory phase has been more streamlined. From 2012 all teaching costs will be covered by regular university budgets. The programme has several institutionalized interaction with the trade unions. There is a two day workshop with trade unionists from multinational companies and global unions on multinational companies, a twinning project were the programmes organize direct partnerships with German trade unionists and GLU students to enable students to

get a more direct knowledge about the German labour movement. At the beginning of the course there will be a workshop with the international department of the trade union and Philip Bowyer from the Global Unions. The last ENGAGE programme intake was not entirely satisfactory and attracted a very heterogeneous group. The programme will be adjusted to the new needs. Next year’s programme will focus on global income security and on trade union strategies in multinational companies.” (om)

“The **Indian programme** has a growing number of trade union participants. This year there are 9 students, from 6 countries. While the programme has many applications from Indian students in general, there have been very few applications from Indian trade unionists. However, the programme is exploring ways that trade unionists can get leave from public sector employers to participate in the programme. This year TISS is going to celebrate their anniversary and will have a GLU seminar on the role of trade unions in social protection.” (om)

South Africa: “In the next round, the GLU programme at Wits will be starting the honours programme, in response to COSATU’s concern that the MA application requirements are too difficult for most trade unionists to meet. There is enthusiastic hope that the honours programme will be seen as a valuable alternative. The programme was widely advertised among South African trade unions and they got much higher number of applications. The new honours programme will provide an opportunity for trade unionists who do not immediately meet the requirements for the MA. While there were applications from other African countries it would be good to have more applications from other continents to strengthen the global character of the programme. The Global Labour Column has been a great success and the South African colleagues would welcome regular contributions from the GLU partners to this weekly publication.” (om)

Part of this TOP was also **the alumni and students feedback**. I presented our current concerns and our ideas for the future we had discussed at the summer school. I started with introducing our idea of an academic charter for all campuses. As the programmes themselves were part of the debate of this topic it was a good starting point for me to talk about the problems students are facing at the campuses. After my introduction and description of our idea a discussion among the members started. Michelle Williams from the SA programme told us that their GLU coordinator meets with the students every month to get their feedback. In Germany student representatives are members of the national GLU steering committee. The committee agreed on the point that it is “important to ensure regular feedback possibilities for the students in the different programmes. ... The annual campus reports should have a special chapter where students provide their feedback to the programme. Problems, concerns, ideas and proposals of students should be presented, even if some of these issues are not solvable through the GLU.” (om). In general I had the impression that parts of the committee were very supportive and open for the idea of an academic charter while others argued against it. So in total the committee is split. I strongly recommended that all programmes should start thinking about how to guar-

antee standards for the students. The committee agreed that the SA-programm will circulate a model charter that they use at Wits. Our part will be to develop a model as well and share it with the steering committee. So there will be further discussions on it and we have to push forward our interests. Our idea of an alumni survey suited very well in this discussion and the committee responded positive to this idea. It was seen as a good starting point for developing a charter model.

Top 4 was about the **GLU conference and** summer school 2011 that just took place in SA. See the detailed feedback at the om. Second important part of that topic was the GLU conference **2012**. It will take place in **Brazil** from 28th-30th September with the overall topic: "Sustainable growth, development and labour: progressive responses at local, national and global level". The Summer School will start after the conference. The Call for Papers is already open, available via this link:

http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/download/CfP_GLU_conference_Brazil.pdf

TOP 5 dealt with the **financial resources** of the GLU. The programme is facing financial problems. Especially the **German Programme** is losing capacities and therefore there is a need to mobilize additional resources. Suggestions: "South-South and triangular cooperation would be an option to try mobilizing additional funding. The Brazilian, South African and Indian partners in collaboration with the ILO will explore the possibilities for support within the IBSA cooperation. "(om) Furthermore the country reports state: **Brazil**: "The Brazilian Government will provide scholarships for 6 people from the South to attend the GLU programme. The development agency of the governments might also be able to support academic exchanges and capacity building, conferences and workshops. The Brazilian cooperation agency already funds internships for current students. **South Africa** has the SITA programme that provides scholarships. COSATU has the possibility to submit proposals for the honours and the masters programme. The colleagues at Wits have submitted a proposal for the South African Research Chairs Initiative. A successful application would allow the funding for an associate professorship for labour policy and globalization and would also provide some funding for scholarships. The decision is to be made in December. **India** has started the hub that guides CSR activities in the public sector. They will explore to find out whether this will also generate scholarships for the GLU programme. They also approached the department of public enterprises to try to ensure that applicants can get leave with pay to participate in the GLU programme." (om) Finally, "Christoph Scherrer explained that we have a good basis to get funding for offering joint degrees. However, it may be complicated because national rules can act as a barrier. The dean at Wits supports the partnership with Kassel however, so it looks promising. The requirements for funding are that the programmes need to fit together tightly, with a strong mutual recognition of qualifications and credits." (om)

TOP 6 was about **GLU information sharing** and started with a reminder. The Global Labour Column is doing very well but it should be spread via a wider mailing list. We are asked to provide

Claire Hobden (hobden@ilo.org) with new addresses of people who should be included in the info and column list. "The GLU Facebook page is active and has more than 300 followers. We post GLU programme announcements such as application deadlines and call for papers, as well as posting the GLC. You don't have to be a member of Facebook to see what is published there. Now there is also a Twitter account where the GLU can make very short announcements." (om). We should also check out the GLU calendar on the website which shares information about GLU events and activities at different campuses. Harald presented the latest GLU alumni figures from the database which includes data on gender, occupation, research areas, and thesis topic. There are about 20 people we have lost track of. If you know alumni who lost contact to the GLU, you may help the GLU to get in touch with them. Harald also introduced the new email-addresses of the GLU alumni representatives (alumni.reps@global-labour-university.org) and the Global Labour News editorial board (GLN.edit@global-labour-university.org). "Campuses should make more of an effort to update and improve the web-based resources. There should also just be more information sharing about what's going on the campuses. Updates to the programme websites should be sent to Harald. There was a brief discussion held on whether or not to share alumni email addresses. It was decided that Harald should remain the primary contact and he can put people in touch with an alumni if they wish to speak with one. The alumni felt that the website should indicate the specifics of each campus. The GLU flyer seems to do this already, so perhaps that content can just be transferred to the website." (om) Talking about the introduction of Moodle as the new knowledge-sharing platform, we proposed that all campuses should use Moodle in order to offer all students and alumni the possibility to use it. Brazil and India followed this proposal. If you have any comments or questions about Moodle please contact Harald (harald.kroeck@global-labour-university.org). "GLU members can gain access to the ILO and FES library through the GLU website. The library provides access to 200 journals. If you find an article that is not available online, you can request it following the links and you will get the PDF back in 24 hours. You can also email it to the ILO library. Campuses can then maybe link to the ILO database, so that our students would have access to debatably the largest labour library in the world." (om)

Most important for us was **TOP 7** about the **GLU alumni networking**. I brought up the challenge of a growing number of alumni to the network. As we know the financial restriction of the GLU meaning that it is getting more and more difficult to bring everyone together, the summer school remains a crucial element of the GLU alumni programme by bringing active alumni together for two weeks. In order to strengthen our network I proposed our plans to formalize the structure in order to be able to apply for our own funding. We were asked to contact GLU Summer School participants and come up with ideas that would be important for the next summer school.

"The GLU statute says that individuals who are actively involved in GLU events can become **associate members (TOP 8)**. To be an

active member means providing columns, guest lecturing, attending conferences, etc. If persons cease to be active, they lose their membership. The process of recruiting new members is to first nominate them in the committee and then extend an invitation to them. Proposals for associate memberships: Akua Opokua Britwum (Senior Research Fellow, Ghana) Nicolas Pons-Vignon (Global Labour Column) and Phumzile Ncube (Global Labour Column).” (om) We will introduce the new members in the following issue.

Regarding the **GLU publications and communication (TOP 9)** the following has to be announced: “The GLU Working Papers are now published with both the ILO logo and the GLU logo. The working paper series provide an opportunity to publish the research of the GLU-Alumi research groups in particular. Please submit drafts to Hansjörg Herr who is coordinating the review process. In terms of submissions in Spanish, we would have to raise funds for translation. Maybe we could include this into the project proposal for IBSA. The Brazilian Agency of Cooperation could be willing to fund translation from Portuguese into English. Some selected numbers could be made available in Spanish and in English.” (om) After the GLU conference 2010 a selection of conference papers was published as the ILO&GLU book ‘Trade union strategies’. For the 2011 conference contributions, Michelle Williams would liaise to see whether a similar publication would be feasible. The proposal will be done by November. The GLU column has received very positive responses from many trade unionists and academic scholars. We are constantly looking for contributions and it would be good if all GLU partners could contribute regularly. A new idea was to start producing a series of GLU Lectures that can be posted on the Web and also may be used to increase cross campus communication and discussions with scholars via video-conferencing. There was also an idea to start a GLU YouTube station, also for clips that the alumni might produce on various labour issues.

Finally, there was some space for **miscellaneous (TOP 10)** and we were informed that Mariano Laplane has now moved on in the science and education networks and needs to be replaced. Eugenia is nominated as a replacement. Dieter Eich has retired and resigned from the International GLU steering committee. His successor will be nominated in the next month.

Artists Rallying for Democracy, Human Rights and freedom in Swaziland

by Joel Odigie (LPG 3)

Swaziland remains the last absolute monarchy in the world. The King is above the constitution and sees the state as his private estate. Political parties are banned, meaning that elections are organised by the state on individual basis and candidates are loyal only to the King and not to their constituencies or constituents. Human and trade union rights continue to be abused by the state and the Royal Police of Swaziland. Forced labour is extracted through cultural claims and the rights to free speech, thoughts and opinion, assembly and association are daily discounted whimsically by the state.

Recently, the state went into a financial crisis caused largely by the King’s extravagant and luxurious lifestyle- he has 13 wives, marries a teenager almost once in a year and has all his children in choice private schools abroad. There were threats that many workers will be laid off and the salaries of all public service workers cut, except for those pertaining to the armed forces. Many HIV patients who need ant-retro viral drugs find it difficult to obtain their medication. The Swazi government approached South Africa for a bailout, which was granted with democracy reforms as conditions, achieved after a massive campaign by the global trade unions movement. But the regime in Mbabane is considering other loan options as it is not comfortable with making such democratic reforms. The global mainstream media has ignored the developments in Swaziland for far too long. However, different groups continue to contribute to solidarity actions to democratize and achieve freedom in Swaziland.

Below is a culled statement from artists who are using their arts to cause change, importantly, to draw attention to the human, rights, democracy, and welfare crises in Swaziland. Let’s continue to contribute actions to fight injustice anywhere knowing that change will surely come and gains will be sweet to savour and enjoy.

The Constitutional vision of Arterial Network – a Pan-African network of artists, cultural workers, creative enterprises and others engaged in the creative sector “is of a vibrant, dynamic and sustainable African creative civil society sector engaged in qualitative practice in the arts in their own right, as well as in a manner that contributes to development, human rights and democracy and to the eradication of poverty on the African continent”.

In the light of the above, Arterial Network strongly supports the struggle for democracy, human rights and social justice in Swaziland.

The struggle of the Swazi people reflects similar struggles of ordinary people in many other African countries as we have recently seen in Tunisia, Egypt and other North African countries, as well as in ongoing struggles against tyranny in countries such as Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Zimbabwe.

Arterial Network came into being precisely to support artists and cultural workers in African countries, many of whose governments do not support the arts either in terms of policy or funding. National chapters of Arterial Network have come into being in more than 30 African countries – including Swaziland – to play advocacy roles in support of the rights and aspirations of cultural workers, to build capacity within the sector, to support greater mobility of African artists within the region and generally, to integrate culture into development strategies.

Cultural workers are not immune from repressive policies and practices of undemocratic governments and the elites they serve. Through our nascent Artwatch Africa project which monitors freedom of creative expression on the continent, we receive regular reports of artists being arrested, detained, harassed, imprisoned and banned for exercising the basic human right of freedom to express their views as contained in Article 19 of the Universal Dec-

laration of Human Rights which states: “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”. The struggle of artists and cultural workers for freedom of expression is thus integral to struggles for democracy and human rights.

In this context, we note and understand the call for a cultural boycott of Swaziland as an additional means of pressure for democratic transformation of that society and for greater respect for human rights and freedoms there.

Arterial Network supports the application of cultural boycotts as a means of pressure towards democratic change and greater respect for human rights, but that such boycotts be applied in a selective manner (as it was in South Africa), so as to:

- isolate ruling elites in undemocratic countries and avoid those state cultural events that lend credibility to repressive regimes;
- build, empower and defend independent civil society structures, platforms and activists in the creative sector.

We believe that selective cultural boycotts must contribute to the struggle for democracy and human rights by helping to organise all sectors of civil society, including the creative sector, and to build capacity and sustainability within the sector.

Finally, we encourage broader democratic forces struggling for change within Swaziland to engage with the progressive organised arts and culture community in Swaziland - and vice versa - in the formulation and application of strategies to transform Swazi society.

Taken from a statement by Arterial Network's Continental Secretariat

Filipino Domestic Workers in Geneva, Switzerland¹

by Dom Tuvera (ENG 2)

Author's Note: I met some Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) working as domestic workers in Geneva, Switzerland in August and September 2011 during my internship at the Public Services International (PSI) in nearby Ferney-Voltaire, France under the ENGAGE Program. Let me share why and how they go there, how they get jobs, the problems they face and how they cope with these problems.

Working in a foreign land without legal papers means workers face the constant risk of deportation. Many Filipino domestic workers in Geneva, Switzerland confront that risk every day. They are mostly women and their numbers will not decrease any time soon. They will keep going there.

Switzerland is now part of the Schengen area. That means OFWs from other countries in Europe can travel there freely. Unlike other countries, Switzerland is lenient on migrant workers. At a minimum, the country's laws on migrant workers are more humane. That how the OFWs I met described the situation.

Like other countries, Switzerland needs migrant workers to keep its economy going. Imagine a day without domestic workers.

Swiss people could not go to work because they would need to take care of their children and their elderly. Global organizations and corporations could not function properly because their employees would need to attend to chores at home.

Why Filipinos go there

The main reason Filipino workers travel to Switzerland to work is the lack of good-paying jobs in the Philippines and elsewhere. There are college graduates and professionals such as teachers who choose to go abroad and work as domestic workers. They take all the chances just to get there, even if it costs a fortune.

Second, wages are good. Really good. A domestic worker can earn 2,500 to 5,000 Swiss Francs a month. That's roughly 125,000 to 250,000 pesos, 10–20 times the highest minimum wage in the Philippines! And wages will remain high because of the demand for domestic workers. The presence of many global organizations in Geneva and its economy help fuel this demand. Many OFWs from other countries also go to Geneva because of the good pay.



Third, domestic workers have rights in Geneva under the law. This is not the case in many other countries. The law spells out the minimum wage, the number of working hours per day, the number of working days per week and provision of basic social insurance. Switzerland passed (and follows!) a national law for domestic workers.

Going to Geneva

Philippine laws do not allow recruitment agencies to send ordinary workers to Geneva without proper papers such as job orders from employers or principals. Many legitimate (registered) agencies refrain from sending OFWs to Geneva because there is no explicit demand for Filipino domestic workers and because the placement process can be difficult and thus prohibitive.

Consequently, travel agencies in Manila have found and developed a niche in sending OFWs as tourists to Geneva. They help prepare the papers of the applicants and coach them for the interview at the Swiss embassy. These services from travel agencies do not come cheap. They range from 12,000 to 16,000 francs per person.

Some employers from other countries bring their domestic workers when they go to Geneva. The workers then escape from their employers. They do this even when their passports are held by the employers. In most cases, they leave with nothing but the clothes they are wearing.

In some cases, Filipinos request that their friends in Geneva support a kin as a domestic worker. The intent is to bring the kin there to work – not necessarily for the sponsor. Friends would often agree in return for air tickets to and from the Philippines, among other things.

Getting jobs

Employers look for at least three things. Can the worker speak English? Can she take care of a baby or an elderly person? Can she clean a house? In rare cases, an employer living alone only needs someone to live with. Many Filipino OFWs have an edge because of their ability to speak English, their caring nature and their adaptability.

As always, having good contacts also plays a key role. The prospective worker may not know anyone in Geneva but someone she knows may. A friend refers her to someone or to another friend. That friend may know someone who is looking for a domestic worker.

Some OFWs get their jobs through the Filipino shop in Rue de Fort-Barreau. People needing workers leave their requirements with the owner. The owner then matches the job offers to those looking for jobs. This way the store also acts as a job matcher, free of charge.

Problems they face

The death of family members, even husbands, causes great sorrow for workers with no proper papers. They face the difficult choice of not going home. Many know they cannot return once they leave Switzerland. And the prospect of not being able to provide for their families worries them. This often includes the families of their brothers or sisters.

That's one reason that some OFWs in Geneva have no savings or investments. They need to continue working in order to maintain their families' standard of living. This is the case even after many years of working abroad. Some have been there for more than 20 years!

Other family problems may be even harder to handle. Workers have to endure the infidelity of their husbands in the Philippines. They try to accept the wrong notion that men need other women while their wives are away. Being long distance parents is also extremely difficult. Workers give in to the money-oriented demands of their growing children in order to compensate for their absence.

Coping mechanisms and trade union connections

The presence of friends and relatives help Filipino domestic workers cope with such problems. In most cases, OFWs from the same area or region in the Philippines group themselves together for social activities and to support those in need. These groups give their members a sense of belonging and support while away from

their families in the Philippines.

Very few of these OFWs are members of unions in Geneva. UNIA has some 40 Filipino domestic workers as members. At least two workers joined UNIA at the prodding of their employers who payed their union dues. Others joined as a result of UNIA's campaign to organize domestic workers. Language, among other things, affects the progress of the campaign, said UNIA's Dario Chiaradonna.

Most workers have not joined the union because people talking about unionism and organizing do not speak their language. In this case, leaders of the Filipino organizations can play strategic roles in helping to organize domestic workers. Filipino leaders need to be trained or oriented about unionism and domestic workers' rights. Working with certain Philippine unions or trade unionists in this area would help.

Filipinos will keep going to Geneva to work as domestic workers. The presence of clear legal rights and the superior wages outweigh the problems these workers face. Increased cooperation between trade unions in the sending and the receiving countries would make a significant contribution to organizing workers in the sector.

¹ A revised version of the article of the same title published at www.overseas-filipinos.com, a website owned and edited by the author

Gender Equality and the Work-Care Balance approach: The case of the "Decision for Life" Campaign in Brazil

by Laura Morillo (LPG 7)



The gender relations of every society play a key role in shaping how the division of labour between women and men is structured and how it changes. Women consistently confront more obstacles in accessing education, training, development of skills, job experience, etc. because of cultural and societal norms that create structures and allocate them to specific jobs or sectors. As a consequence, there is widespread occupational gender segregation that

pushes women into jobs without minimum wages, social protection, or decent working conditions.

For the last several decades, trade unions have been recognizing that women workers confront different and specific barriers. They have their own characteristics, working conditions, and interests. Moreover, unions have been promoting gender equality and incorporating a work-care balance approach into their campaigns.

The 'Decisions for Life Campaign' started in October, 2008. It has been organised by a coalition composed of the International Trade Union Conference - ITUC, UNI Global Union, Wage Indicator Foundation in Amsterdam, and the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies of the University of Amsterdam – AIAS.

The Campaign has been focused on young female workers (aged 15-29) who work in eight large occupational groups including call center operators; secretaries; housekeepers in hotels; IT programmers; travel agency intermediaries; salespeople/cashiers in retail outlets; bookkeepers and receptionists/front office workers in 14 developing countries (Angola, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Botswana, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Ukraine, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The purpose of the campaign has been to raise awareness about employment opportunities and career possibilities as well as family building and work-family balance.

In the case of Brazil, the Campaign Team has been composed of the Departamento Intersindical de Estadística e Estudos Socioeconômicos -DIEESE, UNI Global Union, and six trade union confederations (Central Única dos Trabalhadores - CUT, União Geral dos Trabalhadores - UGT, Força Sindical - FS, Central dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras do Brasil - CTB, Central Geral de Trabalhadores do Brasil - CGTB, and Nova Central Sindical dos Trabalhadores - NCST). In Brazil, the campaign has concentrated specifically on the work-care balance approach. The premise for this approach is an ongoing interrogation of the specific gender division of labour at work and at home and its consequences. Meetings and workshops have taken place with the purpose of providing information about the situation of women workers and the streaming of women into certain activities and roles in the private and public spheres. Meeting participants have also discussed the inequalities between women and men as a historical, social, cultural and structural matter and they have reflected on the changes that have been taking place in gender relations and what can be done to achieve equality.

The results so far has been the following: First, women workers have been informed about gender relations and gender inequalities at home as well as their rights and opportunities at work. Second, the Campaign has organized 5459 young women workers by the end of the second year. Third, Brazilian trade unions have further developed methods to reach young women. Fourth, Brazilian Trade unions are incorporating gender-related clauses into Collective Bargaining Agreements. They expect to have 50 new collective agreements with gender clauses by the end of the campaign. Next, the Decisions for Life Campaign has built coalitions and networks between unions, researchers and other organizations and finally, the campaign has raised initiatives to provide information about gender relations in the schools in order to change misconceptions of children and young people and to encourage the participation of male workers in the debate. Furthermore, DIEESE in coordination with the Secretariat of Policies for Women of Brasil has collected information that led to the publishing of the First Annual Report of Women this year.

The Decisions for Life Campaign in Brasil is a trade union strategy that has incorporated Gender Equality and Work-Care balance approach with positive outcomes for female workers who have found and space to be informed, to reflect and to discuss gender relations, inequalities, and possibilities to change their lives. Moreover, the Campaign Team and Trade unions have developed

methods to reach young women workers; included a Gender perspective as an important issue in their agenda, Collective Bargaining Agreements and Government's social policies; built coalitions and networks; and created an environment to discuss more initiatives to inform and discuss gender issues.

Trade unions should integrate a Gender Equality and Work-Care balance approach in their campaigns. In this way, more women workers would have the possibility to be informed, to reflect and discuss about their own situations, and to find ways to overcome inequalities. It is necessary to understand that the Work-Care balance approach focuses on the gender division of labour at work and at home. In order to do that, it is important to collect information about the private sphere, and gender relations in households.

The Decisions for Life Campaign has brought gender equality and work-care balance approach into broader debates and has made it clear that these issues are relevant for men and women. Gender discrimination and inequalities have a negative impact on women, but also have a multiplier effect in a broader way. Clearly negative impacts on partnerships, relations between parents and children, families, communities and broader society result directly from gender discrimination and inequality. These are not only women's matters, these are issues of society. It would be interesting and valuable to incorporate matters such as family building and the work-care balance in the education of male union members. Trade unions could really promote a change if male workers had more opportunity to engage these issues.

Trade Unions maintain the representation of workers' interests as their main goal. However, trade unions have also been important actors in promoting and demanding social changes in favor of workers and the whole society. The Decisions for Life Campaign in Brasil is an example of how trade unions can change the lives of young women not only in the public sphere as workers, but also in the private sphere. This kind of Campaign brings opportunities for unions to promote broader social change.

Web Sites:

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Videos

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