

Organization and Self-regulation among informal workers: An Ethnographic study of rickshaw drivers in Bogotá, Colombia

By Ana Maria Vargas

Organizing workers in the informal economy is often seen as one of the “weapons of the weak” since workers can mobilize to claim rights, social security and better working conditions (Kabeer et al., 2013). However, workers in the informal economy often have difficulties to achieve long-lasting organizations that can strive for their political goals, their leaders are exposed to corruption and many prefer to work individually. Based on an ethnographic study of two organizations of rickshaw drivers in the city of Bogota, Colombia, this paper explores the role of the organizations of rickshaw drivers in the achievement of welfare at work. The preliminary conclusions suggest that lack of legal norms does not imply that rickshaw are unregulated, they are in fact governed by a comprehensive system of social control, determining their fees, routes, and general conduct in this business. I will argue that organizations of informal workers can have an ambivalent role in some occasions empowering workers to claim their rights and in other occasions can be used to oppress and control informal workers.

Kabeer, Naila, Kirsty Milward, and Sudarshan Sudarshan. 2013. *Organizing Women in the Informal Economy: Beyond the Weapons of the Weak*. Zed Press. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53661/>.

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