

Patriarchy, Labour Markets and Development: Contesting the Sexual Division of Labour in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Although certain strides have been made towards increased female participation in paid work, Sri Lanka's labour market remains heavily segmented and offers limited sustainable economic opportunity for a majority of women. Differentiated entitlements determined by gender, ethnicity and class have left women disproportionately burdened by the challenges of economic development. Shaped by neoliberal reforms embedded in patriarchal ethno-nationalist economic policies, women remain over-represented in the labour-intensive, low-paid occupations that have historically formed Sri Lanka's export base and underpinned development. As migrant domestic workers and garment producers, a majority of Sri Lankan women have been restricted to earning their livelihood through vulnerable and exploitative work within stratified labour markets. By framing domestic labour markets as embedded in global production networks, this article explores the potential for International Labour Organization (ILO) and civil society initiatives to shape domestic policy measures to re-regulate labour markets by addressing mechanisms that devalue and marginalize women workers. It then considers the ways in which civil society actors, women workers groups and labour unions contest or complement entrenched patriarchal tendencies within labour markets. Although ILO and state-led measures are significant, the challenges women face in articulating their collective concerns within labour markets remain central to addressing conditions of exploitation that women workers endure.

Keywords

Sri Lanka, patriarchy, neoliberalism, sexual division of labour, global production networks, labour movement, women's empowerment

Introduction

Since the implementation of neoliberal reform under the auspices of the United National Party (UNP) government in 1977, Sri Lanka's economic landscape has been characterized by a changing sexual division of labour. There has been a concurrent feminization and casualization of labour markets, culminating in the conspicuous over-representation of women workers in key export sectors that have financed imports and sustained macroeconomic development. Contrary to neoliberal assertions that greater participation in wage employment is tantamount to women's empowerment (World Bank, 2012, p. 54), women

continue to negotiate and contest market-driven developmental processes overlapping both public and private realms of a patriarchal mode of production. Embedded within a pervasive patriarchal ethno-nationalism, neoliberal economic policies reproduce gender, ethnicity and class hierarchies that shape layers of differentiated entitlements, with themselves situated in emerging and submerging labour markets shaped by the cyclical expansion of capital via changing global production networks.

Two such labour markets are found in temporary labour migration and the garment manufacturing industry, sectors in which female labour has been subject to fictitious commodification (Rosewarne, 2010) within Sri Lanka

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and across South Asia more broadly. Governed by an economic rationale predicated on maximizing productive efficiency, Sri Lankan women are subjected to precarious employment in vacuums of jurisdiction, where fundamental human rights are denied in the name of 'employment generation' and enhancing 'national competitiveness' (Arunatilake, 2012). As this material exploitation in the productive and reproductive sphere is accompanied by structures of cultural subordination, women workers exist in a state of super-exploitation, subjugated by both profit and patriarchy in the public and private realms. The way in which Sri Lanka is integrated into the international division of labour interrelates with this sexual division of labour and exacerbates processes of exploitation and political subordination. This article explores how such processes relate to specific labour markets in different geographical scales, and how institutions of governance engage in their coordination. Recognizing that coordination also relates to actors in civil society, the article will also highlight how women workers articulate multiple forms of resistance to elaborate their entitlements by socializing the functioning of these labour markets.

Remedies towards Strengthening Entitlements

The dichotomous construct of 'formal' and 'informal' work constitutes a barrier to such efforts, as it fallaciously misrepresents heavily stratified and increasingly casualized labour markets. Government and International Labour Organization (ILO) efforts to improve working conditions for women workers have been couched in an institutional bias towards formal sector employment—a fundamentally masculine conceptualization of work that accounts for a limited and diminishing portion of national employment, particularly for women workers. Using Nancy Fraser's (1997) assessment of affirmative and transformative remedies to crises of recognition and redistribution, this article contends that state- and ILO-led interventions broadly comprise affirmative remedies that reproduce the patriarchal mode of production; thus perpetuating a sexual division of labour that stigmatizes, disrespects, misrecognizes and misrepresents women. Attention is then turned to analyzing the ways in which civil society engagement contests or complements this patriarchal mode of production, arguing for civil society interventions that combine dominant affirmative strategies with transformative remedies

contesting the patriarchal mode of production as well as neoliberal accumulation through dispossession.

Increasing Female Participation in Paid Work: Contesting Empowerment

The election of Jayewardene's UNP in 1977 marked the end of Sri Lanka's experimentation with import substitution industrialization (ISI) and the implementation of sweeping neoliberal reforms. As president, Jayewardene oversaw the rapid liberalization of the Sri Lankan economy, implementing a package of free market policies, advocated by the World Bank and the IMF, that included the adoption of a floating exchange rate, the dismantling of import and migration controls, the establishment of a large export processing zone, general welfare reductions and liberalization of the banking system and credit supply (Dunham & Kelegama 1994; Indraratna, 1990; Richardson Jr., 2004).

The UNP's philosophy of economic liberalization was not, however, paired with a typical contractionary fiscal stance; instead, the new government channelled massive capital expenditure into agriculture, industry, housing and infrastructural projects (Richardson Jr., 2004, p. 48). Chief among these infrastructural projects was the creation of a large free trade zone (FTZ) near Colombo airport to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) for the garment industry (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 499), an emerging labour market within South Asia. While successful in stimulating short-term growth in low-value manufacture, receipts from the garments industry were not sufficient to supplant a growing macroeconomic dependency on aid and loans (Richardson Jr., 2004, p. 51). Only remittances from another emerging labour market—domestic workers in the Arabian Gulf states—provided any tangible reprieve from otherwise lacklustre foreign earnings. The early boom accompanying Jayawardene's liberalization programme was short-lived; by 1982 government debt had tripled, inflation was high and trade deficits—no longer safeguarded by import restrictions—were increasing rapidly (Dunham & Kelegama, 1994). Debt servicing took up a growing portion of government revenue and entailed heavy cutbacks in developmental and welfare projects, spiralling inflation caused ongoing reductions in real wages and the post-Independence trend towards redistribution remedies began reversing (Indraratna, 1990, p. 3; Richardson Jr., 2004, pp. 54–57).

In this context of lagging development, the enduring lack of a technologically advanced or capital-intensive export base has placed continued demand on labour-intensive production to earn vital foreign exchange reserves (Karunaratne, 2008, p. 185). As an open economy, Sri Lanka has experienced submerging and emerging labour markets dictated by South Asia's position as a global pool of low wage labour for expanding capital accumulation. Whereas the estate sector was the primary vehicle for foreign exchange earnings under a colonial economy, Sri Lanka's deeper integration with the global economy within a new imperial context has seen exports become dominated by the garments industry and remittances from temporary labour migrants (Karunaratne, 2008, p. 185). With the gradual submergence of the estate sector due to export diversification—reflected in agriculture's declining share of GDP from 46 per cent in 1950 to 31 per cent in 1977 to just 13 per cent in 2010 (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 491)—the locus of labour-intensive employment has shifted to migration and light-industry. During the period 2005 to 2010, services sector share of the GDP accounted for nearly 59 per cent and manufacturing around 29 per cent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012). During the period 2001 to 2010, the employed population in agriculture increased from 2 million to 2.5 million, while industry increased from 1.4 million to 2.1 million and the services sector increased from 2.7 million to 3.5 million (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012a). With only 22 per cent of the population living in urban areas, the agriculture sector remains central to the livelihood of many.

Conspicuously, both labour markets have emerged as a consequence of shifts in global capital accumulation—rapidly accumulating Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil revenue in the Middle East fuelled demand for construction and domestic workers (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 491; Gamburd, 2000, p. 26), while the relocation of labour-intensive manufacturing in the global South following a broad abandonment of ISI policies and growing competition to attract FDI incorporated local labour markets into global production networks (Piper, 2011). The simultaneous emergence of these labour markets in Sri Lanka during the late-1970s was equally facilitated by the adoption of a neoliberal policy framework, designed to deregulate labour, foster greater market integration and enable new patterns of global capital accumulation. In this sense, the reconfiguration of Sri Lanka's key labour markets can be considered

a product of interconnected local and global political economic dynamics.

Moreover, striking similarities can be drawn between these two labour markets concerning the precarious nature of employment and their reflection of a sexual division of labour. Proliferating in the late 1970s, temporary labour migration to the Middle East—particularly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE (Gamburd, 2000, p. 37)—has featured a conspicuous gendered dimension. While low-skilled male workers have typically migrated as construction workers, women have found even more precarious work as domestic workers, where non-transferable work permits are tied to a single employer and employment conditions consequently offered on a 'take it or leave it' basis (ANMW&WMC, 2008; Caritas, 2011). With their employment embedded in the private sphere and neglected by local labour laws, domestic workers exist in a vacuum of jurisdiction where human rights abuse is common, an observation acknowledged by the Sri Lankan state (MFEPW, 2008) and substantiated by a growing catalogue of traumatic individual narratives (Gamburd, 2000, p. 210). The complicity of the government in encouraging the exploitative migration of women—whom, by the mid-1990s, constituted over 75 per cent of Sri Lankan migrants (Gamburd, 2000, p. 35)—is evidenced by the promotion of foreign employment opportunities at a time when other South Asian governments were banning the migration of domestic workers to the Middle East following reported malpractice (Eelens, Mook & Schampers, 1992, p. 5). The estimated stock of foreign employment increased from around 1 million in 2003 to around 2 million in 2010, with the proportion of women declining from 59 per cent in 2003 to 49 per cent in 2010 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012). Meanwhile, remittances as a proportion of export earnings increased from 28 per cent in 2003 to 48 per cent in 2010 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012).

At the same time, alternative employment for women workers was largely restricted to the emerging garments sector, it too characterized by a specific form of precarious work in extra-jurisdictional zones that override domestic labour market institutions and protective labour laws, particularly freedoms of association and collective bargaining (Biyawila, 2011). The redrawn legal boundaries with incentives for global capital illustrate a zone for accessing cheap, docile and disposable labour, tantamount to the fictitious commodification of women workers. In 1992, the 'FTZ status' was extended to any workplace

approved by the state (Board of Investments–BOI) enabling the segmentation of labour markets accommodating varying interests of capital. The inclusion/exclusion of workers in different regulation regimes allows capital to ‘regime shop’ or to bargain over wages, work rules and even local governance (Webster, Lambert & Bezuidenhout, 2008). There were nearly 12 ‘official’ FTZs in Sri Lanka in 2010, with women constituting around 85 per cent of a total workforce of around 114,000 workers in 300 firms (DOLUS, 2010). The two with the most employment and investment (Katunayake and Biyagama) remain near the main city, Colombo, in the Western Province, integrated with the main financial and commercial centre along with access to the sea and airports. In this sense the strategic development of the garments industry in urban locales has mirrored broader patterns of economic and political centralization at the expense of an increasingly marginalized rural hinterland.

Nonetheless, employment in the garments sector is precarious, as dependence on declining US and EU markets (owing to the United States financial crisis and economic contractions in the European Union, along with the loss of the Generalized System of Preferences Plus facility with the EU in 2010) illustrates its status as a volatile submerging labour market (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 500). The contribution of textile and garments to total industrial exports (which included petroleum and other industrial products) declined from a ratio of 65 per cent in 2005 to 55 per cent in 2010 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2012). Despite these initiatives mostly aimed at maintaining ‘investor confidence’, the garment sector has entered a period of uncertainty with a number of factory closures along with an inability to find workers due to unattractive wages and living conditions. Meanwhile, the Apparel Exported Association has suggested the employment of migrant workers from Bangladesh and other low wage economies to work in local factories, echoing the same exploitative dynamic that Sri Lankan migrant domestic workers are themselves subjected to (Nathaniel, 2013).

While emerging and submerging markets have altered the composition of export industries, what has not changed is the over-representation and under-remuneration of women workers in these labour-intensive sectors of the economy. Even the most cursory of statistical examinations reveals increasing female participation in labour-intensive employment as garment manufacturers and migrant workers, along with a prevalent gendered wage disparity within formal sector occupations where reliable data is available (Ajwad & Kurukulasuriya, 2002, p. 12).

Regardless of remunerative discrimination, mainstream economists are quick to equate increasing female employment in precarious work with a ‘feminization’ of labour markets and even women’s empowerment, arguing in Sri Lanka’s case that ‘open economic policies have favoured more females than males’ (Karunaratne, 2008, p. 195). Such perspectives reflect a narrow ‘malestream’ economic ideology where labour activities are confined to ‘the market’ and, as such, neglect the fundamental nature of women’s paid and unpaid work.

In refuting this position, Diane Elson draws attention to two criteria that dictate the extent to which increasing female participation in paid work represents a reduction in gender equality: wage disparity for paid employment and offsets in the unpaid care work demanded by the reproductive economy (Elson, 1999, p. 613). On the one hand, declining wage differentials, if and when they do occur, are perhaps more suggestive of ‘harmonizing down’—a broader assault on wage labour under neoliberalism—than they are reflective of improving conditions for women workers (Elson, 1999, p. 613). Moreover, with women socio-culturally bound to jobs that are ‘less valued, garner less pay, and entail more difficult working conditions’ (Piper, 2011, p. 64) the likelihood of wage parity within the prevailing patriarchal mode of production appears negligible. On the other hand, Elson asserts that rising female (and falling male) participation in paid work is not sufficiently offset by male work in the reproductive sphere (Elson, 1999, p. 613). It is this element of invisible economic activity that delineates women’s economic subordination across public and private realms, thus rebuking the notion that increasing participation in paid work is tantamount to a transformation of the sexual division of labour. As noted by Vandana Shiva, ‘[t]hat this kind of productivity has been rendered invisible does not reduce its centrality to survival—it merely reflects the domination of modern patriarchal economic categories which see only profits, not life’ (1988, p. 5).

Equally problematic among ‘malestream’ conceptions of the ‘feminization’ of work is the axiomatic equation of economic well-being with social and political well-being. There is a persistent false dichotomy between redistribution (economic) and recognition (cultural) justice, wherein contemporary articulations of resistance to patriarchal modes of production have been framed as either socio-economic or socio-cultural, but in a mutually exclusive fashion (Fraser, 1997). Thus, even if greater participation in paid work was resulting in economic gains for Sri Lankan women, this would only constitute a redistributive

remedy to a state of super-exploitation that by its very nature incorporates the simultaneous economic and cultural subordination of women. What is needed, then, is to challenge economic and cultural injustice simultaneously, through a coupling of redistributive and recognition remedies to the super-exploitation of women in Sri Lanka. Before exploring such remedies amidst a spectrum of civil society responses, however, we need to consider the specific features—with an emphasis on cultural aspects—of the patriarchal mode of production as it has developed in Sri Lanka.

Patriarchal Ethno-nationalism: Layers of Differentiated Entitlements

Sri Lanka's contemporary patriarchal mode of production is largely the product of the patriarchal ethno-nationalism that has shaped the country's post-colonial history. The European colonization process, beginning around the early-1500s, interacted with patriarchal structures of feudalism, primarily around the coastal regions (Wickramaratne, 1995). This interaction reshaped feudal patriarchal relations, particularly property relations, with a tendency to subordinate women's status within society (CENWOR, 2002a; Jayawardena, 1986). The spread of the colonial market economy nurtured a local (multi-ethnic) bourgeoisie educated in Christian English schools who later led the nationalist movements, which illustrated a spectrum of affirmative and transformative strategies (Jayawardena, 1986). The emerging Tamil middle class educated in colonial schools also gained access to state employment, both locally and elsewhere in the empire, as skilled professional workers: teachers, lawyers, doctors and civil servants (Spencer, 1990, p. 1). Middle class women activists, moreover, formed alliances across ethnicities, in common struggles for public provisioning of education and health care (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 116). The dominant representation of women endured primarily as mothers, wives or 'caregivers', which subordinated their identities as workers and citizens in the public realm (de Alwis & Jayawardena, 2001). However, with an expanding manufacturing and services sector mostly linked with the colonial plantation economy, women were increasingly drawn into wage labour, participating in a range of professional, skilled and low-skilled work.

Meanwhile, the anti-colonial struggle was increasingly dominated by the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist movement, in which affirmative remedies of language and

religion were articulated. The disenfranchisement of Tamil plantation workers in 1948 following independence was central to the budding Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonic state formation—largely a response to the aforementioned overrepresentation of Tamils in professional and bureaucratic positions—which was reinforced with the 1956 affirmation of Sinhala as the 'official' state language by way of the Sinhala Only Act (Nissan & Stirrat, 1990, p. 35). This process was further reinforced with the 1972 affirmation of Buddhism as the dominant state religion. The cultural reconstruction that emerged in 1956 was intertwined with a redistributive agenda based on a closed national economy (promoting ISI) that still remained dependent on the export of primary agricultural commodities. The redistribution remedies expanding state social provisioning in terms of education, health and social welfare strengthened women's position within the labour force, although most women remained in subsistence agricultural work. However, these policies remained affirmative of patriarchal structures—illustrating the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class and language within labour markets—where the core workers of an expanding public sector were mostly Sinhala-Buddhist men from petty bourgeoisie backgrounds who also spoke English (Sivanandan, 1984). The closed economy experiment was thus a discontinuous and incomplete redistributive project. Though demanded by the socialist working class parties (the Communist Party and the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP)), the inclusion of compliant sections of the labour movement within the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist project in the post-1956 period, along with the 1971 militant Sinhala youth insurrection (the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)), weakened the left and exposed contradictions that diminished the political credibility of the redistributive agenda. Nevertheless, the alliances among women across class and ethnicity, influenced by the working class parties, also strengthened the women's movement during the closed economy period.

The rise of neoliberalism projected with a Sinhala-Buddhist rhetoric of 'righteous society' (*Dharmishta samajaya*) in 1977 reconstituted a patriarchal mode of production increasingly embedded in a market-driven 'development' agenda. The subordination of women in terms of cultural, material and political realms was to be remedied through access to markets and restricting universal welfare programmes to 'targeted' welfare (Anand & Kanbur, 1991)—the very processes of maldevelopment that, in Shiva's words, constitute '[t]he project of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision,

which was based on the exploitation or exclusion of women' (1988, p. 2). The emerging patriarchal mode of production was simultaneously made hyper-masculine by expanding the coercive tendencies of the state. The 1978 changes to the constitution, establishing a presidential system, weakening the parliament and popular democracy, and enacting the Prevention of Terrorism Act, further strengthened state policing and secrecy along with its militarization (Stokke, 1997). The hyper-masculine Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism also reinforced patriarchal tendencies across other ethnic minorities, particularly Tamils and Muslims. In the early-1980s, the ruling UNP was able to create consent to a strengthening patriarchal Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony with the support of the two minority parties: the largest Tamil party among the plantation Tamils—the Ceylon Workers Congress—and a newly formed, non-contentious Muslim party. The unfolding of the civil war in 1983, directed against the range of militant Tamil movements at the time, narrowed to a war against a singular militant group, the LTTE (Spencer, 1990). Although many women—particularly Tamil and Muslim women—were victims of a brutal war that lasted until 2009, some were active in the militant struggle, while others agitated within the peace movement.

The distinctly patriarchal nature of this ethno-nationalism stems from how women are positioned within the cultural realm as the reproducers of the 'nation' in 'sacrificing mother' representations (de Alwis, 1996). This image is complemented by the positioning of women within the economic realm, primarily as care workers, an extension of their work in the household. Even within the economic realm, women's access to inherited land and other forms of property (bride wealth) remain invisible within 'malestream' approaches to entitlements (Wijeytileka, 2002). As reproducers of the nation, women are to bear the burden of preserving masculine conceptions of 'tradition', 'respectability' and 'morality' (de Alwis, 1996). However, there is a constant cultural tension, particularly for women entering male dominated spheres of work such as factory work, which becomes construed as a challenge to 'women's symbolic role as carriers of national tradition' (Lynch, 2007, pp. 9, 23).

The export oriented economy under market-driven development integrated women workers in global networks of production, through absorbing them within key export sectors (plantations, garment manufacturing, migrant domestic workers). The patriarchal mode of production only entitles women to underpaid and labour-

intensive work, curtailing employment 'opportunities' with sexist assumptions of 'nimble fingers', analogous to productive and docile workers and employed managerially to downplay the wage value of skilled work (Elson & Pearson, 1981; Goonatilake & Goonesekere, 1988). With Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism tied with romanticized notions of a rural idyllic, the women who migrated from rural areas to work in urban garment factories remain sexualized and objectified as 'Juki girls' (Lynch, 2007). Meanwhile, migrant domestic workers are held in an ambivalent position as care workers extending their domestic roles into wage labour, maintaining some notions of 'respectability', but also 'shamed' for neglecting their biological duties as nurturers of the 'nation' (de Alwis, 1996; Hewamanne, 2007; Lynch, 2007). Migrant domestic work also illustrates enduring tendencies of emotional and economic subjugation through tendencies of bonded labour and slavery (Caritas, 2011). Thus, not only are women subordinated in the mode of production itself—their entitlement to employment (Elson & Pearson, 1981)—but they are often culturally chastized for doing so. This dynamic is central to the devaluation of women's labour and dehumanization of women within patriarchal structures.

With the stigmatization of women explicitly linked to their increasing participation in paid work, it is possible to discern a dialectical relationship between economic gains—however exploitative they may be—and cultural subordination. This observation elucidates the aforementioned state of super-exploitation and highlights the paradox of women's integration in Sri Lanka's developmental process; while women's labour has underpinned a market-driven notion of economic development, so too have women been subjugated in recompense. Patriarchal ethno-nationalism has guided a developmental process that cleaves differentiated entitlements along gender lines, though gendered discrimination is again intensified when it overlaps with prejudicial treatment of ethnicity and class. The demographics of the garment industry and of labour migration provide a stark insight into this relationship between ethnicity, class and gender and how their interrelation under patriarchal ethno-nationalism can intensify differentiated entitlements.

The most overt manifestation of such discrimination is found in the marginalization of Tamil women, through prolonged military offensive, from the equivalent economic entitlements of Sinhalese women. Whereas Sinhalese women have achieved increased participation in paid work, Tamil women have been conspicuously absent from both garments manufacture and domestic work abroad

(Ajwad & Kurukulasuriya, 2002). While this might seemingly echo Joan Robinson's rather cynical observation that '[t]he misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all' (2006, p. 45), it also indicates that the few redistributive advances that have been made have occurred in an exclusionary fashion for Tamil women. Muslim women have also endured asymmetrical entitlements, albeit in a less conspicuous fashion. While also dramatically under-represented in the garments industry (Lynch, 2007, p. 12), the Muslim ethnic minorities remain over-represented in the most precarious work available: as domestic workers in the Middle East (Gunatilleke, 1995, p. 679). While over-representation is largely due to a religious bias amongst Middle Eastern employers, persistent government failure to protect migrant workers and, more recently, the adoption of a rhetoric that declares 'the ultimate protection to all migrant workers is the possession of skills' (MFEPW, 2008, p. 10) unveils an explicitly ethnic dimension to the functioning of labour markets and, in turn, foreign employment policy. With the active promotion of foreign employment for skilled women from the Western provinces, as can be seen in the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment's (SLBFE) current training programme for nurses and hospitality workers (MFEPW, 2012), comes the tacit neglect of low-skilled Muslim and Tamil workers from the Eastern provinces who have been drawn into the migration–development nexus following reunification in 2004. In the case of migrant domestic workers, their insertion into the global care network, rather than changing the sexual division of labour within the household where men entering the caring work, other women (primarily girls) are brought in, reproducing patriarchal modes of production (Caritas, 2011; CENWOR, 2011).

Class intersects with gender discrimination in much the same way as ethnicity, with a greater concentration of poor women within the most exploitative and labour-intensive forms of employment. Explicitly bound up in this dynamic are the uneven spatial impact of economic liberalization and the centralization of production in urban areas, particularly in the Western province. The dismantling of nationalized industry deprived many poor rural women of their prior livelihood (which often constituted a majority of household income) and, along with the dispossession and displacement due to the ethnic conflict and the Tsunami devastation in the North and East provinces, presented internal (FTZs) and international migration as unattractive alternatives for economic survival (Mook, 1992, pp. 112–114; Shaw, 2007).

This re-articulation of the national economy illustrates a class stratification that is increasingly shaped by integration with global production networks, where Sinhala women from rural and semi-rural regions enter a heterogeneous working class which is increasingly fragmented. Thus, while there have been certain strides in paid employment and social recognition for women of middle class and elite Sinhala background—women parliamentarians, bureaucrats, lawyers, managers, doctors, academics, etc—this stands in stark contrast to the majority of women who face a matrix of gender discrimination tempered by class and ethnicity.

Contesting Patriarchy: Between Affirmative and Transformative Remedies

The integration of women workers within global production networks illustrates the differentiation and stratification of labour markets reproducing a patriarchal mode of production. However, this uneven integration also involves a range of ongoing struggles, articulating affirmative and transformative remedies to crises of recognition and redistribution, in different temporal and spatial scales. Within the neoliberal notion of development, there is no alternative (TINA) to the promotion of 'self-regulating' markets, and remedies to women's super-exploitation are therefore primarily (mis)framed in terms of affirmative strategies that draw narrow boundaries of women demanding justice while neglecting the structural and institutional conditions of patriarchal power relations that are unjust. Central to this struggle is the role of the state as the immediate apparatus for reform and the competing pressures placed on it by intergovernmental organizations and civil society actors at global, regional, national and local scales. Specifically, remedies at global and regional levels are chiefly affirmative and formulated by the ILO (labour standards) and IOM (trade in services) in conjunction with the state, while a spectrum of union and women worker movements are incorporated within this misframing of entitlements at a local level. Meanwhile, more contentious (counter hegemonic) actors within civil society intertwine affirmative interventions with transformative remedies. These struggles have unfolded differently for migrant domestic workers and garment workers, but together reflect a predominance of affirmative remedies that typically decouple crises of redistribution from those of recognition and consequently target the symptoms, rather than the cause, of exploitation under patriarchy.

Women workers in garment manufacturing began organizing in the early 1980s, influencing workplace relations and living conditions around the FTZs. Although unions were made illegal within this extra-judicial zone, a reflection of the state's entrenchment of the patriarchal mode of production, the struggles of workers won union rights towards the end of the 1990s. These labour standards have since been used by the government and exporting companies as a selling point for Sri Lankan garments (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 500), while some unions and women workers groups have used them to build activist networks. In effect, affirmative remedies that perpetuate patriarchal regimes of accumulation can also be used as forms of contestation. However, dominant state-capital agreements such as joint initiatives between the Employers Federation of Ceylon, the state and the ILO that simultaneously emphasize productivity and working conditions (Peiris, 2007), reinforce patriarchal mode of production by neglecting the gendered realm of social reproduction and maldistribution.

The case of Sri Lanka's migrant domestic workers remains shaped by the spaces and places of work. The dominant space of their work in Arabic nation-states in the Middle East, with authoritarian patriarchal state formations (Moghadam, 1996), along with the place of work within domestic or private households, has restrained the capacity for civil society or public intervention. Between 2006 and 2010, Saudi Arabia accounted for around 35,000 migrant worker departures annually, while departures to Kuwait increased from around 27,000 to 36,000 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012b). In 2010, these two countries accounted for 62 per cent of all migrant domestic workers.

Women's organizations have intervened on behalf of migrant workers since the mid-1980s, mostly complementing development strategies of the state sustained by international development assistance and focused on awareness-building programmes, pre-departure training, micro-credit and micro-enterprise development (Caritas, 2011; MFEPW, 2012). The awareness-building programmes also engage with mass media strategies to inform various actors integrated with the labour market for domestic workers. In this context, the 2011 June introduction of the ILO Convention 189 Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers remains a significant instrument for civil society campaigns to redress the super-exploitation of domestic workers. However, according to a woman's organization campaigning for migrant workers,

Only the sending countries have ratified the Convention while the major receiving countries have failed to recognize the

importance and be accountable to the millions of workers who have contributed to their thriving economies by remaining unaccounted workers making us raise questions to the existence of modern day slavery. (The Action Network for Migrant Workers & The Women and Media Collective, 2012)

This recognition underlines the persistent inability of ILO conventions—and other forms of state-led regional agreements (Wickramasekera, 2012)—to command sufficient political resolve for implementation in both sending and receiving countries. The hyper-masculinity of governance and primacy of capital accumulation in the Middle East (Moghadam, 1996) constitutes a twofold resistance to the acknowledgement of migrants' human rights vis-à-vis their fictitious commodification as exploitable labour inputs. Meanwhile, despite the dependence on domestic worker remittances as a source of foreign reserves, the Sri Lankan state continues to restrain the entitlements of migrant women workers. Working closely with the ILO and IOM, government policy formulations reflect a clear affirmative agenda in 'managing' the continuation of migrant outflows in the name of remittance inflows (MFEPW, 2012). Illustrating a historically specific sexual division of labour under a patriarchal mode of production, the state reproduces gendered labour market institutions along 'male breadwinner' models of households, while situating women within labour markets that constitute the lowest paid, least valued and least organized work locally, regionally and globally.

Where these labour markets overlap is in their relationship to a failed neoliberal 'development' agenda that prioritizes deregulated labour markets (elaborating precarious work) and has entailed a paradigm shift in terms of welfare provisioning. Most women workers who enter the garment sector, as well as migrant domestic work, recognize their transient condition (CENWOR, 2002a, 2002b; Lynch, 2007) and view employment as a short-term opportunity to secure later forms of self-employment in the informal economy—an estimated 62 per cent of national employment (Arunatilake, 2012, p. 496)—reinforcing neoliberal trends towards casualization. At the same time, growing remittance transfers from both labour markets have shifted the burden of welfare provision from the state to migrant 'breadwinners', compounding the educational and infrastructural deficiencies prevalent in rural areas. Affirming Raul Delgado Wise and Humberto Márquez Covarrubias's observation that the migration-development discourse fallaciously frames migration as a catalyst for development (Wise & Covarrubias, 2009), here it is seen that underdevelopment is a catalyst for migration

and—through affirmation of the patriarchal mode of production that exploits and subordinates women workers—further entrenches underdevelopment. In order to sever this mutual reinforcement, the patriarchal mode of production itself needs to be redressed, thus necessitating transformative—rather than affirmative—remedies. An examination of the role played by civil society actors, whose scopes of strategies span both affirmative and transformative remedies, is therefore required.

Currently, in elaborating women workers' entitlements within these labour markets, a range of civil society actors—encompassing garment worker rights networks, domestic workers' groups, migrant workers' groups, women's groups and trade unions—are engaged in strategic intervention primarily focused on affirmative remedies. Often working with a singular focus on garment or domestic workers, redistribution or recognition, these responses address specific aspects of patriarchy by seeking to differentiate women workers as specific segments of labour, demanding specific forms of intervention. For garment workers, economic demands have focused on wages and conditions, trade union and collective bargaining rights, sexual harassment and improving living conditions. Among the organizations working in the FTZs are trade unions (Industrial, Transport and General Services Workers Union, Inter Company Employees Union, JVP) and NGOs (Progress Centre, Biyagama), as well as women's organizations (the Women's Centre, Dabindu) (Biyawila, 2011). Migrant domestic workers' demands for wages and conditions have encompassed deception and forgery of documents by labour contractors, false or minimal employment contracts, non-payment of wages, delayed wages, lack of rest, restriction of movement and poor working conditions, including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and the lack of legal remedies (Caritas, 2011; Solidarity Centre, 2013). Some of the organizations working with migrant workers include the Migrant Services Centre, National Workers Congress/Migrants Services Centre, Social & Economic Development Centre (SEDEC)—Caritas Sri Lanka, Action Network for Migrants (ACTFORM), the Women and Media Collective and the Domestic Workers Union/Red Flag Women's Movement. Other women workers' organizations emphasize justice through recognition and continue to raise awareness around women workers' rights and focus on state actors, national labour officials, employers, trade unions and the media, all of which are entrenched in masculine cultures that often justify and sanitize women's exploitation. The main orientation of all these interventions, however, is to

enforce existing legal and normative standards while raising individual awareness of women as economic actors.

The differentiation of garment and migrant domestic workers within affirmative action, although significant, remains inadequate in recognizing their interdependence and interaction with other women workers as well as their broader class identities as workers. The transformative remedies, which most civil society actors avoid, focus on a deep restructuring of relations of production (Fraser, 1997) which would encompass directly addressing the patriarchal mode of production as well as the neoliberal accumulation regime based on deregulated labour markets and privatization of public goods. The affirmative remedies (mostly in the case of migrant domestic workers) often position women workers as passive agents neglecting their potential capacities for self-organization, politicization and mobilization.

In a fragmented civil society, increasingly under a repressive state, the framing of transformative remedies remains restricted to a few politically committed activist networks. For instance, some women's networks (CENWOR, Women Living Under Muslim Law, Women and Media Collective) are engaged in linking issues of women's entitlements in labour markets with entitlements to inherit land and other forms of property (bride wealth), and access to common property (land) under the control of the state or customary authorities (Wijeytileka, 2002). In the FTZs, the Women's Centre has engaged with issues of migrant workers, recognizing their shared gender and class identities (Biyawila, 2011). Transformative remedies also involve recognizing the interdependence between the productive and the reproductive economy, which overlaps the ecosystems. This is where civil society actors who are informed with socialist and eco-feminist perspectives continue to assert the possibility and necessity of transformative remedies. Accordingly, the devaluation and super-exploitation of women workers demands a reframing of development and human rights, with greater attention placed on transforming the sexual division of labour within the realm of social reproduction, as well as in market driven 'development' that maintains processes of displacement and dispossession.

Conclusion

The stratification of labour markets that absorb migrant domestic workers and garment workers illustrates sites of exploitation as well as resistance within global production

networks embedded in patriarchal modes of production. While dominant responses articulated by state, inter-governmental (ILO) and civil society actors continue to frame affirmative remedies that reproduce existing structures of patriarchal modes of production, more counter-hegemonic civil society actors continue to contest these tendencies. Nevertheless, civil society responses have offered certain immediate remedies to the material exploitation of women workers as well as the cultural subordination of women. While disjointed, these two modes of contestation together comprise a challenge to both aspects of super-exploitation—the economic/redistributive/productive, and, the cultural, recognitive and reproductive. Though operating within the existing legal-normative framework, and thus broadly affirmative, these efforts have negotiated numerous manifestations of patriarchy and pressured the state into acknowledging the various forms of exploitation faced by Sri Lankan women and elaborating their entitlements. Civil society responses therefore carry transformative tendencies, and with them the potential to holistically confront the neoliberal ‘development’ project and the patriarchal relations fundamental to its regime of accumulation. While the ILO- and state-led measures are significant, nurturing transformative remedies within civil society remains crucial in order to counter the sexual division of labour maintaining the super-exploitation of women.

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