

# ACTORS AND ENTANGLEMENTS IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

ACTORS AND ENTANGLEMENTS IN GLOBAL  
GOVERNANCE: THE ILO IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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## LAY ABSTRACT

Conventional studies of global governance tend to focus overwhelmingly on the regulations developed by international organizations. This often comes at the expense of looking in detail at the practices by which these rules are actually put into practice. This study argues that paying attention to these practices reveals important patterns of contestation that have often been overlooked. It draws on original archival and interview research -- conducted in Geneva, Pretoria, and Dakar -- on the role of the ILO in sub-Saharan Africa across a number of different policy areas in order to illustrate the argument.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically interrogates existing theories of global governance. It argues that they have tended to occlude much of the messiness, complexity, and forms of agency involved in the practice of global governance by focusing on delineating the sources of authority of ‘global governors’ or critiquing regulatory frameworks. Critical approaches linking global governance to broader structural power relationships are valuable, but by attributing the trajectories of governance to the workings of ‘hegemony’ in global politics they similarly fail to account for the complexities and forms of contestation implicitly in the practice of governance. This thesis argues instead for an ‘actors and entanglements’ approach to global governance, focusing on the entwinement of governmental practices with multiple histories of struggle ‘on the ground’. This perspective is elaborating by drawing on governmentality theories, an alternative reading of Gramscian historicism, and reflections about spatiality in Actor-Network Theory. Empirically, the value of this approach is demonstrated by tracing the entanglements of ILO programming in sub-Saharan Africa related to forced labour and ‘development’ assistance in the areas of employment, social protection, and workers’ education. The thesis covers the full history of the ILO from 1919-present, although focusing primarily on developments after 1960. It draws on original archival and interview research conducted at ILO headquarters in Geneva, as well as field offices in Pretoria and Dakar, on a series of research trips between June and December 2014.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAC - African Advisory Committee  
AATUF - All-Africa Trade Union Federation  
ACTRAV - Workers Activities Bureau  
ANC - African National Congress [South Africa]  
ARC - African Regional Conference  
AFL-CIO - American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations  
ASI - Anti-Slavery International  
ASS - Anti-Slavery Society  
ATUC - African Trade Union Confederation  
ATUC-SR - African Trades Union Congress (Southern Rhodesia)  
CALM - Council of African Labour Ministers  
CCTA - Committee for Technical Cooperation in Africa  
CDWA - Colonial Development and Welfare Act [UK]  
CEACR - Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations  
CEART - Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation on the Rights of Teachers  
CGAP - Consultative Group to Assist the Poor  
CGKT - *Confédération Générale Kamérounaise de Travail*  
CGT - *Confédération Générale des Travailleurs* [France]  
CIMA - *Conférence Interafricaine des Marchés d'Assurances*  
CLTM - *Confédération Libre des Travailleurs du Mauritanie*  
CNTS - *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal*  
COCOSA - Coordinating Committee for South Africa  
COOPAfrica - Cooperative Facility for Africa  
COSATU - Congress of South African Trade Unions  
COTU - Central Organization of Trade Unions [Kenya]  
CPP - Convention People's Party [Ghana]  
CUSA - Congree of Unions of South Africa  
DANIDA - Danish International Development Agency  
DID - Desjardins International Development  
DWA - Decent Work Agenda  
ECOSOC - Economic and Social Conference of the United Nations  
ESAM - *Enfants Solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde*  
FECECAM - *Fédération des Caisses d'Épargne et de Credit Agricole Mutuel* [Benin]  
FOSATU - Federation of South African Trade Unions  
GAWU - Ghanaian Agricultural Workers' Union  
GB - Governing Body [ILO]  
IAIS - International Association of Insurance Supervisors  
IALC - Inter-African Labour Conference  
ICFTU - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions



IFC - International Finance Corporation  
 IFCTU - International Federation of Christian Trade Unions  
 IFW - Inclusive Finance for Workers  
 ILRM - International League for the Rights of Man  
 INTUC - Indian National Trades Union Congress  
 ITUC-NW - International Trades Union Congress of Negro Workers  
 ILC - International Labour Conference  
 ILO - International Labour Organization  
 ILR - International Labour Review  
 IPEC - International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour  
 ITS - International Trade Secretariats  
 IUF - International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering,  
 Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations  
 JASPA - Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa  
 KFE - Kenyan Federation of Employers  
 KFL - Kenya Federation of Labour  
 LNU - League of Nations Union  
 MCTU - Malawi Congress of Trade Unions  
 MDG - Millennium Development Goals  
 MECSO - *Mutuelle d'Épargne et de Credit pour la Solidarité Ouvrière* [Senegal]  
 MIF - Microinsurance Innovation Facility  
 NEDLAC - National Economic Development and Labour Council [South Africa]  
 NLC - Nigerian Labour Congress  
 NLM - National Liberation Movement  
 OATUU - Organization for African Trade Union Unity  
 OAU - Organization for African Unity  
 PAC - Pan-African Congress  
 PMC - Permanent Mandates Commission  
 RSPC - Simplified Regime for Small Contributors [Senegal]  
 SACTU - South African Congress of Trade Unions  
 SATUCC - Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council  
 SAP-FL - Special Action Programme for Forced Labour  
 SPF - Social Protection Floor  
 STEP - Strategies and Tools Against Social Exclusion and Poverty  
 SUDES - *Syndicat Unique et Démocratique des Enseignants du Sénégal*  
 TAP - Technical Assistance Programme  
 TUC - Trades Union Congress [Ghana]  
 UGTC - *Union Générale des Travailleurs Centrafricaines* [Central African  
 Republic]  
 UNDP - United Nations Development Plan  
 UPC - *Union Populaire du Camérout*  
 USCC - *Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Camérout*  
 WED - Workers' Education Department  
 WEP - World Employment Programme

WFTU - World Federation of Trade Unions  
WTO - World Trade Organization  
ZCTU - Zambian Confederation of Trade Unions

## INTRODUCTION

When writers in International Political Economy (IPE) talk about governance in the global political economy, they usually do so with a few linked questions in mind. The first set concerns the nature and structure of authority in global politics: Who governs issue 'X'? What are the sources of their authority? What mechanisms do they use to secure compliance? Who is included/excluded from decision-making? As in the title of a recent edited volume (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2011), the basic question is 'who governs the globe'? A second set of questions emphasizes the 'rules' themselves: Whose interests do they reflect? Do they adequately address 'X' concern(s)? Taken together, this list of concerns frames enough studies that we might refer to it as a conventional 'rules and authority' *problematique*. These are, no doubt, important questions, but they also leave a good deal out. Focusing on the mechanics of decision-making or the quality of the rules (by whatever standard) tends to obscure much of the messiness, ambiguity, and contestation that goes along with efforts to put 'the rules' into practice. Relatedly, as Hobson and Seabrooke (2007) and others have noted, this set of concerns tends to privilege the role played by a small set of elite actors in global politics.

'Critical' approaches, following Robert Cox's (1977; 1981; 1987) emphasis on the role of governance in the reproduction of hegemony, are valuable insofar as they shift emphasis from rules and authority onto problems of historically contingent function and purpose. Instead of 'who governs?', they ask 'what purpose does governance serve at any given conjuncture?'. This is a productive shift. However, the standard Coxian answer -- that governance aids in the reproduction of the 'hegemony' of leading states and social forces, attributes a singularity and consistency of purpose to the exercise of global governance that often fails to appear in practice. As a result, the agency of subordinate actors in global politics remains difficult to see, often visible only in rare occasions of 'grand rejection' of prevailing order.

In short, scholars in IPE, and especially critical IPE, are good enough at recognizing the ways in which decision-making in global politics is power-laden and contested, but much less so at recognizing the myriad more subtle conflicts through which decisions taken at the 'global' level are actually enacted in particular contexts. Existing theories of global governance thus have important blindspots when it comes to ambiguity, heterogeneity, and (most importantly) agency. These weaknesses are particularly problematic for critical approaches, as they tend to produce an unduly limited vision of the possibilities for change inherent in existing institutions.

This dissertation, accordingly, takes a different tack. I take the critical approach as a starting point, but without assuming that a singular answer is possible even for a specific given context. Thus reformulated, the fundamental question here is ‘who seeks to accomplish what purpose(s) through governance?’ Implicit in this question is a shift in emphasis is a move away from a ‘rules and authority’ framework towards what might be called an ‘actors and entanglements’ centered account of global governance. Like critical IPE approaches, an actors and entanglements approach implies a commitment to what Cox (1996a) calls a ‘historical mode of thought’. There can be no single generalizable answer, only a set of possibilities that can be arrived at through historical investigations of specific entanglements of ‘global’ practices of governance with particular contexts. The principal difference is that, where Cox’s approach tends to assume diachronic variation and synchronic stability within a single global system, centering the investigation on actors and entanglements implies accepting a wider degree of both diachronic and synchronic variability. There is no more singularity of purpose to global governance at any given point in time than there is over time.

The central theoretical argument presented here, in short, is that governance in global politics is usefully thought of less in terms of the negotiation and application of rules, and more as an ambiguous and dispersed set of practices entangled in heterogenous conflicts over the articulation, consolidation, and transformation of social order by the ways in which these practices are deployed and redeployed by various actors. The shift in emphasis implicit in this move to an actors and entanglements approach is useful for two related reasons. First, it is better at coping with the messiness, multiplicity, and heterogeneity of the actual practice of global governance than are conventional approaches. Second, and most importantly, it helps to provide a fuller account of the forms of agency exercised by relatively weak and often overlooked actors in ‘global’ politics.

Of course, the very broad terms introduced here remain to be fleshed out -- ‘actors and entanglements’ might be investigated in a variety of different ways. In Chapter 1, I develop a more substantive framework, drawing on ideas about ‘governmentality’ in conjunction with Gramsci’s methodological reflections on subalternity and historicity, as well as discussions of problems of scale and spatiality in Actor-Network Theory. Empirically, this argument is supported in chapters 2-7 with an examination of the International Labour Organization’s activities in sub-Saharan Africa, from 1919-present, in a number of different policy areas: the regulation of forced labour, and ‘development’ assistance in areas including employment policy, social security for informal workers, and assistance to trade union organizations. These chapters draw on original archival research, conducted primarily at the ILO Archives in Geneva, as well as interviews with ILO and trade union officials in Geneva and at field offices in Pretoria and Dakar.

Applying an ‘actors and entanglements’ approach to the ILO’s activities in Africa involves exploring a number of questions across a broad sample of historical examples of engagements with particular practices of governance. A first set of questions concerns the ways in which different target actors seek to engage with the ILO: What kinds of actors participate in what kinds of ILO programmes? What purpose(s) do they seek to accomplish in so doing? Are these objectives contested by actors other than the ILO with whom participants are engaged? Another set of pertinent questions concerns the ILO itself: What purpose does the ILO assign to a given programme? What particular techniques do they seek to use to carry out these objectives? Are these objectives consistent with those of target populations? Are the techniques the ILO uses consistent with the terrain or the target populations upon which it seeks to work? And, for latter two questions, if the answer is no, how do these tensions play out in practice? There is no single generalizable answer to any of these questions; they have to be answered empirically for particular historical contexts.

#### STATES, WORKERS, AND AGENCY

Since the present approach assigns them a central analytical role, a word is in order here on the concepts of ‘actors’ and ‘agency’. The particular actors of interest here are collective agents targeted by or attempting to influence or reappropriate projects of global governance. I have put a particular stress on examples of actors whose involvement in the original formulation of rules or programmes was minimal; as is discussed shortly, this approach offers a degree of analytical leverage in highlighting the distinctive contribution of an actors and entanglements approach. In the empirical chapters I focus primarily on the actions of states in Africa and of trade unions, although various other kinds of organizations -- e.g. anticolonial movements and anti-slavery advocates -- figure prominently in places. It is difficult, and probably undesirable, to try to fix in advance the answer to the problem of ‘who acts?’ These various groups of actors involved in the story below still have two fundamental things in common. First, they are historical creations -- to map out the entanglements of global governance with different histories of struggle is almost necessarily to venture onto the terrain of conflicts over the legitimacy of contrasting claims to represent or act on behalf of certain populations. There are no *a priori* actors in global politics; the entanglements of various types of actors with ‘global’ practices of governance are often part of an unfinished process of constituting the very actors involved themselves.

Second, the social movements, peripheral states, and trade unions of interest here are ‘everyday’ actors in Hobson and Seabrooke’s (2007) sense -- that is, they are relatively weak actors not often seen as having a central role in shaping the global political economy. An actors and entanglements approach to global governance would fall under the broad heading of ‘Everyday IPE’ (EIPE) insofar as it seeks to answer the question ‘who acts?’ in the context of global

governance. Yet, Hobson and Seabrooke's definition of 'everyday' actors leaves a good deal unanswered. Of course, in no small part this is due to the nature of the edited collection in which they advance the idea of 'EIKE'. They are trying to mark out a broad area of inquiry, rather than develop a fully fleshed out concept. Indeed, a number of contributing authors in the collection work with the different theoretical perspectives drawn on to develop the conceptual framework deployed here -- including Gramscian historicism (Morton 2007a); Foucauldian analysis of technologies of governance (Langley 2007); and Latourian understandings of scale (Herod 2007). There are equally more thoroughly fleshed out understandings of the 'everyday' in the sense of the quotidian available in other areas of social theory (as in the work of Lefevre or Bourdieu, or Nikolas Rose's [1999] 'cramped spaces of the mundane') but these are of less use for the project envisioned here.

The present study thus emphasizes not only the capacity of 'weaker' actors to act, but also the contested processes by which particular collective actors are articulated in the first place. The actors of concern in most of this study -- states, trade unions, and various social movements -- are created out of particular assemblages of individuals, ideas, and practices in particular contexts. Their very existence and their claims to represent or act on behalf of given populations are contingent and often contested. This point is worth underlining for present purposes in order to highlight the extent to which 'governance' as such is entangled in particular forms of struggle. 'Governance' in global politics does not operate on pre-given actors, but rather through entanglements with a range of variously well-organized actors who might -- and often do -- understand themselves or seek to constitute themselves in dramatically different ways from those intended by 'global' institutions.

#### ON THE ILO

This section and the following lay out the rationale for the particular choice of empirical subject matter. Here I outline debates about the ILO in relation to the broader modes of thought about global governance introduced above and point out the potential value of an actors and entanglements approach. The following section addresses the thorny question of defining 'Africa' as an object of inquiry.

This is not the place to trace the history or functions of the ILO in any great detail. These issues are dealt with elsewhere, more or less as they come up. The preface to Part II briefly outlines the ILO's standards and supervisory mechanisms, Chapter 2 examines the origins of the ILO, Chapter 4 examines the emergence of post-war 'development' approaches and the impacts of decolonization, and Chapter 6 examines the impacts of neoliberalism on the operations of the ILO. Nonetheless, in some broad strokes it is worth introducing the ILO's basic structure and some debates about it. These debates are particularly

worth noting because they underline the original contribution of the approach adopted here. Thinking about ‘governance’ in the ways outlined in the following chapter casts the ILO’s activities in a different light -- sometimes dramatically so.

The ILO is, admittedly, in many ways a peculiar institution. This often makes for interesting empirical material, but might reasonably be seen to undercut the broader applicability of the approach developed in this thesis. The ILO is one of the oldest IOs currently in operation. Its ‘tripartite’ constitution, in which governments, trade unions, and business are all represented in the Governing Body (GB) and annual International Labour Conference (ILC), is also relatively unique. The ILO also relies on persuasion and ‘shaming’ (Weisband 2000) to enforce its standards, rather than coercive power -- unlike institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO which are able to penalize countries by withholding loans or imposing punitive tariffs. The organization has also long relied on the production of research and technical knowledge by its secretariat as a source of authority for much of its history. Indeed, the ILO’s in house journal, the *International Labour Review* (ILR), was first published in 1921 (two years after the ILO’s founding). The ILO nonetheless remains a good case through which to show the utility of an actors and entanglements approach.

In the first instance, I am not proposing a causal theory of global governance here, rather a heuristic that highlights certain aspects of the practice of governance. The salient test, then, is whether or not an actors and entanglements approach can show us something important that is obscured or overlooked in other analyses. Thus, in terms of the appropriateness of the ILO as a case study, it is perhaps most significant that examinations of the ILO are generally consistent with the broader *problematique* common to most studies of global governance. And previous analyses of the ILO have indeed tended to concentrate on the institutional form and regulatory contents of the ILO’s work. Most studies have emphasized the sources of the ILO’s authority and legitimacy (e.g. Weisband 2000; Moore 2014; Hughes and Haworth 2011; Symons 2011). Some others have developed critiques of the ILO’s policy frameworks. Selwyn (2013), Lerche (2012), and Standing (2008), for instance, variously critique the recent concept of ‘Decent Work’ for its ambiguity and for its ‘top down’ character, in which enlightened states and corporations are expected to deliver better working conditions for workers. This argument, interestingly, in fact fits closely with some older critiques of the ILO’s work -- for instance, Leys’ (1973) critique of the ILO’s policies on employment in Kenya (see Chapter 6) -- emphasizing the political naivety of expecting improvements for workers through ‘better’ policies running counter to the immediate interests of elites, as well as critiques of more specific policies on particular issues like forced labour (see the Preface to Part II).

The ILO also played a fairly important role in the development of critical approaches to global governance, especially through Robert Cox’s work. Even

leaving aside the prominent place of the ILO in Cox's own biography, he used the concept of 'hegemony' for the first time in an essay primarily about the ILO (Cox 1977). Here Cox develops an analysis of the relation of the ILO to changing patterns of production and world order. Cox highlights the role of the ILO and leading labour federations in the reproduction of a particular corporatist model of production relations -- the ILO provided ideological leadership and aided quietly in the suppression of radical unions. The ILO, in sort, performed certain functions aiding in the reproduction of hegemony in global politics. For Cox, the difficulties faced by the organization in the 1970s -- funding shortfalls and an increasingly acrimonious relationship with the US -- were symptomatic of a broader crisis of tripartite corporatist production relations. This argument usefully moves us beyond investigations of the mechanisms of authority or decision-making or debates about specific rules, shifting attention to more critically pertinent questions about the place of the ILO in broad patterns of structural change. But as mentioned above, Cox's approach assumes a singularity of function to the ILO's activities -- the reproduction of hegemony -- that is difficult to square with the patterns of entanglement and subtle contestation outlined below.

The point, in short, is that the existing literature on the ILO, even stretching back more than 40 years, fits well within the broader modes of understanding that have typically been applied to studies of global governance more broadly. Leah Vosko (2002), drawing in part on Cox's work, suggests that the more recent 'Decent Work Agenda' might primarily contribute to the reproduction of neoliberal hegemony, but also potentially provides a language and set of material resources through which claims for 'social justice' might be articulated. Even her argument, however, remains largely pitched at the level of 'global' frameworks, with limited attention to the practices by which 'Decent Work' is actually put into practice, nor to the ILO's practices of governance over a longer time-frame. For this reason alone the ILO makes for a reasonable 'test case' for an actors and entanglements approach -- if it can shed some new light on the activities of the ILO as compared to the existing literature on this particular organization (which despite its peculiarities has typically been analyzed in fairly standard ways), it stands to reason that similar insights might be possible about the activities of other 'global governors'.

I argue that this is indeed the case. As will become apparent in much of the material discussed below, different actors have used ILO conventions or development assistance to do things that have had very little to do either with the ILO's intentions or the interests of dominant actors. In the empirical chapters below, I trace out examples in which (among other things) ILO rules on forced labour are used in struggles over things ranging from colonial authority and apartheid to education reforms, reports on employment promotion are deployed by governments in efforts to solidify tenuous and contested positions of authority, 'workers' education' programmes are disrupted by conflicts between rival trade



union centres, and different interventions dealing with financial inclusion for workers are used in rival projects at mobilizing ‘informal’ workers, often in the same countries. The point is that the intentions of the ILO or the contents of the ‘rules’ or policy frameworks promulgated by the organization have often failed to have much effect on outcomes in practice. There is a rich and complex terrain, in short, that we can start to map out if we shift emphasis away from rules and authority or hegemony and towards actors and entanglements.

The particularities of the ILO, moreover, appear on closer inspection to be less pronounced than is often assumed. The relatively inclusive nature of deliberations at the GB or the ILC certainly has some influence over the contents of the ILO’s regulatory framework. It is less clear, however, that it has much bearing on the *practice* of governance. In most of the instances discussed below, the African actors discussed encounter ILO programmes in which they had relatively little (if any) say in developing. Moreover, the lack of coercive capacity on the part of the ILO is perhaps less significant than it is often made out to be for at least two reasons. First, the reliance on various forms of persuasion, moral authority, and technical claims to expertise are more reflective of the operations of the considerable bulk of ‘global governors’ than the kinds of coercive authority available to the IMF, World Bank, and WTO. These institutions are no doubt highly significant in shaping the course of the global political economy, but they are also unquestionably unusual in terms of the kinds of power that they can mobilize. Second, as I discuss further in the conclusion and in Chapter 6, these organizations themselves, especially the IMF and World Bank, increasingly rely on more subtle, persuasive, and consensual modes of governance (see Best 2013; 2014). The contrast between the ‘coercive’ Bretton Woods institutions and WTO and the ‘persuasive’ ILO is perhaps exaggerated. Moreover, in practice the Bretton Woods institutions and the ILO should probably not be considered in isolation -- indeed, in a number of instances it has been possible for national governments to gain some additional flexibility or policy space in dealing with the World Bank in particular by drawing on the policies promoted by the ILO (see Kpessa and Beland 2012).

Finally, in at least one instance the ILO’s idiosyncrasies are arguably methodologically useful: the longevity of the ILO as an institution is rather helpful in some senses. A key point introduced above is that we ought to move towards a recognition of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of global governance across both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, rather than thinking in ‘epochal’ terms. Being able to examine examples showing the persistence of ambiguities and multiplicities across nearly one hundred years is thus a signal benefit of researching an organization with a relatively deep archive.

‘AFRICA’

A final issue worth elaborating in greater detail is what exactly I mean by 'Africa' and why it is the empirical focus of this project. In the first instance, it is simply useful to have some criterion for selecting out some of the ILO's activities to examine in greater detail. Of course, by this standard 'Africa' could easily be replaced by any other region, or perhaps by emphasizing a single issue or department (e.g. forced labour, employment, social protection). This particular focus is useful for present purposes, however, because African actors by and large are relatively peripheral in global politics. It can certainly be argued that in virtually all of the cases discussed below, the African governments and trade unions involved played a minimal direct role in shaping the contents of the ILO's programming or the broader structures of world order in which those programmes were embedded. In examining the ILO's activities in Africa, then, we have a relatively useful means of tracing out the disjunctures that often emerge between the intents of 'the rules' and the means for which they are deployed in practice. In this sense, this dissertation draws on and contributes to a growing Africanist literature on the importance of African agency in shaping the region itself as well as its place in the world (e.g. Bayart 2009; Cooper 2014). This is particularly important because the region often remains scarcely acknowledged in IPE (see Lavelle 2005).

Of course, all of this leaves a perhaps more fundamental question unanswered: what is 'Africa'? The simplest answer would be that 'Africa', and particularly sub-Saharan Africa, refers to the region encompassing the area stretching from the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in the North to South Africa. Needless to say this is a big and highly diverse place. A further reasonable question, then, might be why the study chooses to focus on the ILO's activities across the region rather than in one or two particular countries. A good deal of Africanist political economy, especially studies of labour relations, has certainly been based on country case studies or comparisons (see Sandbrook and Cohen 1975; Gutkind, Cohen and Copans 1979; Wood and Brewster 2007 for comparative collections). There is no necessary reason, though, why this needs to be the case. In fact, this approach is arguably quite limiting. There are good reasons why this project has chosen to focus on 'Africa' rather than any individual country or comparative cases.

First, ILO programming in Africa is organized on a regional basis to a considerable extent -- staff are deployed across several countries at once, and particular practices, documents, and ideas developed by the ILO have tended to circulate across the region (and beyond it). 'Africa', then, has long been a relevant field of action for the ILO. Indeed, much of the primary material on which this dissertation draws is itself organized by region. Readers will note the appearance of the number '159' in most of the archival citations below -- this is the code for

files about the region of 'Africa'.<sup>1</sup> The thesis, then, focuses on particular territories or locations when they are relevant to the programme(s) in question, while the scope of the study covers the region as a whole.

Further, I do not deny that there is a danger of essentialism in treating the continent as a whole, but I would argue that the standard response to this problem among Africanists -- to emphasize the diversity and complexity of African experiences through detailed studies of particular cases -- is, for three reasons, not an entirely satisfactory approach. First, as Jean-Francois Bayart's (2000; 2009) reflections on the historical sociology of African states demonstrate, it *is* possible to point to common threads across the *longue durée* of African politics, and indeed even to genuinely 'regional' forms of association, without exoticism and without denying either African agency or the historicity of African social formations. Acknowledging commonalities is not the same thing as denying diversities. Equally, if we overemphasize the 'local' or the 'national' it may mean overlooking the importance of 'global' or 'international' forms of action.

Second, the problem with essentialisms about 'Africa' is not their scale *per se* so much as their ahistoricism. Smaller-scale social units -- country, province, or locality -- have no more *sui generis* meaning than the broader category of 'Africa'. Categorical assumptions about the inherent nature of Kenyan, Burkinabe, Zulu or other 'smaller' scaled groupings are not much less problematic than categorical assumptions about 'Africa'. Contemporary political boundaries, moreover, are very recent creations. It could well be argued that the nation-state is an 'external' imposition on African contexts, a product of colonial rule rather than indigenous political traditions (see e.g. Davidson 1992). This is at least to some extent an overstatement; primarily because it ignores the ways in which postcolonial norms of sovereignty were negotiated between African and European actors in the process of decolonization (see e.g. Cooper 2014; Herbst 2000). But still, even the translation from colonial boundaries to postcolonial national units was not always straightforward. French West Africa, for instance, was administered as a single political unit with a quasi-federal structure and a capital in Dakar; it was converted into eight separate 'national' units in the process of decolonization,<sup>2</sup> an outcome that was well in doubt until Guinée's independence in 1958, if not even later (see Cooper 2014). Still, the point remains that 'national' spaces have no more timeless character than does 'Africa'.

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<sup>1</sup> A brief clarifying point: when referring to individual countries or territories throughout the manuscript, I use the names contemporary to the time period in question -- e.g. I refer to 'Northern Rhodesia' in Chapter 4 and 'Zambia' in Chapters 5 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> The constituent countries were Mauritania, Senegal, the French Soudan (now Mali), Guinée, Côte d'Ivoire, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Dahomey (Benin), and Niger.

Third, as James Ferguson (2006) has compellingly argued, denying the reality or meaningfulness of 'Africa' as such can obscure the extent to which the *idea* of 'Africa' as a 'place in the world' -- in the dual sense of geographic location and social position -- meaningfully shapes interactions between Africans and between 'Africa' and the rest of the world. Debates about 'African-ness' among colonial officials, anti-colonial movements, and workers themselves, moreover, have deeply impacted the history of labour in Africa (see Cooper 1996).

In short, the approach to situating 'Africa' as a case that is most consistent with an actors and entanglements approach is to engage seriously with the ways in which different actors have imagined themselves and others as 'Africans', 'citizens', and/or 'workers' and sought to act out these imaginaries through engagements with the practices of global governance. International labour politics in Africa, especially when dealing with 'development' issues, have long involved unresolved debates over who counts as a 'worker', where workers' political allegiances ought to lie, and how workers should relate to 'national' communities and to the 'outside' world. The ILO might usefully be seen as a set of sites (among many) where 'Africa' -- as well as Ghana, Mali, or for that matter 'labour' -- has been constructed as a politically meaningful category by African and outside workers, colonial and postcolonial governments, and international bureaucrats. These conflicts are highlighted particularly clearly in Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 7. This role in the construction of Africa is significant in view of my overall argument emphasizing the entanglement of governance in multi-layered social struggles.

#### PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The theoretical argument is introduced in greater detail in Chapter 1. Having suggested in the introductory remarks above that 'critical' approaches are potentially more fruitful than the 'who governs?' *problematique*, I take up the somewhat puzzling struggle of neo-Gramscian analyses of global governance to think about agency and subalternity. I argue that their inability to do so is a result of three interconnected roadblocks: a unidirectional understanding of authority and governance; a monological understanding of historical development; and a vision of space that remains centered on the relationship between bounded 'national' territories and an overarching 'global' container. I suggest that the best means of moving beyond these roadblocks is by developing an alternative conception of governance as a set of loosely articulated practices bound up in various levels of contestation between different social forces -- or in short, in adopting an actors and entanglements approach to global governance. I develop a conceptual toolkit to put this approach into practice by drawing on certain aspects of governmentality theory, Gramsci's thought on subalternity, and Latourian thinking about scale and globality.

The remaining chapters apply this framework to an examination of the ILO's activities in sub-Saharan Africa. Part II of the book (Chapters 2-3) examines the ILO's efforts to regulate forced labour from 1919-present. Forced labour has remained an important component of the ILO's regulatory or standard-setting activities since the 1930s. Standard-setting retains a central place in most examinations of the ILO (see e.g. Weisband 2000; Braithwaite and Drahos 2000: Chpt. 11), so it is worth exploring in greater detail how the perspective developed here complicates conventional debates about the ILO's regulatory role. In this respect, forced labour is a useful case because it is the first and oldest component of the ILO's regulatory framework targeting sub-Saharan Africa, and it retains a central role in the contemporary activities of the ILO. Chapter 2 traces the development of the ILO's forced labour conventions. It shows the confluence of ambiguous systems of international oversight of imperialism under the League of Nations with emergent labour problems in colonial Africa. The ILO sought to defuse growing pressure from activists in Europe and Africa for changes to colonial rule by adopting a limited agenda of colonial oversight rooted around the regulation of forced labour. Nonetheless, the emergence of this agenda opened up further challenges to colonial authority through the ILO and associated networks. The chapter then traces the development of the ILO's second convention on forced labour, adopted in 1956. Chapter 3 examines the shifts in the ILO's approach to forced labour after decolonization. It highlights the disjuncture between the ILO's growing emphasis on compulsory labour in the soviet bloc and several intersecting debates about forced labour, settler colonialism in Southern Africa, and workplace struggles in sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter then briefly outlines the revival and transformation of the ILO's activities around forced labour since 2000. It emphasizes the development of relatively decentralized forms of technical cooperation around forced labour and child labour. It examines various forms of contestation in which these activities have become embroiled in efforts to regulate slavery in Niger and Mauritania and trade union activities related to child labour across the region.

Part III shifts from the ILO's 'standard-setting' role to its 'development' activities from WWII-present. The great bulk of the ILO's day-to-day activity for much of the last 70 years has been preoccupied with these activities, so while standard-setting often remains the primary focus of discussions of the ILO's role, these less visible forms of governance are worth examining more closely. Chapter 4 traces the emergence of 'development' approaches at the ILO out of colonial crises around the time of the Great Depression and WWII. It is argued that changing patterns of resistance on the part of colonial workers made the imagined separation of colonial and metropolitan understandings of work increasingly untenable. The ILO's approach to 'development' emerged out of ambivalent colonial efforts to address the problems posed for the imaginations of difference at the centre of colonial authority. The chapter goes on to examine the difficulties

posed for the ILO by the unsettled relations between states and organized labour in the decade following decolonization. Chapter 5 traces the ILO's interventions dealing with the promotion of employment from the early 1970s. It examines the origins on the concept of the 'informal economy' in the ILO's World Employment Programme, started in 1969. The chapter then considers some of the ways in which missions dealing with problems of the 'informal' sector have become entangled in processes of state-making. It examines WEP missions to Kenya, Ethiopia, and elsewhere in the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout, it is argued that the ILO's interventions into the informal sector have been enrolled into efforts to articulate state authority in variable ways. Chapter 6 continues looking into the state-constituting effects of 'development' practice by mapping the trajectory of ILO work on the 'informal' economy after 1990, focusing in particular on efforts to develop modes of social protection appropriate to 'informal' workers. The chapter first outlines the broad conditions in which the concept of the 'informal' was diffused beyond employment promotion across the ILO's activities in the early 1990s, then examines efforts to promote social security for informal workers. It closes with an analysis of the role of the ILO in the development microinsurance policies in francophone West Africa.

Chapter 7 takes up the ILO's activities directly involving workers organizations. In many ways these activities show how contested the processes of state-formation highlighted in the previous chapters actually were and are. The chapter closes by analyzing how recent engagements by the ILO with workers' finance have been enrolled into alternative efforts at organizing the 'informal' economy. Workers' activities, then, offer an interesting mirror through which both the depth and the limits of struggles over the constitution of state-authority through technical assistance.

Needless to say, the narrative presented in Parts II and III is far from linear. This is reflective of the effort being made here to think about the ways in which governance can become entangled in multiple historical trajectories across different places, spaces, and scales of action. A key premise of this thesis is that our understandings of 'history' in IPE need to take better account of multiplicity and complexity because the practice of governance itself defies clean, unidirectional narratives. In this context the multiplicity and non-linearity of the story itself is important.

## PART I: RETHINKING GOVERNANCE

### CHAPTER 1: HISTORY, AMBIGUITY, AND AGENCY IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

‘Global governance’ is sometimes a vague concept. At times it is more aimed at capturing the seeming complexity of the challenges posed by neoliberal globalization than describing anything specific (Latham 1999; Murphy 2000; Weiss and Wilkinson 2014). Hofferberth (2015) notes that the concept serves as a kind of ‘floating signifier’ -- to which different authors ascribe different and partially incommensurable meanings loaded with different normative contents. Nonetheless, at least in general terms, the concept captures various forms of non-state or multilateral regulation organized on a supranational or transnational scale. ‘Global governance’, broadly understood, is thus a central analytic focus for a considerable portion of writing in international political economy (IPE). This focus itself poses some problems. Not least, as Hobson and Seabrooke (2007) have observed, the emphasis on the analysis of regulatory regimes and forms of authority has tended to lead many writers to over-emphasize the role of powerful actors in shaping the global political economy and to vastly understate the agency of subordinate actors. These blindspots, as I argued in the introduction, are accentuated by the kinds of questions that are normally asked about global governance -- namely, questions about ‘who governs?’.

‘Critical’ or historical materialist approaches -- in shifting the emphasis from the sources of authority and the contents of rules to the historically specific purposes performed by global governance in the context of changing patterns of production and world order -- would seem to promise a more satisfactory account. Historical materialism, moreover, promises an ultimate focus on the possibilities for transformative action by non-elites implicit in existing structures of authority. However, historical-materialist IPE has often failed in practice to give much serious attention to actors beyond powerful global institutions and dominant classes in the global north. Moreover, when historical materialist authors (e.g. Cox 1999; Gill 2000) do consider the possibilities of resistance and agency, these are generally understood as an ‘outside’ influence on the institutions of governance themselves. This tends to lead investigations of global governance to overlook the broader range of possibilities and subtle forms of contestation implicit in the actual engagements between subordinate actors and systems of global governance. In seeking to map out an alternative approach to governance, it is thus useful to map out in more detail the reasons why critical IPE has struggled in this respect.

The underlying problem is that critical writers in IPE have often failed to move beyond three interconnected roadblocks. First, elite centers of decision-

making have retained a central place in conceptions of *governance*. ‘Governance’ is seen as the sphere of ‘governors’, while ‘resistance’, ‘agency’ and the like are seen as the terrain of ‘outside’, often ‘local’ forces. Second, this conception of governance is reinforced in critical IPE by an understanding of historical change rooted in the outward expansion of capitalist relations of production from a Euro-American ‘core’. Third, imaginations of space and scale in global politics remain hampered by an understanding of ‘the global’ as a ‘container’ for ‘national’ politics. Such understandings of history, spatiality, and governance risk diminishing the extent to which we can perceive the ‘room to move’ available for subordinate actors in any given system, and the capacity of these subordinate actors to creatively pursue a variety of objectives through ‘global’ institutions without necessarily making any ‘grand rejection’ of existing order. Agency thus tends to be understandable largely in terms either of the wholesale rejection of the prevailing order or localized outbursts of dissent rather than in terms of the multi-layered ongoing struggles over the contents and directions of political authority over multiple scales that might better reflect the reality of global governance.

This chapter proposes an alternative framework, understanding global governance in terms of the ‘actors and entanglements’ through which it is put into practice. I develop this framework in greater detail in the latter sections of this chapter by drawing together a number of resources from different theoretical approaches -- especially governmentality approaches, Gramsci’s writing on history and subalternity, and Latourian perspectives on scale. I argue that governance on a global scale can productively be seen, as a set of practices through which multiple projects are pursued and in which complex sets of social forces are engaged, rather than in terms of rules and authorities. We can thus begin to think of governance as an ambivalent and contested set of entanglements between ‘global’ institutions and various kinds of actors bound up in various historical trajectories, rather than the one-way imposition of ‘authority’ connected to the singular trajectory of ‘global’ capitalism. This approach retains the historicism of critical IPE, while acknowledging that the practice of governance in the global political economy is entangled with multiple overlapping temporalities, rather than any singular history of ‘global’ capitalism.

The argument proceeds in three broad steps. The first section elaborates a critique of existing conceptions of ‘global governance’, highlighting underlying ideas about historical change in current critical accounts. The following two sections begin to map out an alternative understanding of governance, offering a means of avoiding these roadblocks.

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND GLOBAL HISTORY

Two common uses of ‘global governance’ can be identified in the IPE literature. One approach is to think about ‘global governance’ as a system specific to the late-twentieth and early twentieth centuries. Some critical authors identify



‘global governance’ as a political project aimed at smoothing out the contradictions of late-modern globalizing capitalism (e.g. Brand 2005; Soederberg 2004). A second approach is to see ‘global governance’ as an analytical agenda aimed at uncovering the myriad ways in which the global political economy *is* governed (see Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006; Avant, Finnemore and Sell 2011). The concept is meant to capture the authoritative regulation of behaviour and allocation of public goods on a global scale, without necessarily assuming that this regulation is done by states (Rosenau 1992). As Murphy (1994: 1) suggests, the concept of ‘global governance’ in this sense is meant to capture the ‘actually existing’ historical patterns of global regulation, in contrast to utopian visions of ‘world government’. ‘Global governance’ identifies, in this sense, forms of regulation exercised by multilateral organizations and private actors operating across national boundaries, which have been around in some form since at least the nineteenth century. As a number of authors have suggested, this approach to global governance opens up the possibility of exploring and comparing different institutional systems linked to particular forms of world order over a much longer historical time-frame (Weiss and Wilkinson 2014; Murphy 2014).

Nonetheless, certain ambiguities remain; the latter understanding of ‘global governance’ can be deployed in (at least) two broad ways. The first is to carry out studies primarily concerned with the mechanics or the forces shaping governance in a given issue area -- identifying ‘who governs’ and how they maintain their authority. This is the approach taken, for instance, in Avant, Finnemore, and Sell’s (2011) recent collection, which attempts to map out shifting patterns of authority on a global or regional scale across a variety of different issue areas. In the introductory chapter, I labeled this the ‘who governs?’ approach. Alternatively, other authors have explored systemic shifts in world order. Rather than trying to identify causal factors or mechanisms underlying the regulation of any particular issue area, then, this latter approach -- favoured by Weiss and Wilkinson (2014) and Murphy (1994; 2014) -- is aimed at uncovering patterns of systemic change. It asks what functions global forms of governance perform (or might perform) in the maintenance and transformation of world order. This is the move at the core of the critical project in IPE. There is a good deal at stake in this shift. It holds out two important promises. First, it offers the possibility of examinations of global governance that destabilize existing structures of power by showing their historical character. Sinclair (1999) highlights this dimension of the problem by distinguishing between ‘synchronic’ and ‘diachronic’ analyses of governance. Second, in so doing, it potentially allows for analyses of global governance that engage explicitly with possible trajectories for transformation.

#### *Historicism, hegemony, and the invisibility of agency*

If we approach the problem of ‘global governance’ from a critical or diachronic perspective, the difference between authors taking ‘global governance’

as a general analytic problem and those treating it as a recent phenomenon amounts mostly to semantics. In the end, there is arguably not much difference theoretically or methodologically between an investigation of ‘global governance’, understood in terms of shifting systems of world order (e.g. Murphy 1994; 2014) and an analysis of ‘global governance’ as a new modality of world order linked to certain structural transformations in the global political economy (e.g. Soederberg 2004; Brand 2005). Underpinning either approach is a very similar understanding of the relationship between governance and historical change. Both Murphy (1994) and Soederberg (2004), notably, draw heavily on Robert Cox’s work on hegemony and world order. Cox (1987) traces a succession of different systems of world order, each linked to distinctive configurations of production and state power, back to the mid-nineteenth century. He links the emergence of industrial capitalism in England with the extension of a liberal international order based on free trade and the gold standard. The inability of this international order to accommodate the emergence of organized political demands from subaltern classes led to intensified imperial competition and the breakdown of the liberal order. The development and extension of the Fordist compromise after WWII created new social foundations on which a hegemonic world order centered on the US could be constructed. The erosion of tripartite corporatism, internationalization of production, and the erosion of American hegemony in the 1970s, for Cox, created a new period of uncertainty. Some of Cox’s later writing highlights the emergence of a transnational elite consensus around neoliberal economic ideas -- Cox uses the term ‘*nébuleuse*’ to refer to this loosely coordinated configuration of social forces and ideology (1992). Whether ‘global governance’ refers to all of these successive systems of world order or merely the contemporary post-Cold War order or ‘*nébuleuse*’ is perhaps not an overly important debate.

Historical materialist approaches, then, share an underlying conception of historical change. This understanding is also, however, at the root of the difficulty in taking non-elite actors seriously. Critical scholars in IPE tend to rely on a conception of world history as a singular process. Some authors have pointed out that neo-Gramscian thought in IPE tends to rely on a Eurocentric conception of historical change, centered on the transformations of the capitalist class in the North Atlantic (Hobson 2012: 252-258; Muppidi 2004: 14-17). Non-Western agents are either rendered invisible or reduced to a ‘reactive’ kind of agency in which their actions are strongly conditioned by the Euro-American core. Part of the problem, I would argue, is the central role that neo-Gramscian authors have given to ‘hegemony’ in their analyses of global politics. Cox’s history is organized around a succession of hegemonic powers punctuated by crises. Some authors following Cox’s lead have similarly gone looking for the mechanics of hegemonic power. Gill’s writing on structural power and constitutionalism is notable here (e.g. Gill and Law 1989; Gill 1995). When ‘global governance’ is connected to patterns of historical change in these analyses, it is usually this

history of global capitalism or transnational hegemonic power that critical writers in IPE have in mind. Global governance is understood as a mechanism for the transmission and maintenance of hegemonic power relations connected to an underlying structure of production relations. The problem is that this approach (ironically) naturalizes the role of ‘dominant’ or ‘hegemonic’ actors in global politics. It implies that ‘hegemony’ is a normal mode of operation in global politics and the central dynamic of historical development.

These tendencies are amplified by the understandings of ‘globality’ implicit in historical-materialist understandings. Most neo-Gramscian understandings of the ‘global’ or ‘transnational’ scale of action see it as operating ‘above’ national scales. This is perhaps most evident in Gill and Law’s readings of the ‘structural power of capital’ (Gill and Law 1989) -- globalized forms of capital, as well as the linked institutions of global governance, are seen as being able to restrain the options available to states and other social forces precisely because of their access to articulate actions across ‘bigger’ scales. The ‘global’ then, is a predominantly elite sphere, which ‘local’ and ‘national’ territories face as an overarching disciplinary force.

These conceptions of history and spatiality have implications for the ways in which agency can be perceived or understood. Some neo-Gramscian authors have begun to pay more attention to ways in which counter-hegemonic orders and other forms of resistance might be organized among local or national forces excluded from the dominant bloc. Third world states, trade unions, and transnational protest movements are often mentioned as the potential bases of counter-hegemonic movements. The relationship between counter-hegemony and governance is interpreted in terms of challenges to hegemonic global governance from ‘outside’. This understanding of the potential for resistance often has a distinctly spatial character -- with ‘local’ or ‘national’ scales of action seen as most conducive to counter-hegemonic action. In an early reflection Cox writes that ‘The task of changing world order begins with the long, laborious effort to build new historic blocs within national boundaries’ (1983: 174). In a later essay Cox (1999) again suggests that because the institutions of ‘global’ governance are unlikely to be conducive to counter-hegemonic politics, the construction of an alternative world order requires long-term efforts at producing broad shifts in modes of thought and the construction of new solidarities in the (implicitly localized) sphere of ‘civil society’. Gill (2000) similarly highlights the protests in Seattle at the WTO ministerial in 1999 as an indication of an emergent counter-hegemonic movement. There have also been some more specific examinations of groups of subaltern actors that might serve as the basis for resistance, like peasant movements or trade unions (e.g. Morton 2007a; Bieler 2012). More explicit consideration of the possibility for counter-hegemony is useful, but it still retains a problematic emphasis on hegemony. Subordinate actors are assigned a reactive form of agency -- they do not shape the structures of the global political economy,

or the institutions of global governance, but might (under the right circumstances) produce forms of resistance that could lead to systemic change. Hence the criticism that, where Gramsci himself would seem to provide useful resources for investigating the role of ‘subaltern’ agents in global politics (on which see below), the neo-Gramscians have tended to exaggerate or overemphasize the power of ‘dominant’ actors (Hobson and Seabrooke 2007; O’Brien 2005).

The preceding discussion has identified some roadblocks preventing a stronger account of agency in critical IPE. In short, the concept of ‘global governance’ is useful insofar as it marks out the complex, interlinked sets of institutions operating beyond and across national jurisdictions as an area for empirical enquiry. Equally, critical perspectives on global governance are valuable because they point us towards an investigation of the possibilities for systemic change implicit in existing structures of political economy. But as long as we think about global governance in terms of its links to singular histories of capitalism or hegemony, we are likely to overemphasize the power of dominant actors and structures and to miss out on a lot of the complexities and ambiguities implicit in the actual practice of governance -- and by extension, to diminish the ‘room to move’ available to subordinate actors. We are left, in short with an unduly limited understanding both of the actual practice of governance and of the landscape of possibilities and limitations for actors seeking to engage with institutions of global governance. The problem, then, is how to problematize the relationship between agency and governance in a way that might allow for a broader conceptualization of possibilities for historical change. In short, the challenge is how to articulate a critical or diachronic perspective on global governance that can better account for indeterminacy, ambiguity, and possibility - - and accordingly for the agency of various subordinate social forces.

I argue in what follows for an ‘actors and entanglements’ approach to governance in the global political economy. As discussed in the approach, this involves exploring in particular historical instances how different actors seek to shape their own interactions with ‘global’ institutions. This implies an empirical investigation of the entanglements of governmental practices with particular historical struggles. In what follows, I outline in more detail what kind of assumptions this approach requires in terms of the mechanics of governance, the nature of ‘actors’, and the ‘globality’ of governance by drawing on some aspects of governmentality theories, Gramscian historicism, and from Latour.

#### FROM RULE AND AUTHORITIES TO TECHNOLOGIES OF GOVERNANCE

The first roadblock identified above was the tendency in both mainstream and critical accounts to associate global governance with the ‘rules’ promulgated by global institutions and the mechanisms by which these institutions secure their authority. This perspective has increasingly been questioned by a growing

literature on ‘governmentality’ in global politics (e.g. Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Sending and Neumann 2006; Jaeger 2007; Lipshutz 2005). The notion of governmentality emphasizes the dispersed, micro-level practices through which particular visions of ‘the social’ are enacted. Governance, then, is seen less in terms of authority and more in terms of the techniques through which particular kinds of social order are produced. Foucault draws a contrast between ‘sovereign’ modes of power based on discipline and coercion and ‘government’:

[W]ith government it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things; that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics -- to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved. (Foucault 1991: 95)

Governance becomes a question less of making and enforcing decisions and more a matter of the particular tools through which particular imaginations of social order are produced. This implies a focus on a much broader set of tactics and technologies, not simply rules and laws, but the variety of practices and objects by which populations are shaped, measured, and disciplined.

There is a certain ambiguity in Foucault’s writing as to whether ‘governmentality’ refers to a broad methodological device focused on the exploration of the ‘tactics’ by which forms of state and social order are constituted through practices of ‘government’, or a distinctive historical form of practice that emerges in Europe between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. To bring on board the latter meaning into a study of global governance, I think, would veer dangerously close to replicating the narrative structure of ‘first in Europe, then elsewhere’ (Chakrabarty 2000), which poses problems for the consideration of subaltern agency in global politics. The former use of the term, then, is much more productive for present purposes. There is no necessary connection between a broad exploration of the technologies of government and ‘modern’ or European governance -- as studies of colonial governmentality (Mitchell 1988) or of forms of governmentality rooted in non-European social formations (Bayart 2009) attest.

Rose and Miller (1992: 175) suggest that such a ‘problematics of government’ might be developed at two levels. First, they suggest looking at ‘political rationalities’, or the discursive spaces within which constitutive knowledges and moralities are produced and circulated. Second, they highlight ‘governmental technologies’, or ‘the complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody their governmental ambitions’. In this section, I argue that ‘governmentality’ approaches are useful for present purposes, particularly in the emphasis on what Rose and Miller call ‘governmental technologies’, but that the conceptions of subjecthood, historicity, and agency implicit in Foucauldian approaches are problematic. Ultimately, I argue in favour of reading the idea of ‘technologies’ of governance together with an alternative conception of history

and agency, drawing from Antonio Gramsci, fleshed out in the next section.

The concept of ‘governmentality’ has been applied to global governance and related topics in a number of ways (see Walters 2010). Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, several authors have highlighted the construction, recruitment, and incorporation of ‘civil society’ into global governance as a key practice of ‘global governmentality’. Sending and Neumann (2006) argue that, seen through the lens of governmentality, the ‘emergence’ of global civil society in the late twentieth century represents less the erosion of state power and more a changing rationality of governance. Civil society is increasingly implicated in global circulations of power; or, civil society ‘is increasingly defined as a field populated by political subjects whose autonomy, expertise and ability to responsibly channel political will-formation has become crucial to the tasks of governing’ (2006: 669). Other authors have given particular emphasis to the dynamics of ‘depoliticization’ implicit in this process. Lipshutz (2005) draws the distinction between ‘constitutive’ politics, meaning contestation over the basic ordering of social life, and ‘distributive’ politics, or contestation over ‘who gets what’. He argues that global civil society frequently functions to normalize existing forms of social order by emphasizing ‘distributive’ politics over constitutive politics. Jaeger (2007: 258) similarly argues that ‘Discursively harnessed to governmentalities of human security and social development, global civil society is expected to depoliticize global governance, that is, to remove issues from fundamental political contention through participation in and functional contributions to global governance’. The point, for both Lipshutz and Jaeger, is that civil society is enmeshed in global governmentalities in ways that inhibit challenges to broader patterns of social order.

The idea of governmentality is valuable in three ways. First, it shifts attention away from ‘rules’ and ‘authority’ and towards ‘rationalities and ‘techniques’. Governance, then, is no longer simply the exercise of authority, but rather a set of practices through which particular forms of social order are produced. It is particularly useful, then, for getting us beyond the first roadblock identified above -- we have not simply more or less effective regulation, but a range of tactics, including (among other things) technical assistance, educational programmes, the recruitment of civil society, and the production of ‘expert’ knowledge, alongside coercion or authoritative standard-setting. The empirical chapters below, especially in Part III, highlight particularly clearly the extent to which the ILO’s governance of labour in sub-Saharan Africa has often proceeded through the production of various forms of knowledge (reports, research publications, training manuals) in conjunction with a varied set of actors (colonial and postcolonial governments, trade unions, NGOs, academics). Second, governmentality offers a means of articulating a broader understanding of the entanglements of a range of actors with the practices of governance. Governance, from this perspective, involves not just decision-making, but more importantly the

enrolment and entwinement of a wide range of actors into practices of government. Third, when applied outside ‘national’ contexts, the concept of governmentality offers useful avenues for the investigation of processes of state formation -- a number of authors have highlighted the significance of ‘global governmentalities’ in the constitution of state authority, particularly in the developing world (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Joseph 2012).

However, there are also some important shortcomings to the idea of governmentality (*cf.* Walters 2010: 68-81). Most notably for present purposes, studies of governmentality can often be faulted for overstating the ease with which practices of governance can actually remake the world they encounter. The emphasis on depoliticization, relatedly, can often obscure the extent to which the ambivalences in governmental visions of the world can open up spaces for properly *political* challenges. In short, the real application of governmental rationalities or the technologies of government is often a rather more complex and contested process than governmentality approaches might lead us to expect. Theories of governmentality often lack a cohesive theory of agency, and a relatively weak conception of history. This is not to say that theories of governmentality, or Foucauldian theories more broadly, deny the agency of subject positions altogether, but they are ultimately based on methodological premises that make a full consideration of agency and historical change difficult. The point is that governmentality perspectives offer a usefully distinct perspective on the exercise of governance, but do not succeed in offering a sufficiently fleshed out theory of historical change to get beyond the frequent recourse to Eurocentric and elite-centered narratives in IPE. It is worth a brief excursus on Foucauldian understandings of historicity and agency to elaborate this point.

#### *Agency, history, and subjecthood in Foucauldian thought*

Governmentality theories run up against their limits, at least for the purposes of the present study, because they are rooted in an understanding of history that diminishes the scope for considerations of agency. Mitchell Dean (1994) finds in Foucault’s thought a ‘critical and effective’ understanding of history. Foucault, in an early essay, argues that “‘effective’ history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man -- not even his body -- is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men’ (1977: 153). Meanwhile ‘critical’ history, for Foucault, ‘forsakes the critique of the past in terms of the truth of the present but not the critical use of the history of reason to diagnose the practical issues, necessities, and limits of the present’ (Dean 1994: 20). For Dean, Foucault’s history is ‘critical’ insofar as it commits itself to a ‘tireless interrogation’ of things taken to be given or natural, and ‘effective’ insofar as it challenges transcendental or teleological ‘philosophies of history’ -- particularly those centered on the autonomous voluntarist subject at the core of liberal theory.

Foucault's critical and effective history, then, is an interrogation of meta-historical narratives of 'rationalization', modernity, and the self-revealing Cartesian subject. The 'self', for Foucault, is something contingent, fluid, and discursively produced. Dean (1994) argues that Foucault's approach is productive precisely because it opens up 'the subject' and 'the self' as sites for investigation, rather than positing them as transhistoric constants. The rational, self-referential enlightenment subject -- the object of Foucault's persistent critique -- is undoubtedly problematic, and the formation of identity is a potentially fruitful avenue for inquiry. Yet to reduce the 'self' to a discursive construction or the product of so many practices of government always risks obscuring the capacity of the self (or of collective agents) to act. Foucault's own stress on 'transgression' and 'resistance' as the inevitable counterpart of discursive subject positions or regimes of 'power/knowledge' (see Pickett 1996) is perhaps notable here, but even the concept of 'resistance' is rather slippery -- it appears at times to be more a residual argument about that which eludes power, than about the possibilities of creative or purposive action.

This ambiguity, Bevir (1999) argues compellingly, stems from Foucault's elision of agency (the capacity of a subject to act creatively within a given social context) with autonomy (the possibility of a 'pre-social' subject). The result is that 'Sometimes, when he talks of the ubiquity of power or the implausibility of the idea of a founding subject, he appears to reject only autonomy, but at other times, when he describes... the individual as a mere effect of power, he appears to also reject agency' (Bevir 1999: 68). Foucault's own view on agency, then, is rather ambiguous and not always consistent.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful that he (or any governmentality theorist for that matter) would ever outright deny the existence of agency, except maybe in the odd rhetorical flourish, but agency nonetheless occupies a sometimes peripheral, slippery, and problematic place in Foucauldian thought.

The salient problem is thus less ontological (i.e. whether or not Foucauldian theories acknowledge that agency exists) and more methodological. Starting from an emphasis on the discursive or governmental production of subjecthood tends to de-emphasize the ways in which people actually engage with those subject positions. As Scott (1985: 286) notes, 'The fact is that power-laden situations are almost always inauthentic; the exercise of power almost always drives a portion of the full transcript underground'. To emphasize the visible 'transcript' leads to the occlusion of ongoing contest and struggle, creative adaptation, subversion, and any other number of modes of engagements with

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<sup>1</sup> Bevir argues that we would be best served to follow the Foucault who rejects only autonomy. I would tend to agree, but even so Foucault's theory of agency is rather sparse and is usefully supplemented by the Gramscian arguments adopted below.



governmental rationalities on the part of target populations. Governmentality approaches, in short, risk missing agency and resistance simply by failing to look for it. There is thus a crucial paradox in many uses of governmentality: the concept is particularly good at calling attention to the ways in which global governance can operate through the entanglements of ‘civil society’ and other actors in projects of governance, but can also often obscure the agency of the targets of and participants in global governmentalities. As the following section argues in more detail, Gramsci’s thought on the intersections of subalternity and political authority offers us a potentially more useful means of critically investigating the power dimensions implicit in the construction of subjecthood without effacing the capacity of subordinate agents to act. Governmentality, then, is most useful as a provocation to focus on the techniques and practices through which regulatory processes are actually produced and performed. We might begin to work around the limitations of governmentality theories with respect to agency by putting the emphasis more squarely on ‘governmental technologies’, rather than on the discursive formation of subjectivities. The point of emphasizing the role of these objects and practices is that thinking in such terms implies the possibility of multiple different applications -- in short, it reintroduces an element of ambiguity and indeterminacy into the ‘technologies of governance’. Practices of governance are carried out through sometimes-problematic deployments of particular discursive repertoires, documents, techniques, and the like. These practices are likely to be designed for one particular purpose, but they might be twisted to alternate ends in application. This is because, as the next section argues by drawing on Gramsci, technologies of governance encounter not blank slates, but individuals and groups situated in particular historical and cultural trajectories and capable of acting creatively.

#### REVISITING GRAMSCI: HISTORY AND AGENCY

Critical IPE often draws on a conception of historical change heavily focused on the mutations of ‘global’ capitalism, especially in a handful of core economies, a focus reinforced by the centrality of the concept of ‘hegemony’. Governmentality approaches help to move away from the first roadblock, the identification of governance with the ‘rules’, but as noted above, they are problematic with respect to the second. I argue here that one useful way of approaching these problems can come from a renewed engagement with Gramsci’s thought on historical change. Gramsci makes a case for an ‘absolute’ historicism -- ‘in the case of... [historical materialism], one should put the emphasis on the first term (“historical”) and not the second, which is of metaphysical origin’ (1971: 465). He continues, ‘The philosophy of Praxis is an absolute “historicism”, the absolute secularization and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history’ (1971: 465). In short, for Gramsci theory must be developed out of specific historical developments from the perspective of particular problems. Particular concepts should originate not in abstract speculation but in derivation from particular historical experiences. Gramsci’s

application of this ‘absolute historicism’ to the problem of subaltern agency -- reflected most clearly in his writings on method -- is useful in two ways. First, these writings suggest an understanding of agency and subjectivity as historically emergent properties -- the organization of social forces is not accomplished by discursive formations, but through ongoing patterns of action and interaction in which subaltern actors themselves are actively involved. Agency for Gramsci is *social* and historical. Second, Gramsci points to the entanglement of these processes with institutional sites of political authority. However, in order to make these insights work in a study of global governance, it is necessary to think about problems of scale and the relationship between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ in ways that Gramsci himself did not. Further, Gramsci is relatively silent on the actual mechanisms or practice of governance, a point on which it is useful to read him in conjunction with governmentality approaches. These arguments are taken up in more detail in turn.

Gramsci’s methodological reflections on the study of subaltern populations in his ‘Notes on Italian History’ are notable here (1971: 52-55). Gramsci argues that ‘the subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a “State”: their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States’ (1971: 52). In other words, to study subaltern populations is to study the institutional spaces around which subaltern identities are organized and the historical processes in which they are enmeshed.

Gramsci emphasizes the development of particular forms of solidarity against specific institutional and material backdrops. Gramsci identifies a range of avenues for inquiry into the formation of subalternity:

It is necessary to study: 1) The objective formation of the subaltern groups, by the developments and transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology and aims they preserve for a time; 2) their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political factions, their attempts to influence programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own, and the consequences of these attempts in determining processes of decomposition, formation, and neo-formation; 3) the birth of new parties of the dominant groups, intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and maintain their control over them; 4) the formations that subaltern groups themselves produce, in order to press claims of a limited and partial character; 5) those new formations which assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework; 6) those formations that assert the integral autonomy... (1971: 52)

There is a good deal to unpack here, but two points are particularly important for present purposes. First, Gramsci clearly locates the historical basis of the subaltern in the 'objective' relations of production, but also assigns some importance to the relation of these 'objective' groups to pre-existing social formations. Subaltern groups, in short, are formed at the intersection of multiple historical trajectories (see below).

Second, Gramsci identifies a range of potential political articulations of subaltern classes in relation to existing order. There is a certain ambiguity in the relation between these different 'phases'. It is possible to read this outline as a hypothesized temporal sequence, moving towards a definite *telos* in revolutionary communism ('the integral autonomy'). However, while there is little doubt about Gramsci's normative commitment to revolutionary socialism; he also highlights an important degree of indeterminacy in tracing the history of subaltern groups: 'The history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic... Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only "permanent" victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately' (1971: 55). The picture that starts to emerge is of a sort of 'tug of war' over the formation of subaltern consciousness; in which 'Every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should... be of incalculable value for the integral historian' (1971: 55). The broader point is that for Gramsci almost as much as for Foucault the formation of identity and subjectivity ought to be a site of investigation rather than a given -- in this sense Gramsci's historical method might well be seen as 'critical and effective' in Dean's (1994) sense.

However, 'consciousness' for Gramsci is not reducible to discourse or governmental practice because its formation takes place against a fluid, multi-layered backdrop of historical and material trajectories. Gramsci offers a more detailed understanding of history and historical change in his notes on the 'Modern Prince'. On one hand, Gramsci emphasizes diachronic historical processes -- the slow moving or 'organic' development of productive forces and the faster and more fluid, but related, development of political consciousness and social forces. On the other hand, the synchronic 'relations of force' at any given moment can be examined at three levels: the 'objective' economic sphere or 'structure', the political sphere of organization and consciousness (at which we could locate the formation of subaltern agency), and at the level of coercive force (Gramsci 1971: 180-183). These three balances are reciprocally related. That is, Gramsci does not argue that 'class' forces arising from the balance of forces at the level of production produce consciousness or the balance of coercive forces in any straightforward way. 'Class' is a form of consciousness, and thus a product of the balance of forces at the *political* level.

The logical extension of this argument (although not necessarily one that Gramsci pursues) is the argument that we need not necessarily understand the balance of political forces in terms of ‘class’ at all. Here Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) criticism of Gramsci for ultimately falling back on an ‘essentialized’ working class subject is interesting. The interpretation of Gramsci pursued here would suggest that an essential class subject, which does appear at times in Gramsci’s writing, is ultimately inconsistent with his broader approach. The balance of political forces is fundamentally about clashing visions of social order linked with different articulations of identity and solidarity -- solidarities with a basis in the relations of force at the level of production may have an advantage in certain senses, but they are not the only possible locus of collective action. Gramsci approaches the historical construction of subjectivities not as an end point of analysis, but as the basis for an analysis of possibilities for political action. The focus for Gramsci is on the ‘dialectical nexus’ between the synchronic and the diachronic; that is, on tracing shifting relations of forces over time, rather than the synchronic or the diachronic in and of itself. The subaltern, then, while it has some ‘material basis’ in the social relations of production, is in its most salient sense a *historical* and *political* phenomenon, articulated through the spaces of the integral state. Crucially, Gramsci’s discussion of subalternity gives us a lens on agency without falling back on an ‘autonomous’, *sui generis* subject.

Taken together, these readings of history and agency present a picture of ongoing entanglements between hegemonic projects and subaltern agency on a set of terrains situated at the dialectical nexus between multiple intersecting historical trajectories. Importantly, ‘subaltern’ social forces, while they have some basis in the relations of force at the level of production, are constituted *as actors* through their engagements with the terrains of state and civil society -- they are ‘present at their own making’. We can arrive at a decentered, fluid, contingent understanding of historical change without erasing agency. Rather than inert or malleable matter, in Gramsci’s vision hegemonic projects encounter *historically situated*, agentic human subjects. The discursive construction of subjectivities, in short, does not operate on blank slates. ‘Subaltern’ identities emerge out of a kind of historical dialectic between dominant discourses, material relations of force, and the political action of subaltern agents themselves. Consciousness or identity, then, is *contested through* more than *constituted by* practices of governance. Governmentalities (global or otherwise) always encounter complex and multiple sets of relations of force. Again, these dynamics are clearly visible in many of the cases examined below. We can see in many instances in the following chapters that the particular reports, standards, and training programmes rolled out by the ILO have often had outcomes that could scarcely be predicted on the basis of the ILO’s particular visions of African labour. The best explanation for these outcomes is generally found in the kinds of struggles over the constitution of social forces highlighted in Gramsci’s methodological writing. Colonial technologies of government, which the ILO played a significant role in

developing, were continually undercut by the efforts of African workers to articulate their own claims through a variety of forms of mobilization. Similarly, postcolonial modes of practice have often been redirected into struggles over the relationships between the state, organized labour, and the broad segment of the population of most African political economies engaged in various forms of precarious, unprotected, or 'informal' work.

Gramsci's methodological notes thus offer us a useful means of examining the variegated struggles with which ILO's technologies have come into contact. Gramsci's thoughts on the actual practices of governance, however, are relatively sparse. On this point 'governmentality' approaches are particularly useful. It is worth noting that the present approach reads Gramscian and governmentality theories together in a somewhat different way than most previous efforts at doing so in IPE or IR. A common tendency has been for some authors to seek causal forces underlying particular forms of governmentality in changing configurations of global class relations -- in Joseph's (2012) words, neo-Gramscian ideas provide the 'why', governmentality points towards the 'how' of governance in global politics. Gill's (2008) use of Foucauldian concepts like panopticism and capillary power follows a similar logic. This approach falls victim to the second roadblock identified above, where history is reduced to the singular force of capitalism in the core. The present approach draws on Gramsci in a different way, highlighting the place of agency and contingency in Gramsci's historical method. Nonetheless, without addressing the third roadblock -- a conception of 'the global' as a container for 'national' spaces -- it is not clear that Gramsci's concepts of 'state' and 'civil society' can easily be applied to 'global' or 'international' politics. The next sub-section, accordingly, takes up problems of scale.

#### GLOBAL SPACES OF GOVERNANCE AND THE PROBLEM OF SCALE

One of the more recurrent critiques of neo-Gramscian theory is that Gramsci's thought was oriented toward the 'national' level, and is thus difficult to apply to 'global' or 'international' politics. Germain and Kenny argue that a specifically Gramscian reading of 'global' civil society would require demonstrating the existence of corresponding structures of political authority on a global scale -- in short, it would need 'to show just how far Gramsci's... equation can be refashioned to read: "international state = global political society + global civil society"' (1998: 17). The point, in short, is that the application of Gramsci's concepts, not least 'hegemony' and 'civil society', beyond bounded national communities is somewhat problematic. Germain and Kenny's critique is a rather apt summation of the problems with what Strange (1988) called the 'layer cake' model in Cox's work -- wherein world order rests on certain kinds of state power, which in turn rests on particular configurations of production. We might add to Germain and Kenny's critique, however, by saying that this implicit spatial imaginary reinforces the association between 'global' governance and 'elite'

actors. If ‘the global’ is made up of ‘national’ spaces, the politics of ‘everyday’ agency are implicitly associated with ‘local’ or ‘national’ spheres, while ‘global’ politics are generally reserved for ‘elite’ actors.

While the spatial assumptions underpinning neo-Gramscian IPE are indeed troubling, this does not necessarily mean that Gramsci’s thought is unhelpful. Some authors have argued that Gramsci’s own conception of political scale was not quite so bound by ‘national’ frameworks as in Germain and Kenny’s reading (Ives and Short 2013). Moreover, as Morton (2007b) and others have noted, Gramsci’s discussions of state formation, especially the concept of ‘passive revolution’, highlight the contingent, historically specific, and international nature of the state. It would be difficult to argue, in short, that Gramsci unquestionably naturalizes the ‘national’ as a terrain for political action. Similarly, a number of authors have recently started excavating the spatial and geographical dimensions of Gramsci’s thought more broadly (Jessop 2005; Ekers *et al.* 2014). There is some hint in Gramsci’s thought that scales of political action are historically and socially produced. Moreover, any assumption that scales of action exist *a priori* or that a lasting primacy could be assigned to ‘national’ or ‘international’ spaces would not be in keeping with Gramsci’s absolute historicism.

Gramsci’s explicit reflections on the international in the *Prison Notebooks* are nonetheless limited to a brief reflection on a debate between Stalin and Trotsky on the *praxis* of nationalism and internationalism, in which Gramsci argues that the construction of an international revolutionary proletarian movement needs inevitably to operate in particular national contexts, particularly because in order to establish a genuine hegemony the working classes need to enroll peasant and intellectual communities whose outlook is decisively ‘national’ or even ‘local’ (1971: 240-241). Gramsci, however, also acknowledges in his discussion of the political relations of force that ‘It is also necessary to take into account the fact that international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique, and historically concrete combinations’ (1971: 182). In other writings on cosmopolitanism and internationalism Gramsci does seem to acknowledge the possibility, even the necessity, of transnational practices of solidarity (Featherstone 2014). Gramsci notes provocatively that

Nationalism of the French stamp is an anachronistic excrescence in Italian history, proper to people who have their heads turned backwards like the damned in Dante. The “mission” of the Italian people lies not in the recovery of Roman and medieval cosmopolitanism, but in its most modern and advanced form. Even indeed a proletarian nation... proletarian as a nation because it has been the reserve army of foreign capitalism, because together with the Slavic peoples it has given skilled workers to the entire world. For this very reason, it must join the modern front struggling to reorganize

also the non-Italian world, which it has helped to create with its labour. (1985: 247)

Here, Gramsci suggests that waves of Italian emigration made possible the expansion of capitalism elsewhere. Moreover, in such practices of transnational labour mobility Gramsci locates the possibility of a kind of subaltern cosmopolitanism or internationalism -- Italian labour migration gives 'Italy' a profound stake in the reorganization of the 'non-Italian' world. Indeed, Gramsci suggests that the intimate connection of Italian labour to the expansion of capitalism makes 'nationalism' anachronistic and dangerous. Further, as Featherstone (2014: 75) notes, Gramsci's focus on labour migration here 'signals the productiveness of diverse trajectories and articulations in shaping internationalist practices. Here subaltern articulations of cosmopolitanism can become constitutive of internationalism allowing a more generous account of who matters in shaping international politics and broaden agency beyond national left leaderships'.

Gramsci's reflections on these points are nonetheless fragmentary and ambiguous. Ultimately, as Jessop notes, Gramsci 'was a deeply spatial thinker, but he did not explicitly prioritise spatial thinking' (2005: 422). To make Gramsci's insights on authority and subaltern agency work in the context of global governance, it is useful to take Gramsci's absolute historicism, along with his thought on internationalism and subaltern practice as an opening to problematize assumptions about scale and 'the global'. As Stuart Hall notes (writing about the prospects for left politics in Thatcher's Britain): 'Gramsci gives us, not the tools to solve the problem, but the means with which to ask the right kinds of questions...' (1988: 162; cf. Morton 2003).

'Thinking in a Gramscian way' (Hall 1988; Morton 2003), in the context of global governance, requires that we interrogate conventional assumptions about space and scale – or, in short, Gramsci's method suggests a need to get around the third roadblock, but doesn't necessarily offer the means of doing so. Ferguson and Gupta (2002), usefully for present purposes, argue that state authority has historically depended on a specific spatial imaginary reflecting two main principles: first, states are seen to 'encompass' the populations and territories under their jurisdiction; and second, states are seen as forms of authority 'above' and detached from those territories and populations, referred to as 'verticality'. Importantly, these imaginaries are made concrete by routinized, 'bureaucratic' practices. Political space, in short is an emergent property of social interactions, not an inert 'container' for social action. They argue that the growth of 'global' practices of governance -- 'not only new strategies of discipline and regulation, exemplified by the WTO and the structural adjustment programs implemented by the IMF, but also transnational alliances forged by activists and grassroots organizations and the proliferation of voluntary organizations supported by complex networks of international and transnational funding and personnel'

(2002: 990) -- has put these imaginaries under increasing pressure by introducing overlapping sets of governmental practices. However, instead of the development of new imaginations of scale, more often ideas about 'encompassment' and 'verticality' are simply stretched. Thus 'institutions of global governance such as the IMF or the WTO are commonly seen as simply being "above" national states, much as states were discussed vis-à-vis the grassroots' (2002: 990). Spatial imaginaries, in short, have failed to keep pace with shifting patterns of practice.

Latour, I think, diagnoses the broader problem here very well:

The problem is that social scientists use scale as one of the many variables they need to fix up *before* doing the study, whereas scale is what actors achieve by *scaling*, *spacing*, and *contextualizing* each other through the transportation in some specific vehicles of some specific traces. (2005: 183-184)

This *a priori* 'fixing' of scale is particularly problematic, we might add, when it is coupled with an implicit or explicit hierarchy in which 'bigger' spaces are retained as the preserve of elites. Presuming that more powerful actors are somehow 'bigger' precludes an investigation of the very 'battle or negotiation' at the root of 'differences in level, size, or scope' (Callon and Latour 1981: 279). Latour suggests a useful alternative mode of imagining space: 'Instead of thinking in terms of surfaces... and spheres... one is asked to think in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they do connections' (Latour 1996: 370). The 'global', then, refers not to an all-encompassing sphere, but rather to merely 'longer' connections forged through particular associations between particular nodes. Hence Latour's claim that even 'global' networks are 'local at all points' (1993: 117-120). Re-reading scale in this way opens up the consideration of a broader range of strategic possibilities for subordinate actors faced with 'global' capital or forms of governance. Scale, then, cannot be given in advance. In the context of this project, the presumption that resistance is 'local' and power is 'global', which is implicit in much of the critical IPE literature, is thus problematic in practice because it obscures the extent to which ostensibly 'local' or 'national' actors are able to draw creatively on 'global' frameworks for governance, and (by extension) the extent to which 'global' governance needs to be enacted through particular circulations of practices into particular 'local' sites.

The point, if we approach scale in this way, is that 'the global' is scarcely the preserve of elite actors, as critical IPE often implicitly assumes. For subordinate actors, indeed, 'the global' is often a more conducive space for certain forms of political action than the 'national'. Ferguson (2004) notes that the skill of 'local' social movements in articulating transnational linkages plays a considerable role in shaping their success. Pommerolle (2010) similarly notes that protest movements in sub-Saharan Africa are increasingly equally capable of drawing on strategies of 'extraversion' themselves in order to resist state power. Herod (2001) argues that workers' efforts to organize the scale of their own political or workplace activity have played a significant role in shaping the



geography of contemporary capitalism -- including, among other things, by exploiting 'global' corporate structures to leverage the impacts of 'local' job actions or by using contacts with union organizations in multiple countries to coordinate transnational campaigns against 'local' initiatives by 'global' capital.

Given that 'globality' is understood here in terms of nodes and connections cutting across 'national' spaces, it is necessary to clarify how exactly the state fits into this schema. As Nicola Phillips (2005) has perceptively noted, in IPE debates states seem to combine features of both structure and agency. In the present study, however, I am primarily concerned with African states as actors. This fits well with the theoretical approach adopted here. As Joseph (2012) notes, 'global' governmentalities very often take states as their objects -- international organizations deploy myriad modes of surveillance and practices of technical assistance as means of producing particular kinds of state actors. Taking states as actors is equally consistent with Gramsci's approach. Although Gramsci's use of the word 'state' itself is notoriously slippery, Gramsci's primary concern is with the ways in which various social forces constitute themselves, and make claims to represent others, across multiple levels of the relations of force. When we talk about the state as an actor in global governance, what we mean is usually the particular group (faction, party, junta, etc.) in control of the institutional structures of the state. As noted above, Gramsci makes some provocative suggestions about the ways in which some actors are able to constitute themselves as 'states' by drawing on their position in relation to the international, particularly in his discussion of passive revolution (Morton 2007b). Of course, states have institutional dimensions as well, and this approach does downplay them. However, at least in the context of 'global' forms of governance, the 'actor-ness' of states is probably more relevant.

Emphasizing the agentic, rather than the structural, aspects of statehood is also probably empirically more suited to the study of African politics over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. States have, historically, certainly made plenty of appeals to the principles of verticality and encompassment, but these have very often been especially tenuous. The implication, then, is that, if states in general display traits of both actors and encompassing structures, the former have often been stronger among states in Africa. As Frederick Cooper has evocatively put it, African colonial regimes relied on 'arterial' forms of power (1994: 1533) -- heavily concentrated around strategically central cities and infrastructure and rather thin, sporadic, and arbitrary elsewhere. They left in place economies and infrastructures heavily geared towards the production of cash crops or minerals for global markets, such that control over exports became the central means of accumulating surplus. Cooper (2002) has termed this configuration the 'gatekeeper state' -- in which various factions struggled for control over the surpluses that could be accrued by controlling the 'gate'. Bayart's emphasis on strategies of extraversion (see above) is similar. The ways in which this surplus

was put to use varied, ranging from the virtual kleptocracy in Zaire under Mobutu to the more genuine (if not much more successful) developmental aspirations of Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* programme in Tanzania. The stability of postcolonial regimes has varied enormously too -- in some instances, as in Tanzania, Cameroon, and Botswana, a single party has remained in power since independence; in other cases, notably Ghana and Nigeria, frequent coups and regime changes took place as various groups struggled for control over the 'gate. But the basic structures of production and exchange were similar. Jean-François Bayart's concept of 'extraversion' similarly highlights the ways in which African state elites have maintained their own positions by drawing on the rents made available through control over dependent external links. Control over external political and economic links in the post-colonial period is a source of resources that have been used to maintain elaborate networks of patrimony, or the 'reciprocal assimilation of elites' (2009: Chap. 7). Thus, dependency, for Bayart, is as much a mode of action as an externally imposed condition. State authority, then, in the perspective adopted here is a contingent achievement, drawing on resources made available through entanglements in global networks of governmentality. Herbst (2000) notes that, given historically sparse populations, colonial and postcolonial regimes have struggled to extend effective control over their whole territory, often securing their regimes through a kind of collective rigid adherence to existing international borders, maintained through different forms of international coordination, from the Berlin Conference to the Organization for African Unity (OAU). More importantly for present purposes, the regime controlling the state at any particular point in history for practical purposes has often behaved more like a particular collective actor among many, whose claims to statehood are contested and tenuous, rather than an encompassing structure.

States (and workers), then, are collective actors, formed in the process of political struggles and linked to certain material trajectories, articulated simultaneously across multiple scales at once. They make particular and contingent claims to organize and represent different populations in different ways. States and workers in Africa, moreover, are not powerful actors in global politics, but they do constitute themselves as actors in part by drawing on the practices, resources, and spaces of global governance. While this thesis is centrally concerned with agency, it conceives of agency not in terms of the actions of *a priori* autonomous agents, but in terms of ongoing struggles over the definition of consciousness, identity, and solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

It may be useful here to draw together the threads of discussion in the preceding sections and to reiterate how exactly this approach contrasts with existing approaches. I am arguing that we can fruitfully adopt an 'actors and entanglements' approach that resituates 'governance' in global politics as a set of

practices entangled in ongoing and multiple struggles over the articulation of political-economic orders across 'local', 'national', and 'global' scales. Thus, alongside thinking about sources of authority or critiquing the contents of the rules, it is useful to investigate how the particular techniques and discourses deployed in the practice of governance (a conception of government drawing from Foucault) have become entangled in different struggles over the shape of state authority and political order in particular historical contexts (an 'absolute historicism', in Gramsci's terms). This approach, further, necessitates a certain rethinking of globality and scale (here done by drawing on Latour) -- rather than seeing the global as an encompassing and vertical sphere, it is useful to investigate the work of 'global' institutions in terms of nodes and connections arrayed across cross-cutting 'national' and 'local' spaces.

This actors and entanglements approach can usefully be contrasted with conventional approaches to global governance, which tend to preoccupy themselves with the sources of authority and the contents of the rules promulgated by global institutions, and with critical or historical materialist approaches, which have tended to concern themselves with the mechanics of hegemony in global politics. The actors and entanglements approach outlined in this chapter is especially a response to the shortcomings of critical IPE in dealing with interlinked problems of multiplicity and the agency of subordinate actors in global politics. In brief, rather than asking 'who governs?' or evaluating rules or policy frameworks according to this or that standard, as in conventional approaches, or asking what purpose governance performs in the context of particular conjunctural alignments of state power and production relations, as in critical IPE, an actors and entanglements approach asks what purposes different historically situated actors, in the context of various ongoing struggles, seek to pursue through engagements with 'global' institutions. This approach offers two principal advantages. First, it is better able to account for the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and ambiguity that many authors have noted in existing global governance. Second, and most importantly, it is better able to account for the agency of subordinate actors of various kinds, especially by revealing a range of subtle tensions and conflicts that are obscured from view by other approaches.

On this second point, an 'actors and engagements' approach to global governance is very much in line with Hobson and Seabrooke's (2007) EIPE. It shares a commitment to addressing the problem of 'who acts?' in the global political economy in an inductive manner. The present approach goes beyond 'EIPE' as Hobson and Seabrooke lay it out, however, in two ways. First, as was noted in the introduction, EIPE is (intentionally) a broad agenda that requires a good deal of filling out to be put into practice. Second, and more substantively, the present approach requires a somewhat different understanding of 'everyday' agency. Setting out alternative and equally legitimate 'everyday' and 'regulatory' research agendas has the effect of reinforcing a kind of dichotomy between elite

and everyday spheres. As a result, 'everyday' agency takes on the role of a kind of 'outside' influence on elite politics. An 'actors and entanglements' approach, meanwhile, focuses on the ways in which struggles over the very constitution of subordinate actors are bound up in the practice of governance. In short, it argues for a move beyond the acknowledgement of the capacity of 'weak' agents to act and toward an investigation of the ways in which 'regulatory' (to use Hobson and Seabrooke's term) spheres of the global political economy play into the ways in which those agents constitute themselves in the first place. It is thus able to offer a more nuanced assessment of the possibilities and limitations of certain kinds of agencies in particular contexts.

As noted in the introduction, putting this approach into practice requires addressing certain questions in the context of particular historical contexts. The following chapters trace out the ways in which the ILO's efforts to govern different issue areas in sub-Saharan Africa have become entangled in different histories of struggle. Part II examines the regulation of forced labour from 1919-present; Part III examines 'development' assistance more broadly, tracing the emergence of 'development' ideas and practices after WWII, efforts to promote employment in the 1970s, social protection for informal workers in the 1990s and 2000s, and assistance to workers' organizations across the entire postcolonial period. Throughout, several questions deriving from the approach introduced in this chapter guide the analysis: What particular techniques does the ILO employ to try to shape social order 'on the ground'? What kinds of actors or subjectivities does the ILO seek to create? Do the targets of ILO interventions seek to shape their own interactions with the ILO's programmes? In what ways are they able to do so? Do these interactions create tensions or conflicts? What are the broader relations of force within which these actors seek to shape their interactions with the ILO? Of course, these are questions that cannot be answered in any general way, but they are a useful guide for the empirical analysis that follows.

## PART II - GOVERNING FORCED LABOUR

### PREFACE TO PART II

Forced labour is the oldest area of ILO activity in Africa, dating to debates about colonial labour relations in the 1920s. The issue has retained plenty of salience into the twenty-first century. The elimination of forced labour is among the ‘core conventions’ defined in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; the ILO has established a Special Action Programme for the Prevention of Forced Labour (SAP-FL) and an International Programme for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (IPEC) in the last twenty years; and the ILO, as well as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its successor the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), have issued major reports, research projects, and ‘capacity building’ programmes dealing with forced labour in the last ten years. The International Labour Conference (ILC) also recently adopted a protocol updating existing conventions on forced labour in 2014.

On the surface, the ILO’s governance of forced labour is a fairly straightforward example of multilateral standard setting. The ILO operates the oldest current multilateral monitoring scheme, dating to the first decade of the organization’s operations following the treaty of Versailles. The supervisory machinery surrounding the ILO’s conventions does not have any coercive power, but relies on moral authority, persuasion, and the ability to ‘shame’ violators to gain compliance with international labour standards (Weisband 2000). This machinery has two main parts. First, countries that have ratified ILO conventions are compelled, at least on paper, to report to the ILO’s Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) every five years on their application of the conventions they have ratified. This period has been shortened to two years for the Core Conventions, including C29 and C105.

The reality is that this reporting has often been rather infrequent, especially on the part of many colonial and postcolonial governments in Africa. With respect to forced labour, then, especially in postcolonial Africa, this has heightened the significance of the second part of the ILO’s supervisory machinery: the complaint procedures. There are separate procedures for ‘representations’ by trade unions and employers’ organizations and for ‘complaints’ by member governments against other members. Complaints and representations can only be pursued against countries that have ratified the convention in question, and only by governments that have ratified it. Complaints and representations are reviewed by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations and Conventions (CEARC). Outside this formal supervisory machinery, there are also a range of less formal procedures through which workers’ and employers’ organizations, along with other NGOs and activist

groups who don't have access to any formal complaint procedures, have attempted to pursue claims against member governments through the ILO (e.g. informal conversations at conferences or workshops, writing letters to the Director General's Office) -- many of which are examined in what follows.

The ILO has passed two conventions regulating forced labour (see Maul 2007). The first, passed in 1930 (C29) was meant to regulate coercive labour recruitment in colonial territories; the second, passed in 1956 (C105), restricted the use of forced labour for political education or in the execution of national development programmes, measures which were clearly targeted at the soviet bloc. A third, more recent convention on child labour is also potentially relevant. The ILO has had minimum age conventions for different industries since 1919 (indeed, international minimum age agreements predate the ILO itself), and child labour is not necessarily 'forced' labour in the sense intended by the ILO, but a convention passed in 1999 on the 'worst forms of child labour' (C182) does include a major emphasis on forced labour. C29, C105, and C182 are among of the 'core conventions' defined in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The ILO established an 'International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour' (IPEC) in 1992 and Special Action Programme for the Prevention of Forced Labour (SAP-FL) in 2002. Technical assistance programmes, in this context, are seen as means to 'address the structural roots of forced labour; strengthen the organizations that challenge it; conduct broad campaigns against it; and establish and reinforce the labour administration and criminal justice institutions needed to back up policy interventions with punishment of perpetrators' (ILO 2001: 91).

These recent changes have been accompanied by shifts in the ILO's understanding of forced labour. Whereas C29 and C105 were concerned primarily with coercion by the state, contemporary forced labour is understood as a predominantly private, normally illicit phenomenon. Rather than a question of legal compulsions to work, then, forced labour is now understood primarily in terms of fraudulent recruitment practices, 'traditional' forms of slavery, human trafficking, bonded labour, and child labour -- all of which take place primarily in the private economy. 'Forced labour' is understood as something that occurs in residual 'pockets' insulated from wider historical progress:

Forced labour -- a relic of a bygone era? No, sadly not. Although universally condemned, forced labour is revealing ugly new faces alongside the old. Traditional forms of forced labour such as chattel slavery and bonded labour are still with us in some areas, and past practices of this type haunt us to this day. In new economic contexts, disturbing forms such as forced labour in connection with the trafficking of human beings are now emerging almost everywhere. (ILO 2001: 7)

Notably, this understanding of forced labour implies a significant repositioning of the state in forced labour governance: ‘Attaining better enforcement of laws that ban forced labour forms a natural part of repairing failures in governance that characterize many manifestations for forced labour’ (ILO 2001: 3). Rather than a question of restraining the state’s recourse to coercive methods of recruitment, as with C29 and C105, and thus the ILO’s conventions and monitoring system proper, the new approach has much more to do with *strengthening* state institutions to better enforce prohibitions on forced labour.

Already here, readers may have a sense that ‘forced labour’, as such, is a rather fluid object. It is thus worth taking a minute to explain what, exactly, ‘forced labour’ is. The ILO offers a seemingly straightforward definition, from the text of C29: ‘all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily’. This probably raises more questions than it answers -- most importantly, what exactly does it mean for work to be voluntary? Indeed, Marx famously suggests that the formally ‘free’ labour relations at the core of capitalist production are only superficially voluntary -- the wage labourer is ‘compelled to sell himself of his own free will’ (1976: 932), or starve. Banaji (2003) extrapolates this point to argue that the notion of employment as a voluntary contract between equals is a fiction created by the formal-legal equality presumed in liberal thought -- that is, that there is no such thing as ‘free’ labour under capitalism (and hence no such thing as ‘unfree’ labour either). This argument has been subject to important critiques (e.g. Brass 2003), and indeed would seem to dismiss potentially significant differences in the forms of coercion through which labour is extracted, but the general point that the ‘voluntary’ nature of labour relations under capitalism is not so clear cut is well taken.<sup>2</sup> A number of authors have, perhaps more usefully, posited a kind of continuum between ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ labour under capitalism, in which a variety of different forms of coercion at various stages of recruitment and during the process of production itself are all compatible with capitalist production (see LeBaron and Ayers 2013; Brass 2010). Indeed, this blurry line has sometimes proven consequential for the ILO’s efforts to regulate forced labour in practice. In one instance discussed below, a Senegalese teachers’ union lodged a complaint with the ILO over a government programme employing ‘education volunteers’ in rural areas -- the crux of their argument about why this programme constituted forced labour was that, because the programme sought to enrol unemployed youth as teaching volunteers in exchange for a small stipend, it was *forcing* people with no other economic possibilities to take poorly remunerated jobs.

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, at the same time as Marx seeks to undercut the voluntaristic foundations of ‘free’ labour, he still suggests that the historically distinctive form of coercion implicit in ‘free’ wage labour is the very foundation of capitalism.

Still, the ILO has often tried to avoid this kind of problem by insisting that ‘forced labour’ is defined by the use of ‘non-economic’ coercion (see Maul 2007). The threat of starvation does not forced labour make, the threat of violence does. Equally troublesome definitional issues, however, are also prevalent if we try to distinguish between ‘free’ labour and ostensibly ‘pre-capitalist’ forms of labour control like slavery. Of course, slavery would seem to quite comfortably fall within the category of work extracted non-voluntarily, and by non-economic means -- and the ILO concerns itself with most of the activities that have gained popular and academic attention as forms of ‘new slavery’ (Bales 1998). Indeed, in Niger and Mauritania, programmes to eradicate ‘traditional slavery’ are currently underway as part of the ILO’s broader efforts to regulate forced labour (notwithstanding a good deal of difficulty, see Chapter 3). But the definition of ‘forced labour’ from C29 was actually meant, at least in part, to differentiate ‘forced labour’ from ‘slavery’ -- which was the purview not of the ILO but of the Temporary Slavery Commission of the League of Nations and was considered primarily an indigenous ‘African’ phenomenon, as distinct from coercive labour recruitment used by colonial powers. Indeed, it was precisely because activists started pointing out the abuses of colonial forced labour to the TSC that the ILO was tasked with regulating it. C29, in short, was in no small part about differentiating ‘forced labour’ from slavery.

The point, for the moment, is that ‘forced labour’ covers an ambiguously defined terrain, the boundary between ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ labour is fluid, contingent, and often contested. Moreover, the range of activities that have fallen under the category of ‘forced labour’ have tended to change over time -- the place of ‘slavery’ in the ILO’s current activities is a particularly notable example. ‘Forced labour’, as an object of governance, in short, is what people make of it. For precisely this reason, much of the actual practice of governing forced labour has had to do with struggles to define it. The ‘forced labour’ cases discussed in the following chapters cover a dizzying array of different situations, they do not always have much in common. It makes little difference, from the perspective of the present analysis anyways, whether or not they are ‘really’ ‘forced labour’ according to any particular theoretical definition, except insofar as it helps to highlight the disjuncture between the ILO’s intended scope of application for the rules about forced labour and the situations into which various other actors have sought to enrol those same rules. What matters is the range of ways in which a striking variety of actors have tried to make a surprising number of different situations into ‘forced labour’ in the eyes of the ILO.

This is a point, I think, where the present approach diverges considerably from most other commentary on the ILO’s efforts to govern forced labour, much of which generally fits the ‘rules and authority’ approach identified in the introduction. In particular, there are a number of very convincing critiques of recent ILO policy documents on forced labour that have been published since



2005 -- all of which take up similar lines of critique around the conception of forced labour in the ILO's recent reports. Lerche (2007) and Phillips and Mieres (2015) have argued, albeit in somewhat different terms, that the ILO's emerging new understanding of forced labour as a 'residual' practice tends to obscure the ways in which forced labour is linked to globalizing neoliberal capitalism. Rogaly (2008) makes a similar argument about the representations of migrant labour implicit in ILO (2005) -- suggesting that the ILO tends to 'residualize' unfree labour relations, both dismissing the agency of temporary migrant workers and ignoring the embeddedness of forced labour and labour migration in broader patterns of capitalist relations of production and state authority. All of these critiques suggest, quite rightly, that the ILO misses the extent to which forced labour is the product of particular forms of capitalist relations of production rather than of exclusion from 'modern' capitalism. Regulatory frameworks that fail to recognize this, it follows, cannot be more than superficial engagements with the various forms of unfree labour to which many people remain subject. This is a strong and effective critique of the ILO's contemporary *policy* frameworks, but this approach leaves the *politics* of actually governing 'forced labour' in practice somewhat unproblematized. Focusing on the ILO's understandings of forced labour can tell us little about how these regulatory understandings or mechanisms are actually used -- by which actors and for what purposes? While these analyses can tell us about a number of shortcomings with respect to what the ILO presently thinks 'forced labour' is, they can tell us little about how those definitions themselves are warped, challenged, or re-appropriated in practice. As will become apparent below, the ILO's forced labour conventions have been used unevenly across time and space, and for a range of purposes that at times have had surprisingly little to do with 'forced labour' *per se*. In order to address these dimensions of the problem, I argue, it is helpful to approach the governance of forced labour from the perspective of actors and entanglements.

Accordingly, the following two chapters apply the framework developed in the previous chapter to the ILO's historical efforts to govern forced labour in sub-Saharan Africa. Chapter 2 traces the development of the ILO's forced labour convention of 1930 (C29) out of conflicts over colonial labour relations in Africa and in Europe, and briefly examines the development of the 1956 abolition of forced labour convention (C105). Chapter 3 traces some ways in which the two conventions were circulated and used in sub-Saharan Africa and examines recent changes around the development of SAP-FL.

## CHAPTER 2: C29, C105 AND THE ANTINOMIES OF COLONIALISM, C. 1919-1960

This chapter examines the context for, development of, and uses of the ILO's first convention on forced labour (C29) in interwar colonial Africa. C29 was brought into being by pressures from European and African activists on an ambiguous system of international supervision of colonial powers established after WWI. The convention was explicitly depoliticizing, and reified certain assumptions about colonial difference. It sought to mark out a limited, reformist agenda for imperial labour relations. However, C29 and the institutional networks that developed around the ILO's activity in the colonial world created opportunities for more overt challenges to colonial rule by actors within and beyond Africa. The debates that led to the formation of C105, meanwhile, were reflective of a broader turn towards Cold War conflicts after the US and USSR both joined the ILO. Nonetheless, some actors did seek to articulate certain claims about colonial labour relations in the context of these debates. An actors and entanglements approach is useful in unpicking these developments. It highlights certain aspects of the debates about forced labour and the use of the conventions that are largely overlooked by conventional approaches. C29 was the product of a depoliticizing vision of imperialism, based around a kind of benign civilizing mission whose potential excesses would be regulated through international oversight. In practice it was grossly ineffective in terms of actually limiting the use of forced labour.

Working from the perspective of rules and authority, then, we might be tempted to simply argue that the convention was inadequate or the ILO's authority too weak. However, this would ignore the efforts of a striking range of actors to use the networks of international and colonial officials, academics, politicians, and activists in Europe, the United States, and in colonized territories that were emerging around the ILO's regulation of 'Native Labour' to deploy a variety of challenges to colonial authority. In spite of the depoliticizing and ambiguous character of C29 itself, which were intended to mitigate potential challenges to colonial authority, several groups of actors were able to articulate exactly these using the convention itself and (more importantly) through the networks for international governance of colonialism that sprang up in the course of debates about regulating forced labour.

Before beginning to discuss C29 specifically, it is useful to lay out the context in which the ILO was established, as well as some of the background to colonial labour issues in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The former is dealt with in the first section, the latter in the second. The two final sections cover the debates leading to the adoption of C29 and the ways in which some actors used the convention itself, as well as the international networks that

were built up around the ILO's 'native labour' activities, including the regulation of forced labour, to open up challenges to colonial authority.

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE ILO

Proposals for some form of international labour standards date at least to Robert Owen in the early nineteenth century. The idea began to be taken more seriously with the growth of trade unions, the expansion of the franchise, and the rise of socialist parties in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As Cox (1996b) has noted, the promotion of international labour standards gained ground as a conservative response to revolutionary pressures. International agreements on labour standards were first articulated, ironically, as part and parcel of the 'new nationalism' emerging in the late nineteenth century linking 'policies for industrial expansion, protection for workers, and increased state power' (1996b: 46). International labour regulation was thus closely linked to the nationalization, depoliticization, and de-radicalization of socialist parties and labour movements in Europe. A number of international treaties dealing with various aspects of labour standards were signed after 1890, and an 'International Labour Office' was established in Brussels in 1905. This first ILO primarily played an information-sharing role -- tracking changes in industrial legislation across Europe. These developments were disrupted by the outbreak of WWI. However, European and US trade unions and socialist parties began to press for some expanded forms of international labour regulation to be incorporated into the post-war international order as early as 1916. Labour proposals for post-war regulation were negotiated in a series of conferences held between 1916 and 1918.

The details of international labour standards prior to Versailles are not so important here. The salient point is that these engagements were primarily centred on the depoliticization of problems of industrialization in Europe, and on a narrowly defined industrial 'working class'. This meant the marginalization of colonized workers abroad and non-established workers in Europe. This point is made especially clear in the ways in which colonized populations were discussed (albeit briefly) in debates about how the new international labour regime should address migration. The French *Confédération Generale du Travail* (CGT) raised the spectre of competition from imported colonial labour in its proposals to the Leeds Conference in 1916 (reprinted Shotwell 1934: 19-21). The poor treatment of migrant labour was linked to the degradation of labour conditions for European workers: 'In every country capitalism has caused the importation of foreign labour to become a fighting weapon against national labour'. The CGT anticipated greatly expanded migration from the colonies in response to the loss of labour supply due to the War, coupled with expanded demand for labour across Europe as industrial progress continued: 'Search... will be made, and has already commenced, for labour among the populations at a still lower standard of living, among the natives of our colonies of Africa and Asia, among the Hindus, Chinese, or Japanese'. In order to prevent the erosion of wages and working standards, the

CGT argued it was essential to guarantee the same standard to immigrant workers from colonial territories as to European citizens. The resolutions of the Leeds Conference included provisions on immigrant labour, reflecting agreement that 'Should the need arise to employ coloured labor, the recruiting must proceed under the same conditions as apply to European workmen' (reprinted Shotwell 1934: 24). The proposal was contested. The President of the International Federation of Trade Unions suggested in comments on the Leeds programme that it was impossible to grant the same standards to colonial workers as to Europeans: 'The Zulus and the Cingalese know no more of trade union organization than the Chinese coolies do' (reprinted Shotwell 1934: 33). The Berne Conference of International Trade Unions in 1917 abandoned the demand for immigrant labour to be guaranteed the same conditions as European workers.

This debate about colonial immigrants' status as workers is significant for present purposes because it presaged an ambivalence that would plague later international efforts to regulate colonial labour practices: how far could 'European' labour standards be applied to colonial populations? If colonial labour could be paid less, it threatened to erode the position of European labourers. The CGT clearly saw equal conditions of work for migrant workers as a means of preserving their own competitive position. However, 'equal' treatment was difficult to square with the project of colonial rule itself, which was premised on the civilizational inferiority of colonized populations. These tensions were compounded in the case of labour standards by the association of 'working class' status in Europe with a particular set of cultural practices, which made it difficult to see Africans and other colonial subjects as *workers*. 'Zulus', 'Cingalese', and 'Chinese coolies' were seen as fundamentally different and thus could not be subject to the same standards.

#### *Labour, Bolshevism, and Versailles*

The preoccupation at Versailles, at least as far as labour was concerned, was thus with the tensions of industrialization and the problem of 'social peace' in Europe, framed by the backdrop not only of the war, but also of the Russian Revolution in 1917. The backdrop to labour issues at Versailles, then, was largely an evolution of the conservative nationalist project with which the early efforts at international labour regulation in the nineteenth century were closely associated. The depoliticizing aspects of this project were carried over, and indeed amplified by the sudden salience of the revolutionary threat in the wake of 1917. Cox once described the establishment of the ILO as 'Versailles' answer to Bolshevism' (1973: 102). James T. Shotwell, a member of the American delegation at Versailles, similarly recalled that:

The Governments of Europe were nervous in the face of a rising industrial unrest, with unknown Bolshevist possibilities, with menacing fires of revolution in Germany, and with at least one or two of the governments represented at Paris in daily danger of being

overthrown. As a result, the Allied Governments had to offer to labor some definite and formal recognition at the very opening of the Conference, both to justify themselves with reference to the war in the past, and to hold forth the hope of a larger measure of international labor agreements in the future (1933: 18).

Still, as should be apparent from the discussion above, much of the groundwork for the ILO was already laid before the Russian Revolution. There was, after all, *an* ILO and a raft of international treaties prior to the war and serious discussions on the part of workers in Europe about international labour standards that could be incorporated into the post-war international order were underway prior to 1917. The fear of Bolshevism, though, doubtless convinced some reluctant government delegates at Versailles of the need for a more comprehensive set of standards and a more expansive organization than was present before the war.

Fears about communism also unquestionably shaped the early operations of the ILO. Most notably, they amplified the depoliticizing character of the ILO's activities. This is reflected quite clearly in the ILO's constitution (Articles 387-426 of the Treaty of Versailles): 'whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship, and privation to large numbers of people *as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled*' (emphasis added). 'Injustice, hardship, and privation' here are of concern not so much in and of themselves as for what they might do to 'the peace and harmony of the world' if they were to get so severe that they started producing unrest. Craig Murphy (1994: 200) usefully argues that the organization became a kind of 'midwife of the welfare state', or a space in which the alliance between capital, the state, and conservative elements of the labour movement -- under construction already in the nineteenth century -- could be solidified. Indeed, this direction was reflected in the actual activities of the ILO. While the ILO's conventions have typically attracted the most attention, perhaps the biggest difference between the post-war ILO and its precursors was that ILO aimed to fill this purpose through the application of technical knowledge as much as through the promulgation of standards. Indeed, well over half the organization's staff and budget even in its early years were devoted to research activities (Haan 1933).

Nonetheless, despite its primary concern with 'social peace' in Europe, the ILO operated in a post-war international order that was unavoidably colonial in character. Article 421 of the Treaty of Versailles compelled colonial powers to apply all of the labour conventions they ratified to their colonies, with an exception for situations where conventions were 'inapplicable' to local circumstances. Colonial representation at the ILO was limited. South Africa was a founding member of the ILO, although only white workers were ever appointed to the ILC or Governing Body before South Africa was expelled from the organization in 1964. India was also a founding member at the behest of the British -- Indian workers were thus represented at the ILC. However, the ILO's

entanglement with the ill-defined system of international supervision of colonial governance that emerged under the League of Nations, coupled with the growing prominence of colonial labour issues (on which see below) probably made it largely inevitable that the ILO would be pulled into problems of colonial politics.

The League was most directly involved in colonialism through the Mandates system (on which see Callahan 1999). The Mandates system extended to former Ottoman holdings as well, but at its heart it was designed around the problem of what to do with Germany's African colonies after WWI. Some anti-imperial activists had hoped that Germany's defeat in the war might lead to the transfer of its colonies to an 'impartial' international body -- as a first step towards the internationalization of imperialism along the lines proposed by John A. Hobson (1938), among others -- while conservative nationalists in France and Britain hoped to annex Germany's African colonies (Louis 1965). The Mandates system was an awkward compromise between these two positions. The victorious powers would administer former German colonies, but they would be supervised by the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) of the League of Nations (which included representatives of the ILO). Germany's African colonies in Tanganyika, Togo, and Cameroon were divided up between the French and British; Ruanda-Urundi was assigned to Belgium; and South-West Africa to South Africa.

Paradoxically, the PMC was highly restricted in its ability to actually alter the behaviour of colonial powers in mandated territories, yet also increasingly involved in problems of colonialism that stretched well beyond the mandates themselves. Rather like the ILO, the PMC operated through criticism and moral suasion rather than any power to sanction, so it was difficult to limit its work to the Mandates alone -- criticism of French or British policy in Cameroon or Tanganyika would almost inevitably resonate to some extent with problems in French Equatorial Africa or Uganda. The salient point is that ILO representation on the PMC, in conjunction with Article 421, thus meant that it had some ill-defined role in overseeing labour policies in colonial territories. In short, the creation of the ILO and the PMC created important ambiguities of jurisdiction over colonial labour policies. These ambiguities marked out the ILO and the League as spaces in which particular colonial practices might be contested. And, as I show in the next section, there were considerable tensions emerging at the same time around the shape of colonial labour practices.

#### AFRICAN LABOUR AND THE ANTINOMIES OF COLONIALISM

The abolition of indigenous forms of slavery was an important legitimizing device in the early extension of colonial rule in Africa. Indeed, eradicating the slave trade was a critical motivation of many of the first European 'explorers' of the African interior, especially missionaries. The Berlin Conference in 1884-1885 saw European colonial powers lay down some commitments to abolish slavery, and in 1889 a conference explicitly devoted to the abolition of

slavery in Africa was held in Brussels. British and French administrations across Africa in the early twentieth century passed decrees abolishing slavery.<sup>1</sup> Yet, colonial administrations across Africa increasingly relied on various forms of forced labour. The most famous example is probably the horrific system of rubber harvesting under King Leopold II's Congo Independent State. Nonetheless, British, French, and Portuguese administrations were hardly blameless in this respect either. Portuguese and Belgian colonies, as will be seen below, were especially heavily targeted by activists. The British and French, however, also practiced forced labour. Fall (1993) has documented the rise and fall of forced labour in French West Africa in considerable detail. No equivalent study exists for British Africa, and the general consensus is that British territories often made less use of forced labour than neighbouring colonies, but various forms of forced labour are nonetheless widely reported.

This tension is significant because it meant that colonial labour practices threatened to undermine the basic legitimating claims of colonial authority. A pamphlet written in 1900 by the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society in London, for instance, after detailing abuses in the Congo Free State, argued that 'If there is any honesty in our professed desire to put an end to slavery in Africa, we must condemn and abandon all the systems of forced labour, and all the devices for procuring it, which are now tolerated by the Governments of Great Britain, France, Germany, and other European nations, as well as by the Congo Free State' (Fox-Bourne 1900: 14). While the 'freeing' of labour was a critical means by which colonial authorities sought to justify the expansion of colonial rule, colonial infrastructure and economic projects could often only proceed by force. The threat to the legitimacy of the colonial project, if it could do no better than to replace slavery with another form of brutally exploitative and violently coercive labour practices, is easy enough to understand.

This tension was intimately entwined, however, with a broader concern about the suitability and availability of Africans for 'modern' wage work. The problem of 'labour shortage' in colonial Africa was widespread. The *Journal of the Royal African Society* published a serious article in 1902 discussing the

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<sup>1</sup> On the end of slavery in the early twentieth century see, among others, Cooper (1980); Miers and Roberts (1988); Lovejoy and Hogendorn (1993); Conklin (1998); Roberts (2005). There are debates about the significance of the linkages between anti-slavery, colonialism, and forced labour, as well as the relative weight of European abolitionism, economic transformations, and slave resistance in compelling abolition. The general point that the abolition of indigenous forms of slavery was an important component both of the legitimizing apparatus and the actual practice of early colonial expansion in Africa is nonetheless generally agreed on, as is the widespread reliance on colonial administrations on forced labour up to at least 1945.

potential use of elephants as a solution to the 'labour shortage' for railway construction in South Africa (Stopford 1902). The 'shortage' was emphatically not a problem of underpopulation. In one authoritative estimate from the late 1920s (the research for which, incidentally, the ILO played a significant role in supporting) the proportion of Africans in wage employment was estimated to be lowest in Nigeria, at 0.4 percent of the total population and 2.1 percent of adult males, and highest in the Transkei in South Africa at 8.2 percent of the total population and 41 percent of adult males (Buell 1928a; 1928b). 'Labour shortage', then, was fundamentally a problem of recruitment. One obvious solution might have been to offer better pay and working conditions. This was practiced in some instance, indeed, one major factor in the eventual elimination of forced labour in French Africa was the fact that indigenous elites relying on voluntary labour, especially in Côte d'Ivoire, were able to demonstrate that they were more productive than French plantation owners still reliant on forced labour. But, as long as questions like those raised in the above discussion of migrant labour persisted -- about whether colonized workers *could* be expected to participate in 'normal' labour relations -- force seemed to many administrators like the only option. This ideational factor was reinforced in most instances by the widespread requirement that colonies self-finance out of export revenues. Even if administrators felt like paying workers better would have facilitated recruitment, there was not necessarily the material capacity to do so within the fiscal constraints imposed by the structure of the colonial state (see Young 1994; Mamdani 1996).

The result was a set of labour policies often shaped by local expediency more than any coherent framework. The British took different approaches in the settler colonies in East and Southern Africa than in West Africa. There was little explicit labour policy in West Africa, aside from various schemes for labour recruitment, until at least the 1930s -- Nigeria and the Gold Coast, notably, had among the lowest levels of wage employment anywhere in the region. However, more explicit forms of labour control were often adopted in settler territories. The abolition of slavery in Kenya was accompanied by the implementation of vagrancy laws that often compelled 'freed' Africans to continue working on settler plantations. In the context of mining operations in South Africa and Northern and Southern Rhodesia, 'working class' identities (and most labour rights) were initially explicitly articulated as a preserve of white privilege. African labour was closely controlled, especially by 'pass laws', which compelled Africans living outside 'reserves' to return 'home' after a fixed period of time and to carry a pass on them at all times so that this could be enforced. French labour legislation, meanwhile, included explicit provisions for the gradual extension of metropolitan regulations to colonies as early as 1898, but left the decision on issuing the decrees necessary to implement labour protections up to local administrators. Decrees extending labour provisions in stages were passed in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and the French Caribbean colonies beginning in 1910



and continuing through the 1920s. Little action was forthcoming, however, in sub-Saharan Africa -- indeed the *Code de Travail* for French West Africa was not passed until 1955 (see Chapter 4). The French had begun to develop codified standards for the use of forced labour in African colonies prior to WWI. Conklin notes (1998: 433-434), however, that these rules were intended as much to create the illusion of a 'rational' system of rules as to prevent abuse.

The point, in brief, is that colonial labour relations raised a potentially loaded set of political problems, both in Europe and in Africa. Even if the ILO's mandate was centered on the problems of 'social peace' in Europe, colonial labour politics were at the very least a problem lurking in the background. This was compounded by the ambiguous status of international oversight of colonial rule through the Mandates system, as well as the fact that some of the leadership of the ILO in the early 1920s, including especially Albert Thomas (the first Director General), were quite sympathetic to the Hobsonian idea of a benevolent, internationally supervised colonialism.

#### THE ILO AND 'NATIVE LABOUR', C. 1919-1930

Up to this point, we have not really gone far beyond what a critical perspective in Cox's vein might tell us -- even if the previous sections have, I think, presented a more fine-grained and less Eurocentric account of early-twentieth century imperialism. I have painted a picture of colonial labour relations as a kind of 'historic structure' shaped by the confluence of material needs ('labour shortage'), colonial political structures (especially the commitment to abolishing slavery and the self-financing provision) and a particular common sense about colonized workers, and of the League of Nations as a site where colonial powers sought to manage the political contradictions engendered by these tendencies. Where an actors and entanglements approach starts to diverge, however, is in the assertion that, while it is clear when we set them in the context of the interwar colonial world order that the creation of these regulatory frameworks may have been *intended* to depoliticize and defray threats to the legitimacy of the colonial project, they also presented openings for actors seeking to do exactly the opposite. And, indeed, that these engagements are the most important thing to unpick if we want to get at the real significance of the ILO's early efforts to govern colonial labour practices, which had very little impact on the actual incidence of forced labour.

The establishment of the ILO and the League of Nations system, then, is significant not so much because of the depoliticizing intents of international labour regulation, but because (despite these intentions) these institutions opened up a new set of spaces through which new forms of political action became increasingly possible. Indeed, the earliest archived correspondence with the ILO regarding colonial labour is a letter from W.E.B du Bois sent on behalf of the

Second Pan-African Congress (PAC) in London in 1921.<sup>2</sup> The conference itself had included representatives from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Senegal, the French Congo, Belgian Congo, Madagascar, Angola and Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Liberia, along with several representatives from the Caribbean, African-Americans, and Africans living in Europe. Du Bois's letter asked for the establishment of a permanent section devoted to native labour, 'especially that of Negroes'. He gave four reasons why this was needed: 1) unprotected and unorganized native labour formed a growing proportion of world labour; 2) machinery and transport were increasing levels of competition between white and native labour; 3) labour problems in colonized territories could not be resolved by 'ignoring native labour, helping to enslave it, or by attempting to climb to power on its back'; and 4) the need for regular research and public awareness-raising of 'the real costs of Congo and East African slavery'. Du Bois' letter came attached with three resolutions of the Congress regarding the League of Nations. Along with the request for investigations into problems of African labour relations, these included the request that 'a man of African descent, well-prepared by character and by education' be appointed to the PMC because 'the modern world has increasingly recognized that autonomous government constitutes the end goal of all men, and thus of the mandated territories'.<sup>3</sup> Du Bois also visited the ILO in Geneva shortly afterwards. Indeed, to judge from subsequent internal correspondence, du Bois' letter and visit seem to have been partly responsible for the establishment of a native labour section of the ILO. Thomas exchanged letters with several officials referring to du Bois' visit and discussing suitable candidates to head a native labour section or research project, in which it is fairly clear that there were no serious plans to do so before the interaction with du Bois.<sup>4</sup>

It is notable, then, that interactions with the limited system of international colonial oversight installed after WWI, of which the ILO was a significant part, enabled some (primarily elite) segments of colonized populations to challenge colonial labour practices, and even the broader legitimacy of colonial rule in novel ways. Interwar global governance, then, potentially provided means of working around the limited opportunities available for participation in colonial polities, or of making claims that would not be admissible through the channels of colonial authority. This is particularly notable in light of the argument in the previous chapter that the entanglements of 'global' governance with fluid, intersecting networks crossing multiple scales of action provide opportunities for certain subordinate actors to articulate claims. In 1921 the PAC was asking for a comprehensive regulatory agenda for colonial labour, linked to eventual self-

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<sup>2</sup> W.E.B. du Bois to Albert Thomas, 15 September 1921, ILOA N 206/1/01/3.

<sup>3</sup> Resolutions of the Second Pan-African Congress for the League of Nations, London, 1921, p. 2; attached to du Bois to Thomas, ILOA N 206/1/01/3.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Royal Meeker minute to the Director, 7 October 1921, and reply, 10 October 1921, ILOA N 206/1/01/3.

determination for the colonized and to a recognition of interdependence between working populations in colonial and metropolitan territories.

*'Forced labour' and reformist imperialism*

In this context, the ILO began to articulate a limited, reformist regulatory agenda for the colonized world. This agenda took shape around the problem of forced labour in the mid-1920s. The ILO adhered strongly to a set of imaginaries emphasizing colonial difference -- colonized labour was understood as requiring a very different set of regulations because it was not really 'labour' in the sense the ILO normally understood. A number of actors started lobbying the ILO in different ways to develop regulations for colonial labour in the mid-1920s.

A member of the League of Nations Union (LNU) in Britain, a non-partisan group counting a considerable portion of Britain's political elite as members, cabled Thomas in January of 1925 to call attention to a debate in the House of Lords where it had been suggested that the ILO prepare a charter dealing with 'certain forms of coloured labour'.<sup>5</sup> This suggestion bore some resemblance to the PAC's insofar as it suggested that the ILO should set up a more comprehensive programme to deal with 'native' labour. But the LNU did not connect international regulation of African labour relations to either any anti-imperial agenda or any appeal to the interdependence of African and European workers. It was, nonetheless, still further than the ILO's officials thought it prudent to push in the immediate term. The ILO's response to the LNU suggested that it would be better to work on an issue-by-issue basis, rather than adopt a 'charter' *per se* right away.<sup>6</sup> The problem of forced labour, highlighted in a series of reports on colonial labour situations in the mid-1920s, provided a useful starting place.

Networks of academics and activists, primarily in Europe and the US, began publishing evidence of forced labour in colonial Africa. The report that probably had the greatest impact was submitted to the Temporary Slavery Commission of the League of Nations in 1925 by E.A. Ross, a sociologist at Columbia. Ross interviewed African workers in Angola and Mozambique over several weeks in 1924. His report described the system of labour recruitment in Portuguese Africa as 'virtually state serfdom' (1925: 9). Books targeted at the general public also played an important role in heightening the emphasis on forced labour. French author André Gide's travel diaries of a trip through French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo in 1925 and 1926 are among the most important examples (Gide 1927). Gide describes a series of punishments handed out by French administrators to villages that refused to participate in the rubber harvest for concessionary companies in French Equatorial Africa, including

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<sup>5</sup> Gilbert Murray cable to Albert Thomas, 15 January 1925, ILOA N 206/0/2.

<sup>6</sup> Harold B. Butler to Gilbert Murray, 9 February 1925, ILOA N 206/0/2.

imprisonment and corporal punishments. Gide's book was not written for the ILO or the League specifically, but they had enough influence on the broader perception of colonial violence that they made an impact on the organization. Indeed, Gide's book was explicitly referenced by at least one delegate in the debates about forced labour at the ILC (ILO 1929: 409).

Much of the discussion tended to centre on reforming colonial practice in order to live up to the promise of the civilizing mission. The LNU, for instance, was not unambiguously opposed to forced labour. The Union convened a conference on colonial forced labour ahead of the ILC in 1929 -- a report on the conference notes that Wilfred Benson, an ILO official in the Native Labour section, was present (JRAS 1929: 287). Much of the discussion was about Britain's record on the issue. The Parliamentary under-secretary of state for the colonies noted that the use of forced labour was on the decline, and that 'the main use today of... various forms of compulsory labour, whether for native governments or for the Protectorate Government, is in connection with roads... In almost all our administrations in tropical Africa some recourse is had to compulsory labour for road purposes, though this is steadily diminishing' (JRAS 1929: 284). Forced labour, then, was framed as a temporary expedient that would be gradually eliminated. The point of international regulation, then, would be to prevent the worst excesses.

Ross, Gide, and the participants in LNU meetings -- and ILO officials like Benson and Thomas -- typically framed their arguments in terms of promoting a more humane imperialism. Certainly few of them sought an end to colonial rule in Africa. Such discussions of colonial labour practices, though, because they turned on such a central practical and ideological tension in the colonial project, always risked opening up the possibility of fundamental challenges to colonial authority. By the 1920s, especially in France, the brutality of colonial forced labour was emerging as a key theme in communist propaganda, an argument that was pushed especially heavily by French-educated colonial subjects. Lamine Senghor, a Senegalese radical living in France, and founder of the *Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre*, gave a speech to the *Union Intercoloniale* in Brussels in 1927 centering on forced labour in French West Africa:

We have to work ten hours of forced labour a day under the hot African sun, to earn nothing by two francs! Women and children work the same hours as men, yet we're told that slavery has been abolished, that negroes are free, that all men are equal, etc. (Senghor 2012: 60)

On its own, this is a rather more colourful description of colonial forced labour, but not incompatible with the assertion of the parliamentary undersecretary of state that 'some recourse is had to compulsory labour for road purposes'. The key here is that Senghor explicitly connected these and other abuses to capitalist imperialism, rather than dismissing them as a temporary expedient. Senghor suggested that coercive labour practices were inherent in the structure of

colonialism, and thus identified the solution to colonial labour abuses with the overthrow capitalist relations of production altogether (2012: 63). There could be no gradual elimination of coercive labour practices, or no restriction of the worst excesses, if the brutal exploitation of colonial subjects were central to the operations of capitalism itself. Some colonial subjects, then, were beginning to identify the use of forced labour as an indication of the fundamentally exploitative nature of colonial rule.

This is a significant contribution of an actors and entanglements approach; it shows the difficulty in containing the implications of even the limited agenda of colonial reform implicit in the ILO's approach to the issue. The ILO's efforts to regulate forced labour, in short, always risked becoming more deeply entangled in a kind of radical anticolonial politics that ran very much counter to the organization's rather conservative roots. By the mid-1920s, tensions between anti-slavery discourses and the use of forced labour, and over the position of African labour more broadly, were being highlighted by networks of European, American, and African activists, researchers, and politicians. These were increasingly articulated around the ILO, and so the organization was becoming increasingly entangled in colonial politics through the actions of a loose set of actors in Africa, the US, and Europe. Some colonized subjects also sought to make more radical claims against the basic legitimacy of colonial rule. Where labour relations had been at least a latent political problem for colonial authority for quite a while, in the 1920s, in part because of the new availability of international spaces and networks built up around the League and the ILO, colonial powers faced growing pressure. The leadership of the ILO seized on forced labour as a means of articulating a limited agenda of colonial reform.

### *Regulating Forced Labour*

The Director-General's report to the 1927 ILC included a discussion of labour conditions in colonial territories, with a particular emphasis on efforts to eradicate slavery and the regulation of forced labour (ILO 1927a). An Indian workers' delegate moved a resolution calling on the Governing Body to place the topic on the agenda at a future ILC in 1927 (ILO 1927b: 334). Action against forced labour was debated at the ILC in 1929. Following the standard procedure for ILO conventions, the problem was referred to committee, to draw up a questionnaire to be sent to governments on a draft convention to be voted on the following year. Outright opposition was rare. At the ILC it came only from the Portuguese (ILO 1929: 44). Some informal letters opposing the convention were also sent to ILO officials.<sup>7</sup> In any event, by 1929 there was near-consensus on the need for an international convention on forced labour; the disagreements among speakers in the main session of the conference and in the committee in 1929 were about its contents. The most problematic questions were whether the ILO's

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<sup>7</sup> Albert Thomas to Louis Franck, 11 December 1929, ILOA N 206/1/01/5.

convention should call for the outright abolition of forced labour or set minimum standards to limit abuses, and how broadly ‘forced labour’ should be interpreted. There was broad agreement that forced recruitment for private enterprises should be prohibited, but not about how recruitment for public works should be handled. One ILO official summarized the debate as follows in an article for the ILR:

With reference to forced labour for general public purposes... it seems that certain broad principles are generally accepted by the colonial powers: authorization of forced labour in cases of emergency...; efforts to abolish portage whenever possible, and until this can be achieved strict regulation of forced portage; admission of compulsory cultivation... only as a protection against famine and on condition that the food so produced remains the property of the natives themselves. There remain the large scale public works on which it appears difficult at first sight to reach agreement, since the developmental work of various colonies is at various stages of progress. It is to be expected, however, that the Governments... will not object to agreeing that it should be subject to strict regulation and that a maximum should be fixed for the duration of the forced labour of each individual, if the existence of situation that are closely analogous to slavery are to be expected. (Goudal 1929: 632-633)

The committee on forced labour at the ILC in 1929 still failed to reach a consensus on the basic question of whether the convention should aim to regulate or abolish forced labour. The committee report and draft questionnaire emphasized regulating the abuse of forced labour (ILO 1929: 388-389). The workers’ delegates on the committee prepared a minority report, complaining that the questionnaire ‘would embody, besides vague and insufficient solutions, so many exceptions that the abuses to be suppressed could be perpetuated’ (ILO 1930: 46). In the end, Article 1 of the convention avoided addressing the issue. It did establish the goal ‘to suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible period’, but then went on to qualify this by stating that ‘recourse to forced or compulsory labour may be had, during the *transitional period*, for public purposes only and as an exceptional measure’ (emphasis added). The Governing Body was vaguely committed to reviewing whether or not the transitional period could be declared over after five years (in fact, it was not formally ended until the ILC in 2014!).

In short, the thrust of the ILO’s efforts was an effort to manage the worst abuses of colonial authority while still enabling the introduction of ‘progressive’ forces to ‘backwards’ areas -- including, if need be, by certain forms of compulsion. The *intent* of the forced labour convention was thus expressly depoliticizing: ‘The continuity of the work of the Office is a new guarantee to the native races that there will be a steady and wise pressure by the international society to secure better conditions for them.’ (Chamberlain 1933: 85). The job of protecting colonial labour is articulated here in paternalist terms -- it is up to ‘the

international society' to gradually improve the position of colonized labour, not for labourers themselves to press for them. More generally, Harold Grimshaw, the head of the ILO's Native Labour Section and its representative to the PMC, put the problem as follows in a lecture in 1929: 'One certain result of continued contact between ourselves and the primitive systems of society found in colonial areas is the destruction of the latter'. The most important force behind this destruction, for Grimshaw, was the colonial demand for labour. The point, then, was that the role of the ILO, particularly with respect to the forced labour conventions, was understood in terms of managing the destruction that would necessarily accompany the development of a new society (Grimshaw 1968: 133).

The ILO's regulation of forced labour, in short, was intimately connected to an idealized vision of progressive, compassionate imperialism. We might account for the character of the ILO's approach to colonial labour in a number of ways. In the first instance, the handful of staff dedicated to 'Native Labour' -- which never numbered more than three prior to WWII -- were typically British, and closely linked with the British Colonial Office.<sup>8</sup> The ILO's leadership more broadly, especially Thomas, were committed to Hobsonian reformist imperialism even before 1919. Similarly, the Native Labour staffers were probably more closely aligned in their day-to-day work with the rest of the League of Nations, particularly the PMC, than most of the ILO's other officials. Moreover, the broader historical linkage between the ILO and the nationalist, reformist politics of international labour regulation in Europe (see Murphy 1994; Cox 1996b), as well as the growing emphasis on anti-communist objectives (discussed above) also predisposed the organization against radical appeals for the abolition of capitalism (e.g. Senghor), or even longer-run calls for the independence of colonized populations (e.g. du Bois and the PAC). All of this marked out ILO regulation as a potentially acceptable way for the colonial powers of containing the political challenges posed by labour relations in colonized territories. If we look primarily at the debates around C29 in Geneva, then, we might be tempted to conclude that the ILO was primarily an instrument of hegemony when it came to dealing with African labourers, contributing to the articulation of a hegemonic vision of reformed imperial order. In practice, however, this vision was largely illusory. As the next section argues, the virtue of an actors and entanglements approach is in taking us beyond the discussion of the rules themselves to deal with the actual messy practice of governing.

#### C29 AND COLONIAL RESISTANCE, C. 1930-1945

Seen from the perspective of rules and authority, C29 accomplished very little. Fall (1993) credits the debates in Geneva with focusing public attention on the problem and increasing pressure for the abolition of forced labour. Cooper

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<sup>8</sup> These close links also had a significant impact on the ILO's later 'development' policies, see Chapter 4.

(1996: 30), however, has shown that C29 had little impact on the day-to-day practice of colonial rule, and not much more on the ways in which administrators sought to manage and understand labour issues. Moreover, the ILO's supervision could be applied only where the convention had been ratified. Among colonial powers, only the British ratified C29 immediately. The French government initially passed its own decree calling for the gradual elimination of forced labour in 1930, reporting to the ILO that 'Some Articles of the Convention infringe our sovereign rights (that is the case with the Article which covers the employment of the second military contingent) or are in obvious contradiction with the present situation in some or other of our dependencies' (qtd. ILO 1937: 36). Most notably, the French government did not want to do away with the use of military conscripts in road construction. The French did, however, eventually ratify C29 in 1937. Belgium took until 1944. While the Portuguese, like the French, passed their own decree almost immediately after the passage of C29, they did not ratify the convention until 1956. Moreover, reports from the ILO on forced labour typically documented only legislation related to forced labour (see e.g. ILO 1937). Legislation on this issue was not, however, necessarily all that reflective of actual practice. Regulations were often as much a means of obscuring the actual practice of colonial labour recruitment than of regulating it. The Governor General in French West Africa wrote to the Ministry of Colonies in 1937 saying that 'we lie in Geneva and at the International Labour Organization when, regulations and circulars in hand, we speak of the organization of public work in the colonies' (qtd. Fall 2002: 12). The result of all of this is that the ILO's efforts did very little to actually reduce the use of forced labour or to curb abuses -- indeed, the use of forced labour increased dramatically in many parts of Africa during WWII. A critical perspective might be more helpful here insofar as it could help highlight the interplay of shifting relations of production with transformations in world order, but the default assumption that governance is an instrument for the maintenance of hegemony is somewhat limiting.

The key point here, from the perspective of actors and entanglements, is that while the impacts of C29 on the actual use of forced labour are uncertain at best, the ILO's practices of governance nonetheless led to the creation of resources and spaces that were redeployed in significant ways. J.P. Daughton aptly notes that 'while the ILO continued to defend colonialism, much of the information that they helped to produce ultimately fed anti-colonial rhetoric in Europe's empires' (2013: 94). Available evidence is necessarily somewhat patchy, but seems to suggest two important points. First, visions of 'reformed colonialism' could slip over into challenges to the basic legitimacy of colonial rule more easily than many European activists or the ILO seemed to anticipate. Second, moreover, the expansion of international networks centered on the ILO dealing with colonial labour problems made it easier to articulate some of these challenges. The theoretical import of these developments is particularly clear when we consider the contrast with the limited effect of the convention on the



actual incidence of forced labour. In short, the most important impacts of the forced labour convention up to WWII are more visible if we think in terms of actors and entanglements than if we worry only about the authoritative application of the ILO's 'rule' about forced labour.

In the 1930s, at least, the most significant way in which these dynamics made themselves felt was through the way in which international networks for colonial oversight created spaces in which anti-colonial claims could be articulated. Conferences on a number of topics relating to the social situation in colonies were organized in the 1930s; these were particularly important on this front. At the same time, in the late 1920s and 1930s, a number of more or less formal networks linking European and American communist activists with anti-colonial activists in Africa were emerging -- in which people like Senghor who moved back and forth between metropolitan and colonial territories were often important. These engagements were often rather troubled (see Derrick 2008; Genova 2004), but did nonetheless constitute a set of actors that could at times mobilize challenges to colonial authority. These networks were, at times, entangled with the institutions of global governance, including those emerging around the ILO's regulation of forced labour. One well-documented incident took place in 1931 at a conference in Geneva on child welfare in colonial territories.<sup>9</sup> Representatives of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUC-NW) -- an arm of the Red International of Labour Unions intended to promote communist affiliated unionism among colonized and African-American workers -- were in attendance (although maybe not as official delegates). These members included Jomo Kenyatta, the future President of Kenya, and James W. Ford, an African-American Communist organizer. Ford addressed the conference on behalf of the ITUC-NW. His speech was later published as a pamphlet entitled *Imperialism Destroys the People of Africa* (Ford 1931) by the Harlem section of the Communist Party of the United States of America. As a result, it is one of the best records available of the kinds of politics *possible* in this sort of space, if not necessarily the most representative. Ford delivered a radical critique of colonialism, and of the conference itself for failing to grasp that colonialism lay at the root of whatever social problems might be facing African populations:

Conferences of this kind try to conceal the fact that the dreadful fate of African children is due to imperialist exploitation, similarly as the League of Nations and the International Labor Office are doing and have done with regard to slavery and forced labour in Africa...

There is no remedy without abolishing imperialist oppression and domination, the cause of unspeakable misery and suffering of the African people! (1931: 3)

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<sup>9</sup> Brief accounts of the conference can be found in Hooker (1967: 25); Murray-Brown (1972: 164); Derrick (2008: 211). The ILO did not host the conference, but did send several representatives.

He went on to argue that 'It may be said, however, that the International Labor Office had no intention of protecting women and children in Africa, notwithstanding the fact that already at this conference the representatives of this organization in the opening session have pretended to be interested in the children of Africa' (1931: 8). Two points are notable. Ford's speech explicitly cited evidence from Ross and Buell on abuses of forced labour, as well as Gide and a number of other similar reports (1931: 8-11). The information that the ILO and associated networks were helping to produce and circulate on labour practices in colonial Africa, then, could also be deployed as resources in very harsh critiques of colonialism itself. Equally, the formal and informal institutional networks building up around the ILO -- including conferences like the one in question -- provided some actors with terrains on which to deploy those resources in ways that the ILO itself certainly would not have wanted.

On this point the involvement of several early anti-colonial activists, like Kenyatta, in the ITUC-NW is particularly significant. There are strong echoes of the claims raised by Senghor a few years previous, but the institutional spaces around the ILO, and the resources made available through the ILO's practices of governance, made it possible to push similar claims more directly at metropolitan circuits of power. Here again, as with the point about scales of action raised in connection with the PAC, this is particularly significant in view of the arguments raised about 'global' scales of action in the previous chapter. Not only did 'global' institutions of governance provide spaces in which certain colonial subjects could articulate certain challenges that would not be possible through the pseudo-'national' politics within colonial territories, but certain anti-colonial activists were able to access 'global' spaces in part by participating in (admittedly tenuous) networks of activists spanning Europe, the US, and African territories. Ford's arguments did not necessarily entirely represent the views of the African participants in those networks; nonetheless, the salient point is that challenges to colonial authority that the ILO would never have expected were possible through the spaces of governance emerging around C29. The 'global', then, was at least potentially also accessible to decidedly non-elite actors, and indeed could allow for challenges to persistent structures of power -- indeed, it could allow for the formation of subaltern solidarities and certain forms of agency that were much more difficult to assemble in the 'national' or 'local' spaces much more directly controlled by colonial authorities.

This is not to say, however, that 'local' forms of resistance did not exist. Shortly after C29 was passed, various forms of resistance by African workers began to pose serious problems for colonial authorities -- particularly notable were the growing adoption of trade union forms by African dockworkers, railwaymen, and miners, highlighted by a string of strikes beginning in the mid-1930s and continuing into the late 1940s, as well as growing concerns about labour migration, especially from French and Portuguese territories into British

colonies and South Africa where workers expected better pay and working conditions. These actions were beginning to force colonial authorities to reconsider the frameworks through which they approached labour problems. These developments are covered in more detail in Chapter 4, but they merit mention here because they contributed to forcing those international networks that had grown up around the ILO's work on forced labour to broaden their approach to African labour. If groups like the PAC and ITUC-NW had, in different ways, been pushing in the direction of a more expansive approach to African labour for quite some time, more localized forms of resistance by African workers made a more comprehensive engagement increasingly difficult to avoid.

The ILO published a wider ranging report on 'labour recruitment' policies in colonial territories for the ILC in 1935 (ILO 1935), and established conventions on recruitment and penal labour later in the 1930s. By the outbreak of WWII, the ILO had established a 'Native Labour Code', made up of four conventions and a pair of recommendations -- all dealing with problems of labour recruitment. This was very much in line with the sort of code sought by the LNU in the mid-1920s, but even this proved far too narrow a set of tools to cope with the rapidly shifting terrain of labour politics in colonial Africa. Trade union rights and more comprehensive labour protections and social policies began to be seriously considered during WWII. The point is that African workers, although they had little direct impact on the debate about forced labour, made the relatively narrow approach to colonial reform implicit in C29 and the Native Labour Code impossible to sustain. Here the Gramscian historicism introduced in the previous chapter is particularly useful -- colonial imaginations of labour subjectivities, which the ILO participated quite actively in articulating, came increasingly under pressure as they ran up against shifting relations of force in practice. This entailed the articulation of new technologies of governance, the shift to 'development' approaches discussed in more detail in Chapter 4; it also led to some important shifts in the mechanics of forced labour governance, discussed in the following section.

In short, attempts to regulate forced labour in the interwar period are revealing in two main ways. First, the ILO attempted without much success to set limits on the discussion of colonial problems. C29 was meant to be the cornerstone of a limited framework for international oversight of colonial labour policies. It was no more effective in this purpose than it was in actually preventing the use of forced labour. Explicit mentions of race or critiques of colonialism were exceedingly rare at the ILC in 1927, 1929, and 1930 when forced labour was discussed. Yet, the ILO's engagements with forced labour nonetheless led to the creation of spaces and resources through which challenges to colonial authority could be articulated. Second, the indirect actions of Africans themselves were crucial in forcing the ILO, as well as colonial policy networks more broadly, to reconsider the narrow paternalism of the Native Labour Code after WWII. The

ILO, then, was deeply bound up in political conflicts over the organization of labour in colonial Africa, in spite of the depoliticizing manner with which the organization sought to deal with problems of colonialism.

#### THE COLD WAR, 'DEVELOPMENT', AND C105, C. 1945-1956

The 'forced labour' agenda took a turn after WWII. Problems of development, which took on a growing place on the agenda of the ILO after WWII, the beginnings of decolonization, the establishment of international 'human rights' frameworks, and the emergence of Cold War tensions were largely responsible. The salience of the latter issue was particularly important for the ILO because both the US and the Soviet Union had joined the ILO since the passage of C29. There was also, (finally) a notable decline in the incidence of colonial forced labour after the war. Notably, particularly in French West Africa, the political mobilization of African plantation owners who had been making more 'efficient' use of voluntarily-recruited labour was probably the deciding factor -- Felix Houphouët-Boigny (the future president of Côte d'Ivoire) played a particularly notable role (see Cooper 1996; Fall 1993). ILO engagements with the problem of 'forced labour' in Africa thus became somewhat irregular and sporadic after WWII. The general thrust of the ILO's engagements in Africa shifted towards more comprehensive engagements in 'development', dealing with problems around social policy linked to productivity, migration, and trade union organization. These developments are dealt with more in Chapter 4, but for present purposes the general point is that changes in the relations of force -- both in terms of the organization of production and in terms of political organization by African populations themselves -- pushed the ILO to develop new technologies of governance.

Another factor was the extent to which the ILO was increasingly bound up in Cold War politics. This development had particularly important consequences for the governance of forced labour.<sup>10</sup> In 1947 the AFL-CIO asked the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC) and the ILO to investigate allegations of forced labour in the Eastern bloc. ECOSOC agreed to establish a joint 'Ad-hoc Committee on Forced Labour' with the ILO in 1951 (hereafter referred to as the UN/ILO Committee'). The terms of reference of the committee were rather ambiguous:

To study the nature and extent of the problems raised by the existence in the world of systems of forced or 'corrective' labour, which are employed as a means of political coercion or punishment for holding or expressing certain political views, *and* which are on such a scale as to constitute an important element of in the economy of a given country... (UN/ILO 1953: 4, emphasis added)

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<sup>10</sup> Accounts of the forced labour debates in the 1950s and 1960s can be found in Haas (1964: 221-225); Maul (2012: 202-211; 2007: 483-488).

The ‘and’ separating the references to corrective labour and to forms of forced labour on a large enough scale to be important to the economy was the chief source of ambiguity. It could be read to mean that the committee should consider instances of forced labour that were *either* ‘corrective’ or economically significant, or that the committee should only consider a case if the use of forced labour was *both* ‘corrective’ and economically significant. The committee opted for the former (much broader) interpretation (UN/ILO 1953: 5). The Committee drew heavily on allegations about forced labour that had been made to a series of ECOSOC meetings. Communist delegates, concerned mostly to defray the attention of the committees on their own labour practices, made a range of complaints about forced labour in colonial territories. It would certainly be possible to interpret the main thrust of this debate as primarily a reflection of the great power politics of the time (as in Maul 2007; 2012; Haas 1964). The final reports of the UN/ILO and ILO committee, indeed, do very much reflect the problems of Cold War politics, and in fact explicitly reject efforts on the part of a number of different actors to pursue claims about colonial politics.

An actors and entanglements approach is again useful here insofar as it can show some of the more subtle tensions that played out through the efforts of different actors to mobilize claims about colonial politics through the committees. More importantly, there are certain parallels with the story presented in the first half of this chapter. C105 and the committee debates out of which it emerged can readily be interpreted as the results of Cold War politics. Many of the same criticisms that we might make toward C29 -- that it was ambiguous in content and limited in its enforcement -- are also applicable. What ultimately happened in practice with the convention, however, was that a number of subordinate actors in the global political economy (African and otherwise, although the former are the main focus below) made a number of different creative uses of the convention that had little to do with either the contents of the convention itself or the historical circumstances in which it was originally articulated. The latter developments will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the former dynamics are briefly considered here.

The communist delegates were accompanied in many of their claims about the colonial powers by human rights activists seeking to limit abuses of colonial power, particularly in the settler states in Southern Africa. The Anti-Slavery Society (ASS) took the opportunity presented by the ECOSOC meetings, and subsequently the UN/ILO committee, to advance some allegations about forced labour in African settler colonies (i.e. South Africa and Portuguese Angola, São Tomé, and Mozambique) which had not ratified C29 and thus were not subject to the ILO’s regular surveillance procedures.

Moreover, colonial labour politics even coloured the communist contributions to the debates in at least one instance. The World Federation of

Trade Unions (WFTU) -- the communist-aligned segment of the international labour movement -- occupied an ambiguous position in the ECOSOC debates. It was simultaneously linked to the Comintern and to the French *Confederation Générale du Travail*, which was rapidly expanding its role and its membership in French African territories at the time. It is impossible to say for certain, but to judge from the content of its allegations, the initiative came as much from the CGT as from Moscow. Its allegations to ECOSOC (UN/ILO 1953: 240-241) were rather more detailed than most others from communist-aligned delegates. The WFTU cited specific actions taken by the CGT on colonial labour: 'In October 1948, the French Confederation of Labour [CGT]... had submitted to the President of the Republic condemning many abuses committed in the territories of the French Union. Mr. Diallo mentioned the case of children as young as eight to 12 years old who had been conscripted for manual labour in the Niger province' (UN/ILO 1953: 240). It also went on to list a number of grievances relating to the debate, ongoing at the time of the ECOSOC meetings, over the revision of the Code de Travail in the colonies.<sup>11</sup> The allegation continued:

A labour code for application in the French African territories had been under consideration for several years... The French Government was, however, delaying the enforcement of a code which would represent an advance on the existing state of affairs. The final draft prepared by the French Government prohibited forced labour completely in principle, but it provided for a whole series of exceptions and left the local administration to decide when to make use of those exceptions... Some of the clauses were rather strange, and it might well be asked why the French Government did not apply the laws enforced in the metropolitan country to the overseas territories (UN/ILO 1953: 240).

Here, then, was an odd overlap of Cold War conflicts in ECOSOC and the ILO with a debate about colonial policy in which metropolitan and colonial workers' organizations were enmeshed.

The UN/ILO Committee avoided any strong condemnation of colonial practices. The Committee concluded that it had no evidence of forced labour in French territories (UN/ILO 1953: 41); British-controlled territories were also generally found not to be in violation of the forced labour convention (UN/ILO 1953: 109-110). These might be contrasted to the findings on the Soviet Union, where the Committee felt they had found unambiguous evidence of forced labour both for political and economic purposes (UN/ILO 1953: 98). The Committee itself sought to avoid becoming entangled with colonial labour issues, but was

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<sup>11</sup> The debate about the Code de Travail is examined in more detail in Cooper (1996: Chpt. 7); Martens (1979); Dewitte (1981); Delanoue (1983). It is also discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, below. For present purposes the salient point is that the WFTU-affiliated CGT was closely involved.

never entirely successful in closing itself off as a terrain for challenges to colonial practice.

This is also particularly clear in the work of the ILO committee. The Governing Body of the decided on the basis of the UN/ILO Committee's report to set up their own committee in 1955 (hereafter 'ILO Committee') to write a report that would form the basis for debate at the ILC about a new convention on forced labour. The ILO Committee's report drew heavily on the findings of the UN/ILO Committee, although some new information was collected. The ASS, again, sought to call attention to Portuguese and South African labour practices.<sup>12</sup> Here again, then, the debates about forced labour provided opportunities to raise critiques that would not have been possible through the formal supervisory mechanisms of the ILO. The debates also seemed to provide forums for critiques of the British reaction to the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. The International League for the Rights of Man (ILRM) wrote to the Secretary General of the UN about abuses of human rights in Kenya in 1954.<sup>13</sup> Similar criticisms of the British handling of Mau Mau also came from India two years later. The Director of the ILO Branch Office in India was approached informally by a British academic working in India about a report about forced labour in Kenya -- probably some time in 1954 or 1955. The issue was dropped until the Indian National Trades Union Congress (INTUC) sent a report on the issue to the Indian office, asking for the office's opinion as to whether or not the issue would call for action by the ILO.<sup>14</sup> The consensus opinion within the ILO was that it would be inappropriate to advise the INTUC on whether or not to submit the issue for the consideration of the GB.<sup>15</sup> The ILO did not, in the end, take any action on the Mau Mau rebellion. The ILRM's allegations were apparently considered by the ILO Committee, but did not make it into the final report because the Kenyan case was viewed as 'a deviation from the general conformity of British colonial policy with ILO norms' (Maul 2012: 209).

Indeed, colonial forced labour was not given much attention at all by the ILO Committee. The report emphasized the existence of forced labour 'as a means of political coercion or education' and 'as a regular and normal means of

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<sup>12</sup> C.W.W. Greenidge, 'Memorandum addressed by the Anti-Slavery Society (UK) to the United Nations and to the International Labour Office commenting on the comments of the Government of the Union of South Africa of the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1956 on Forced Labour', 10 July 1956, ILOA FLA 1-25-0.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Baldwin and Frances Grant to Dag Hammarskjold, 16 August 1954, ILOA FLA 1-25-0. The letter was forwarded to the ILO by the Secretary General's office.

<sup>14</sup> V. K. R. Menon to Wilfred Jenks, 2 January 1956, and attached report, ILOA FLA 1-25-0.

<sup>15</sup> Jenks reply to Menon, 13 January 1956, ILOA FLA 1-25-0.

carrying out state plans and projects for economic development' (ILO 1956: 59). In both instances, the conclusions were clearly targeted at the soviet economies. The committee also found that C29 was inadequate for regulating these forms of forced labour. It suggested that the ILO should pass a new convention prohibiting forced labour for political purposes, or as a means of mobilizing the population for economic development (ILO 1956: 60). The 'Abolition of Forced Labour Convention' (C105) was passed by the ILC in 1957. It prohibits forced labour for five different purposes: as a means of political coercion; as a means of mobilization for economic development; as a means of labour discipline; as punishment for participating in strikes; and as a means of social or racial discrimination. This did represent a significant shift in thinking about forced labour from C29. C105 is much more clearly intended to abolish forced labour than was C29 -- there is no discussion of transition periods or exemptions. C105 also reconceptualises 'forced labour' itself primarily as a problem of particular 'national' economies, not of imperial governance. In this respect, C105 fit clearly with shifting perceptions of 'development', which was increasingly seen as a 'national' project emphasizing industrialization and the expansion of common prosperity, rather than as a process of 'civilization' in a colonial context. There are numerous references across the UN/ILO and ILO committee reports to the contrast between forced labour in 'self-governing' territories and the colonial issues covered by C29.

## CONCLUSION

To recap: the ILO was established in a context in which the primary concern was with the maintenance of 'social peace' in Europe, but in which the management of colonial labour practices represented a growing threat to the legitimacy of the colonial world order and in which the League of Nations system exercised some limited but loosely defined supervisory authority in relation to colonial administration. In this context, the ILO was targeted by a variety of actors making a number of very different claims about the regulation of colonial work relations, and about the legitimacy of colonialism more broadly. The result of these engagements was the passage of C29, which sought to limit and regulate, but not eliminate, the use of forced labour in colonial territories in the context of a vision of gradual reform of colonialism. C29 and the international networks that increasingly emerged around the ILO, however, also opened up possibilities for far more radical challenges to colonial authority. At the same time, the imaginations of colonial difference underpinning the NLC were increasingly undercut by the growing adoption of trade union forms by African workers themselves. This shift in emphasis away from the narrow agenda implicit in the NLC towards the broader project of 'development', coupled with the increasing salience of the Cold War conflict for the ILO after WWII, profoundly reshaped the agenda of forced labour governance. The debates leading to C105 at the ILO and ECOSOC were used by some actors to advance claims against colonial authority -- most notable, perhaps, is the contribution of the WFTU, whose



contribution to the debate was dominated to a surprising extent by ongoing struggles over labour rights in French West Africa. Still, these contributions had little impact either on the reports of the ad hoc committees or on the contents of C105. Still, as will be seen in the following chapter, the convention was used in often surprisingly creative, and certainly unintended ways, in the process of decolonization and in contests over the shape of postcolonial social order.

I will defer a more detailed consideration of the theoretical implications of this trajectory to the end of the next chapter. For the moment, though, we might note that an actors and entanglements approach has already opened up a few important insights. First, a conventional focus on the rules passed by the ILO and the bases of its authority over these issues might well lead us to conclude that the ILO's governance of forced labour was simply ineffective. It was so in the sense that it ultimately did very little to reduce the extent of forced labour, or even to curb abuses. But to stop here is to miss the real politics of governing forced labour, in which the research and documentary evidence being produced, collected, and disseminated by the ILO, and the network of conferences in which colonial policy networks increasingly engaged, made possible challenges to colonial authority. Similarly, where critical perspectives might well be extended to highlight the connection between changing structures of colonial production and world order and the role of the ILO, they fail to call attention to the framework of possibilities which some actors in Africa and elsewhere found to make challenges to colonial authority through these institutions. An actors and entanglements approach, then, starts to call attention to an uncomfortable (for the ILO) dialectic between depoliticizing interventions aimed at curbing the possibilities for anti-colonial politics and the actions of a variety of activists within and beyond Africa. These dynamics became, if anything, more pronounced in the process of decolonization, the next chapter turns to these developments.

### CHAPTER 3: 'FORCED LABOUR' AND HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

This chapter examines the trajectory of ILO efforts to regulate forced labour in Africa during the process of decolonization and in the postcolonial period. The process of decolonization itself unleashed an important set of struggles over the constitution of postcolonial social order; indeed, the ILO played a significant role in these processes. These issues are dealt with more in the next chapter, but it should suffice for now to note that decolonization was hardly ever a clean and simple transfer of sovereignty from an imperial power to 'national' authorities. Decolonization implied a set of thorny questions about what postcolonial society and politics should look like; it often provided an impetus for (normally unrealized) hopes of transformation of colonial political economies in ways that would cut much deeper than the mere transfer of power from one set of foreign authorities to an indigenous one (Cooper 2002; 2005, 2014). The ILO's place in this new context, and particularly the place of its regulatory machinery, was also highly uncertain. There were increasingly wide divergences between the visions of 'development' adhered to in Geneva and those of many postcolonial regimes (again, see Part III, especially Chapter 4). Postwar debates about forced labour nonetheless marked out the ILO and the forced labour conventions as important sites and resources through which the shape of decolonization and postcolonial order could be established or contested. Postcolonial states sought to turn debates about coercion, development, and colonialism in ways that would bolster their authority, but were also left open to challenges from organized labour and other activists.

The forced labour conventions, in any event, have only been used sporadically between about 1960 and the late 1990s. While the ILO has placed a renewed emphasis on forced labour since the Declaration in 1998, this has not always translated easily into practice. This is significant because neither this unevenness, nor the subtle patterns of contestation involved, is easy to understand in terms of the ILO's own rules or understandings of forced labour, or the sources of its authority, or the context in which C29 and C105 were negotiated. The 'rules and authority' *problematique*, in short, is a limited guide here. An actors and entanglements approach is helpful in interpreting the uneven, heterogeneous character of the actual practice of forced labour governance in this period. In so doing, it opens up considerations of a broader range of possible forms of action implicit in the particular sets of practices, resources, and spaces through which the regulation of forced labour is carried out.

Three broad categories of interactions with the ILO on 'forced labour' cases, between the passage of C105 in 1956 and roughly the year 2000, can be identified. First, the early 1960s witnessed a debate at Geneva about the proper balance between coercion and 'development' in postcolonial Africa. Second, the

forced labour conventions were deployed by a wide range of actors to lodge complaints about the few remaining colonial governments in the region: Angola and Mozambique, apartheid South Africa, and Southern Rhodesia. Third, workers organizations were able on some isolated occasions to deploy the forced labour conventions in the context of various relatively localized conflicts. In sum, ‘forced labour’ was entwined in a variety of complex ways with the politics of negotiating decolonization and postcolonial social order. The chapter considers these developments in turn, after which the final three sections consider the ILO’s activities since the establishment of IPEC and SAP-FL. Similar dynamics persist - notably the entanglement of the ILO’s programmes and regulatory mechanisms with struggles over social order, not all of which have had much to do with forced labour, and efforts by different social forces to deploy the ILO’s practices and resources of government for very different purposes.

#### THE YOUTH LABOUR SERVICES DEBATE

The ILO’s forced labour machinery was a double-edged sword for many new African states. The provisions about forced labour for economic development in C105 were particularly troubling for some newly independent states in Africa. Portugal made an allegation about the use of forced labour in Liberia in 1963, largely in retaliation for African governments’ pressure on its practices in Angola and Mozambique. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) also criticized some practices of labour recruitment by African governments in 1962.<sup>1</sup> The CEACR report in 1962 ‘regrets to note that in some... countries various forms of compulsory labour services which may be used for economic development have recently been instituted’ (ILO 1962a: 214). In a footnote, the report lists legislation in Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Côte D’Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, and Senegal (ILO 1962a: 214, n. 6). The Committee’s discussion of these ‘compulsory labour services’ referred explicitly to colonial practices:

In several cases the formula adopted is that instituted in Madagascar in 1927 and extended to certain other French territories: all young men liable to call-up who were not enlisted in the armed forces to perform their compulsory military service constituted a “second contingent” used at the government’s discretion for public works in the general interest (ILO 1962a: 214).

The committee also reported that similar services were being considered in Cameroon and Niger (ILO 1962a: 215).

The debates about the sections of the CEACR’s report dealing with forced labour in committee at the ILC were clearly acrimonious, although the records of the committee sessions are not detailed enough to pull out the lines of debate in full. It is particularly difficult to assess what role the African workers’

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<sup>1</sup> Maul (2012: 264-268) covers the debate in some detail.

representatives played in the discussion. There were few workers' representatives from Africa involved in the committee -- deputy members from Congo (Brazzaville) and Liberia and an observer from Uganda out of 31 total workers involved (ILO 1962b: LIX-LX). The references to the workers' delegates in the committee's report suggest that workers usually spoke unanimously, and were critical of the argument that 'development' required the use of coercion (e.g. ILO 1962b: 686). Without more detailed records, however, especially of discussions amongst workers' members, it is hard to say anything specific about the role of African workers.

The picture about the views of African governments and employers is somewhat clearer. Some government delegates from developing countries apparently 'suggested that account should be taken of the economic and social situation, and that, in their opinion, the Experts had treated the problem in an excessively abstract and legal manner and account should be taken of actual social and economic situation' (ILO 1962b: 686). Apparently, 'one of these members suggested that, after having attained political independence, such countries also wished to gain economic independence'; and 'An employers' member from one of these countries expressed the view that the local needs and climactic conditions of such countries do not induce people to work and that it was necessary to impose an obligation to work' (ILO 1962b: 686). A Malian government delegate alluded to the failure of the CEARC and the committee to differentiate colonial from postcolonial practice in arguing that he 'regretted that, in his view, the Committee had confused the educational and vocational training system in the civic service with service in the second contingent' (ILO 1962b: 686). Here debates about forced labour were clearly less about forced labour *per se*, and more a means of delineating and negotiating the bounds of postcolonial statehood.

The rupture between colonial and postcolonial practice, then, crucial to the legitimacy of postcolonial governments, had to be established through political contestation. In part these contests drew on and took place through the practices, resources, and spaces provided by the ILO. The debate showed the limits of anti-colonial protest as a legitimizing strategy, but also pulled the ILO into conflicts over the shape of postcolonial statehood in the process of supervising the application of its conventions. The debates about compulsory labour services, particularly when read in tandem with the use of the ILO's spaces and resources in resistance to settler colonialism (outlined below), show the extent to which the governance of forced labour was entwined with ongoing political conflicts over the shape of postcolonial statehood.

#### 'FORCED LABOUR', SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND AFRICAN SOVEREIGNTY

Beyond the occasional debates at the ILC, the most prominent set of appeals drawing on C29 and C105 involved various protests against the actions of

settler colonies in the 1960s and 1970s. As with the allegations to the ad hoc committees, a rather eclectic collection of actors pressed claims about forced labour in the settler colonies after 1960. Protesting against various labour abuses in the settler colonies, drawing on the ILO's conventions and supervisory machinery as a set of resources and spaces, could be means to accomplish quite a range of political ends, often several at the same time. Allegations about forced labour in the settler colonies were increasingly bound up in conflicting approaches to the interlinked problems of statehood, social order, and 'pan-African' solidarity after about 1960. Notably, the forced labour conventions were typically only part of an array of resources used for the same purposes.

The ILO's increasingly troubled relationship with the apartheid regime in South Africa in the early 1960s is an important piece of context here. Some African actors were making efforts to 'internationalize' apartheid by working through the ILO, although not exactly in the same ways or for the same purposes. The ILC was an important space in which these claims were pursued. The ILC debated various sanctions against South Africa in the early 1960s, with the African delegates present virtually unanimous in favour of expelling the country from the organization. They were supported by the Soviet bloc and a number of Latin American countries. The debates came to a head at the ILC in 1963, where the Nigerian president of the conference resigned and African delegates to the conference threatened to leave over the decision to allow a South African delegate to speak (see Maul 2012: 238-242).

Without wishing to deny either that apartheid deserved to be subject to international criticism or that the African actors involved were genuine in their opposition to it, the issue at the ILO was never entirely about South Africa. By the early 1960s, an important conflict was brewing within the trade union movement in the region about how unions should relate to postcolonial governments and 'development' schemes -- by 1963, two rival 'pan-African' organizations, the African Trade Union Confederation (ATUC) and the All-African Trade Union Federation (AATUF) were already in place. Opposition to apartheid seemed to present an opportunity to develop a greater degree of 'unity' at the regional level - it was, after all, something most workers in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere could agree on.<sup>2</sup> A press release on the 1963 conference, signed by trade union leaders from Nigeria, Tunisia, Congo (Brazzaville), Liberia, Cameroon, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Southern Rhodesia explicitly linked the resistance to apartheid to the formation of 'pan-African' labour solidarities:

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<sup>2</sup> Debates about 'unity' remained deeply troubled by conflicts over the relative autonomy of union organizations from state control and over their ability to affiliate internationally well into the 1980s. This set of problems is taken up in greater detail in Chapter 7.

We consider that our trade union organizations as an essential arm of the democratic and progressive institutions in the New Africa should constitute themselves into a vital force in the vanguard of action in the execution of “Operation South Africa”; and to this end we call upon the secretariat of the African Trade Union Confederation in Dakar and the All-African Trade Union Federation in Accra to take steps to convene, at an early date, a meeting of representatives of all bona-fide and democratic African national trade union centers with a view to set up an All-African Trade Union Action Committee and to determine a “positive action programme” aimed at the complete eradication of apartheid... (rprnt. ATUC 1963: 76-77).

The statement was circulated widely to national union confederations in Africa by Lawrence Borha, who was General Secretary of the United Labour Congress of Nigeria and a member of the ILO’s Governing Body. The letter accompanying the release included the statement that ‘I hope that... your organization will give its maximum cooperation in bringing into being a Pan-African trade union committee to deal not only with the South African question *but also to form a basis for the eventual unification of the African labour movement*’ (rprnt. ATUC 1963: 74, emphasis added). Here, then, opposition to apartheid expressed in part through the spaces of the ILO was at least in part a means of attempting to enact a vision of regional labour solidarity.

This effort at ‘unification’, however, was a slippery objective because different states and trade union organizations harboured very different visions of what role a ‘unified’ pan-African labour movement should actually play in the region’s political and productive systems. Very real debates persisted about whether African trade unions should be subordinate to ‘national’ or ‘pan-African’ forms of organization or linked into the broader international labour movement. These were debates, moreover, that were intimately entangled with struggle over the shape of postcolonial order. The same issues stemming from labour abuse in the remaining colonial territories were deployed at around the same time by a number of very different actors to articulate very different visions of pan-African solidarity. Moreover, invocations of ‘forced labour’ in these conflicts were deployed in the context of broader strategies drawing on both the ILO and the UN system more broadly across several issue areas at once.

#### *Ghana and Portuguese Africa*

The Ghanaian government lodged a complaint about the use of forced labour in Portuguese African territories in 1961. The complaint was probably well founded, and the ILO did appoint a Commission of Inquiry, but the Governing Body did not ultimately decide to issue any sanction against Portugal. From a rules and authority perspective, then, we might take this event as an indication of the weakness of the ILO’s standards or of the relative influence of Portugal and Ghana over the Governing Body’s decision-making. Both are, of course, valid

conclusions to draw, but they leave us with an unduly limited picture of the kind of politics implicit in the Ghanaian complaint. An actors and entanglements approach, meanwhile, would suggest that the actual outcome of the case in terms of sanctions, or even in terms of the impact it might have had on labour practices in the Portuguese colonies, is perhaps less important than what the *act* of making the complaint actually *did*, and the shifting, multiscale relations of force with which the complaint managed to entangle the ILO.

The political economy of labour in Ghana in 1961 is particularly important to understand in this respect. Ghanaian trade unions had played an important part in the struggle against colonialism, but even prior to the country's independence from Britain there were considerable divisions within the workers' movement over how closely they should be linked to the Convention People's Party (CPP). Broadly speaking, the leadership of the national confederation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), were closely linked to the CPP, but rank and file unionists -- especially in certain sectoral unions, most notably the Railway Union -- continued to press for greater autonomy from the government. In short, the relations of political forces were marked by particularly unsettled group formation, both within the trade union movement and in terms of the CPP's ability to claim authority over the 'nation' as a whole. This fragile political balance had potential material implications, especially for the ruling party. The fragility of the CPP's position was highlighted particularly clearly by an illegal seventeen-day strike by the railway and harbour workers in Sekondi-Takoradi in September of 1961. The demands of the strikers were put in terms of relatively minor economic issues -- the July budget had included a compulsory savings scheme and a property tax on larger than average houses which were unpopular among skilled workers likely to suffer somewhat from these measures. However, the strike was widely supported by unskilled workers, market women, and even some of the unemployed in the area. These actors would not have been especially affected by these measures, instead their support for the strikers was driven largely by 'the wider significance these economic issues assumed in the context of the politics of the national labour movement, and of widespread popular opposition to the direction of development of the CPP regime' (Jeffries 1975: 263). This support was crucial for the union, which was able to arrange to have food supplied to the strikers by market women. The broader mass support for the strike also heightened its political salience. There were wider debates at play about the relation between the TUC and CPP -- the Railway Union in particular advocated for a role for the TUC as a check on the power of the CPP, whereas the TUC leadership and CPP sought to maintain closer control over the workers' movement. For marginal urban workers to support the strikers meant an explicit challenge to the CPP's efforts to articulate a 'national' consciousness centered on the party.

That the CPP was faced with a difficult political situation, in which conflicts over the formation of the labour movement played a major role, is

critical in explaining the Ghanaian government's complaint to the ILO. When the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the ILO to investigate the complaint asked for additional information, one of the key documents included was a series of excerpts from a speech by Kwame Nkrumah in the Ghanaian Parliament in May of 1961 (two months prior to the July budget strike). The selections included in the communication to the ILO were mostly specific allegations about the use of forced labour. The speech mentioned the importance of Portuguese forced labour for South African mining, reports of Portuguese troops ransacking the Angolan countryside with impunity, and outlined the system of forced labour recruitment and quotas in place -- including, notably with a direct reference to Ghana's own colonial history: 'Requests are... sent to local administrators up and down the country until they reach what would be the equivalent of a District Commissioner in old colonial times in Ghana' (ILO 1962c: 119). The portions of the speech not included in the communication to the ILO, however, are particularly revealing of the politics of the complaint. Nkrumah linked the effort to abolish forced labour in the Portuguese colonies to the formation of pan-African solidarity:

In Angola, in spite of the enervating force of slave labour... that country has now entered the African nationalist revolution and it will never be the same again... The evils of Portuguese colonialism are realized by all African states without exception. *We should therefore be able to go united to the assistance of the people of Angola and it is most important that the differences of approach we have on other problems should not prevent our mobilizing the full strength of African opinion against what is taking place today in those parts of African controlled by Portugal.* (Nkrumah 1961: 2, emphasis added)

Indeed, he linked the perpetuation of forced labour in Portugal's colonies to the continuation of forms of neo-colonial economic dependence elsewhere: 'In the neo-colonial world of southern Africa, the Portuguese colonies and all that they stand for are essential for the purpose of depressing African wages, preventing trade union organization, and maintaining high profits for expatriate-owned industries and farms' (1961: 3-4). The Portuguese system of labour recruitment for South African mines was, significantly, cited as evidence on this point.

Nkrumah made the significance of these arguments in the context of Ghanaian politics in 1961 explicit. He argued that the resistance to this neo-colonialism required the formation of African trade union unity, without ties to European dominated international federations: 'Creating our own African international trade union organizations, we cannot individually opt to associate with other international unions, for this will do exactly what we must guard against' (1961: 8). If these concerns undoubtedly reflected Nkrumah's famous concerns about neo-colonialism and pan-African solidarity, they also have to be read in the context of the CPP's political struggle to control the labour movement. It is worth noting in this respect that the TUC leadership -- fragile though their position in Ghanaian union politics was -- were among the leaders of the



movement pressing for a 'pan-Africa' trade union confederation made up of unions under the control of 'nationalist' parties, and saw the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions as a potential threat to their own position to the extent that it might provide support for breakaway factions like those in the Railway Union (see Chapter 7). These arguments were omitted from the version of the speech submitted to the ILO. They are, however, a key indication of the particularly fraught politics of postcolonial statehood and labour in which the Ghanaian allegations against Portugal must be read.

The protest against Portuguese labour practices, then, was for Nkrumah a means of constructing a particular mode of pan-African unity in response to the fragile hold of the CPP over certain segments of the labour movement in particular. The connection between Portugal's colonies and the perpetuation of colonialism by other means elsewhere was stressed, establishing the protest against Portuguese labour practices as a means of reinforcing the rupture between colonial and postcolonial systems (upon which the CPP's legitimacy rested in no small part) and of linking the establishment of pan-African trade unionism under the control of the CPP to the eradication of the remnants of colonialism. Allegations about forced labour in Portuguese African colonies were at least in part means of trying to bolster the position of the CPP in relation to other social forces in Ghana. The complaint against Portugal is thus best read as a kind of performance -- a performance, moreover, for which it mattered very little what the ILO actually did about the complaint. Of course, the regime's strategy was not really all that successful -- some elements in the trade union movement continued to press for greater autonomy from the CPP. Nkrumah's government fell to a coup in 1966, with the support of a good number of workers. Two points are worth highlighting. First, regardless of the fact that the strategy was unsuccessful, it did nonetheless result in the ILO's technologies of governance becoming entangled with the CPP's struggle for control over the labour movement. In this sense it can be read as an effort by the CPP to draw on the resources and spaces provided by the ILO in an effort to solidify its own position relative to other social forces in Ghana. Second, this strategy on the part of the CPP ultimately ran up against the limits posed by the actions of workers themselves rather than by the ILO (even though the latter did not pursue the complaint). This underlines the point that state control over 'global' networks of governance is never uncontested.

#### *The ICFTU in Southern Rhodesia*

The picture only becomes more complex when we look at other similar, less formal, complaints being launched at around the same time. There was no necessary connection between the kind of state-centered pan-Africanism in Nkrumah's arguments and the use of ILO spaces and resources in the resistance to settler colonialism. Trade unions in Southern Rhodesia raised concerns to the ILO about settler-dominated systems of labour control -- in large part by collaborating with the same international union bodies Nkrumah sought to reject. Here again,

allegations about forced labour were part of a wider strategy. Trade unions in Southern Rhodesia, in the face of an openly hostile settler state, were able to draw on connections to the ILO and to the ICFTU. As in the Ghana-Portugal case, the ILO took no substantive action, but this in itself is less interesting than the politics of attempting to enrol the ILO in a complex set of relations of force.

Context is thus, once again, crucial. By the early 1960s, anti-colonial mobilization against the settler regime in Southern Rhodesia was being met with an increasingly repressive response. The Southern Rhodesia African Nationalist Congress was banned in 1959, only to be almost immediately replaced with a nearly identical National Democratic Party in January of 1960. In July of 1960 three leaders of the group were arrested, prompting widespread riots in Harare and Bulawayo -- the army was called in to respond, at least a dozen Africans were killed and several hundred arrested. Political meetings were banned, but strikes and riots continued. In early October, over 100 arrests were made and several more protestors were shot in another series of confrontations. Part of the legislative response to this crisis was a revision of the Vagrancy Act. The text of the act was novel in Rhodesia in that it emphasized rehabilitation of 'vagrants' rather than simply their exclusion from urban spaces -- or, implicitly, the strict regulation of the movements of 'African' populations through pass laws. The application of the act, however, was rather different in practice. Hundreds of arrests -- unsurprisingly mostly protestors rather than 'vagrants' -- were made under the Vagrancy Act in October and November of 1960, and the 'rehabilitation centres' provided for in the act were often little more than hastily constructed cages (Alexander 2012: 351-353).

This progression of state violence and repression is relevant for present purposes because some Rhodesia workers sought to enrol the ILO's assistance in response to the arrests made under the Vagrancy Act. The African Trades Union Congress (ATUC-SR), itself a politically radical breakaway segment of the more moderate Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress, cabled the ILO to complain about the use of the Vagrancy Act as a means of forced labour recruitment:

700 Africans arrested by Southern Rhodesia government through Vagrancy Act of October this year. Forced labour practiced here. Appealing to ILO to intervene immediately.<sup>3</sup>

The cable was communicated to the Overseas Department of the Ministry of Labour in London, which in theory was still in charge in Southern Rhodesia, in a letter signed by David Morse.<sup>4</sup> The Vagrancy Act, it should be noted, certainly penalized unemployment, but did not necessarily constitute forced labour in the

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<sup>3</sup> Cable from Secretary, African Trades Union Congress to International Labour Organization, 4 November, 1960, ILO Archives, Geneva (ILOA) FLA 1-244.

<sup>4</sup> David A. Morse to the Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Overseas Department, 15 November, 1960, ILOA FLA 1-244.

ILO's sense. The ATUC-SR's appeal, then, ought to be seen as a creative effort to enrol the ILO into a conflict with a deeply repressive settler-state. The ATUC-SR's appeal, then, ought to be seen as a creative effort to enrol the ILO into a conflict with a deeply repressive settler-state. The ATUC-SR appealed to the ILO, in this case working through informal contacts with the Director General's office rather than the Governing Body's representation procedures, as a means of working around the settler government. Indeed, ironically, working through the ILO enabled the ATUC-SR's claims about forced labour to be brought to the Colonial Office in London, which would have been difficult or impossible to achieve by direct appeal. The ILO's position relative to both Southern Rhodesia and Great Britain, then, enabled a complaint about the Vagrancy Act to circumvent the lines of colonial authority.

While no other substantive action was taken in 1960, the ATUC-SR and other workers' organizations in Southern Rhodesia continued to draw on international networks in order to find spaces to act, including by occasionally using the language of 'forced labour'. The role of the ICFTU was particularly notable here. The ICFTU submitted a series of allegations about the imprisonment of unionists in Southern Rhodesia to the ILO in 1964 (ILO 1966a). The ICFTU also provided material support to African trade unions in the country and continued to press allegations about trade union rights and labour legislation in Southern Rhodesia to the ILO and UN. The ICFTU and the World Confederation of Labour co-authored a petition to the Secretary General of the UN about forced labour in Southern Rhodesia in 1974.<sup>5</sup> Invocations of 'forced labour', then, they were part of a broader strategy of resistance to settler colonialism in Southern Rhodesia adopted by a shifting coalition of local and international trade union confederations. Indeed, the head of the African branch of the ICFTU made the link between trade union rights and the forced labour petition quite explicit later in 1974:

There is indeed a great need for a strong and viable trade union movement in that country, for the minority racist regime does not even hesitate to introduce forced labour to promote its ends. The ICFTU protested in strongest terms against the introduction of this practice and other measures on South African Apartheid lines.  
(Kailembo 1974: 39)

The ICFTU's role in fighting apartheid was by no means unproblematic (see Chapter 7), but it is nonetheless notable for present purposes that the ILO's conventions on forced labour were being deployed here as part of a broader

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<sup>5</sup> 'Petition from Mr. Jean Brück, General Secretary, World Confederation of Labour, and Mr. Otto Kersten, General Secretary, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Concerning Southern Rhodesia', 26 March 1974, ILOA FLA 1-0.

strategy of resistance to settler rule (rather than ‘forced labour’ *per se*) by a loose configuration of ‘international’ and ‘national’ trade union activists.

The significant point here is that more or less formal allegations about ‘forced labour’ in the settler colonies, drawing on the ILO’s conventions and supervisory mechanisms, were being used in the context of a variety of very different strategies related to the negotiation of colonial and postcolonial sovereignty in Africa. Indeed, as will be discussed further in Chapter 7, the ILO was entangled in trade union resistance to apartheid in a number of other ways that went well beyond its standards framework. For present purposes, the point is that resistance to white rule and invocations of ‘forced labour’ were means by which various groups sought to forge overlapping forms of identity or solidarity and cement or challenge a range of state forms after 1960. These uses of the ILO’s forced labour conventions are notable for how they seem to diverge from the purpose of the conventions and supervisory machinery the ILO deployed in its efforts to regulate forced labour. An ‘actors and entanglements’ approach is useful in highlighting at least three different dimensions of the problem here. First, the regulation of ‘forced labour’ depended in practice not so much on the ‘enforcement’ of rules as on the circulations of conventions as resources by a wide range of actors. Second, the actors participating in these circulations of governmental technologies, however, did so with an eye to struggles that had often little to do with forced labour *per se*. Moreover, it was possible for state and trade union actors to use these mechanisms for strikingly different purposes and in the context of different struggles. It is not enough, in short, to highlight the technologies of government involved in regulating forced labour, mapping the multiple encounters of these technologies with historically shifting relations of force is crucial. Finally, these struggles suggest the fluidity of boundaries between the ‘national’, ‘regional’, and ‘international’ -- ‘international’ technologies of government were deployed in struggles over ‘national’ authority.

#### ‘FORCED LABOUR’ AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

The ‘forced labour’ conventions were also deployed sporadically in more ‘localized’ conflicts. Workers have occasionally mobilized claims to the ILO about forced labour as a means of resisting management or recruitment practices, even in instances where nothing that could obviously be called ‘forced labour’ was taking place. These examples underline the theoretical points raised in the previous section. Two surprisingly similar cases separated by almost 40 years are notable here.

##### *Labour inspection in Cameroon*

The *Confédération Generale Kamerunaise du Travail* (CGKT) approached the ILO in 1958, at the tail end of the colonial period. The process of decolonization in Cameroon was unusually complex. Cameroon was split up between the French and British following WWI, but remained a mandate territory

under both the League and the UN. In 1955 the radical *Union des populations du Cameroun* -- closely affiliated to the largest trade union movement in the country, the *Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun* (USCC) -- had been outlawed by the French administration, followed in the British part of the territory in 1957. The colonial regimes subsequently began the process of passing power to the relatively conservative *Union Camerounnais*. Complicating matters even further, because Cameroon was a UN mandate territory (at least in theory) there was an additional layer of international oversight over the administration in Cameroon. Indeed, the UPC, its ability to act ‘domestically’ severely restricted by the bans passed in 1955 and 1957, continued to appeal to the UN Mandates Commission about abuses by the French and British administrations (see Terretta 2012). In 1958, in short, Cameroon was in the midst of a relatively complicated process of decolonization, under ambiguous jurisdiction, and in which the lines between ‘national’ and ‘international’ politics were especially blurry. The situation in terms of trade union politics was equally complex and contentious. The USCC cut ties with the CGT and renamed itself the CGKT after the UPC was banned. The new CGKT, however, remained riven by conflicts about whether to cooperate with the administration or to support the guerrilla campaign being waged by the banned UPC (Konings 2009: 322-323). Much of this, readers will note, was also broadly true of Ghana. In Cameroon, however, the CGKT was also faced with several rival organizations. Indeed, the contacts with the ILO of interest here took place during an interval 1957-1959 in which the federation had split into two rival factions, one largely pro-regime and another pro-UPC.

The details of the actual events at the root of the CGKT complaint are somewhat unclear, but they revolved around the demotion and transfer of a *délégué du personnel*, M’Bone Möise, at the *Société de l’eau et de l’assainissement*.<sup>6</sup> Möise was transferred to Douala from a water treatment plant at nearby Japoma and demoted from engineer to unskilled general labourer after a visit to the plant by the local labour inspector. The transfer and demotion left the Japoma plant’s workers without a *délégué*; and according to the CGKT they were unable to elect a replacement ‘due to the complicity of the local Labour Inspectorate’.<sup>7</sup> The inspector’s explanation, annexed to the CGKT’s letter, was that Möise had ‘left his post without authorization for more than half an hour’, during which time the machine used to add lime to the water being processed became jammed, and as a result ‘during an indeterminate period of time, partially

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<sup>6</sup> The *délégué du personnel* is an elected representative of workers in a particular workplace, it was originally a French institution. The role does not necessarily have any formal connection to union structures. Labour code reforms in the 1950s established the right for Cameroonian workers to be represented by a *délégué* in their dealings with management.

<sup>7</sup> D. Nokmis, Félix Song and Edouard Ndoumbou to the Director General of the ILO, 21 August 1958, p. 1; ILOA FLA 1-0.

untreated water was pumped to Douala'. The inspector also made note of Möise's 'insolent and absolutely unacceptable' attitude to his manager's comments on the matter.<sup>8</sup> The CGKT suggested that the inspector and management had not followed proper procedure in dealing with Möise's absence, and were effectively using a trumped-up pretext to deprive the workers at the plant of legally mandated representation.

It would certainly be fair to ask what about this case constituted 'forced labour' -- by almost any definition, this is not immediately apparent. The CGKT argued that the demotion and transfer was an instance of forced labour because it would require Möise 'to work in unfamiliar conditions incompatible with the Conventions of the ILO', on threat of dismissal.<sup>9</sup> This was a tenuous argument at best, certainly by the standards the ILO's conventions. But the intent on the part of the CGKT was evidently less to ensure the enforcement of the forced labour conventions than it was to enrol the ILO's help into a workplace conflict in which the administration in Cameroon was unlikely to be of much help (and indeed in which the labour inspectorate may have been complicit). Without the forced labour argument tacked onto the complaint, it would not have been within the scope of the ILO's activity. The rather thin argument that Möise was subject to forced labour, then, was a creative effort to enrol the ILO in a superficially 'local' conflict. They were not entirely successful. The ILO's reply was to dodge the issue by telling the CGKT that the complaint would be passed on to the Ad-Hoc Committee on Forced Labour.<sup>10</sup> There is no real way of knowing if the committee seriously considered the case (although it seems doubtful), by the time the committee issued its next report it was 1962 and the primary concern was with the policies of postcolonial states.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the CGKT's actions are significant insofar as they highlight the agency exercised by the CGKT in the actual deployment of the ILO's regulatory frameworks around forced labour in the context of ongoing struggles with the state around its basic right to exist. Despite the relatively depoliticized frameworks articulated by the ILO, the practice of governing forced labour was often entangled with these kinds of politics.

The broader point is that outside of occasional debates and committee work in Geneva, like the 1962 ILC, and sporadic formal complaints like those from Ghana (and Portugal's retaliatory complaint about Liberia), the real work of regulating forced labour mostly involved interactions like this one and the entreaties from the ATUC-SR and ICFTU about Southern Rhodesia. That is to say, it involved entanglements -- however fleeting -- with scattered actors

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<sup>8</sup> Annex to Nokmis, Song and Ndoumbou to Director General, cited n. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Nokmis, Song and Ndoumbou to Director General, p. 2, cited n. 29.

<sup>10</sup> C. Wilfred Jenks to Secretary General, CGKT, 19 September 1958, ILOA FLA 1-0.

<sup>11</sup> It is also difficult to say, unfortunately, what happened to Möise.

pursuing objectives that had little to do with forced labour and, as a result, with multiple histories of struggle.

*Contract teaching in Senegal*

A similar, albeit more formal, use of the forced labour conventions came from Senegal in the mid-1990s. The *Syndicat unique et démocratique des enseignants du Senegal* (SUDES) lodged a representation to the ILO in August of 1995 about a recruitment programme looking for ‘education volunteers’ in rural Senegal. The representation from SUDES notes that the government had advertised for ‘education volunteers’, explicitly asking for educated young people with ‘no short-term employment prospects’, and offering a small monthly ‘scholarship’ of CFA Franc 50 000 (slightly more than USD 100) and accommodation. The advertisement apparently justified the programme by arguing that ‘given the constraints facing the state, the Government is seeking to launch a movement of young education volunteers, and, for the next four years, to recruit 1 200 education volunteers for elementary classes each year, especially for children in Senegal’s most backward areas’ (ILO 1996: 3). SUDES argued that this constituted forced labour because

The segment of the population targeted by the recruitment drive (unemployed graduates, young people with no employment prospects) makes it perfectly obvious that the principal motivation of the “volunteers” is bound to be their economic difficulties and their need to find work at any price. They have no choice at all in the matter. There can therefore be no question of their being volunteers in the true sense of the word. It is nothing but their economic difficulties that obliges them to accept. (ILO 1996: 5).

Their representation continued by explicitly invoking the balance between ‘development’ and coercion implicit in C105:

This kind of procedure harkens back to the colonial history of Africa when the colonial administration, under the guise of the “recruitment of volunteers”, in fact obliged the natives to work on so-called “development” projects. Through its “volunteer” policy which totally ignores the aforementioned international Conventions and currently labour legislation in Senegal, the Government is actually perpetuating forced labour. (ILO 1996: 5)

As in the CGKT case, the argument about ‘forced labour’ is fairly tenuous with respect to the conventional sense in which ‘forced labour’ was understood in the ILO’s conventions. The SUDES complaint at least partially echoes the kinds of blurry lines between ‘economic’ and ‘non-economic’ coercion central to Banaji’s (2003) arguments about the ‘fiction’ of free labour in its invocation of the volunteers’ ‘need to find work at any price’ -- a line of argument which the ILO has studiously avoided since the 1920s. The real issue for SUDES was quite simply that the ‘education volunteers’ were being offered less than half the starting salary for a teacher in Senegal, which was plainly perceived as a threat to

their members' economic position. They also pursued two other arguments, one alleging political discrimination in the hiring of education volunteers, and another arguing that the programme violated the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Governing Body committee appointed to investigate the complaint found that the forced labour allegations were unfounded.

SUDES' concerns did, however, have a more lasting impact on the sectoral activities section of the ILO dealing with teachers and on the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (CEART). CEART found that the Senegalese policy was in fact in violation of the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation (CEART 1997: Annex 2D, Paras. 19-20). Yet, CEART could not really do much of anything other than to recommend that the Governing Body set up some kind of aid programme for the expansion of education in Senegal, and request that SUDES and the Senegalese government keep them updated on the situation. SUDES thus continued to push the 'forced labour' angle in later engagements with CEART. SUDES' submission to a review by CEART in 2000 of developments since the original complaint noted its

regret that its previous arguments concerning forced labour had not been accepted, since "volunteer" teachers in Senegal were really victims of a policy which, in the name of "economic emergency", reduced young workers to accepting anything they were given for want of any decent employment prospects. (CEART 2000: 47)

The 'volunteer' programme remains in place -- indeed it has been adopted as a model for various systems of contract teacher recruitment in Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Cameroon (Duthilleul 2005: 33-38). However, SUDES' pressure was a major force behind greater attention subsequently being paid to employment and working conditions in setting regional and even global policy frameworks for contract teaching.<sup>12</sup> This is, of course, at best a small victory for SUDES, but it is nonetheless significant for present purposes because C105 was deployed as a resource in pursuit of a broader political strategy to deal with a problem that really had very little to do with forced labour through international institutions. 'Forced labour', along with the CEART, were means of 'internationalizing' a relatively localized conflict over labour recruitment. The forced labour complaints were, as for the CGKT, means of entangling the ILO in a relatively localized conflict -- this time over recruitment practices.

These cases show the considerable range of purposes that have been pursued, albeit not necessarily successfully, using the forced labour conventions. This is theoretically significant because it draws our attention to a broader range of possible forms of action in 'global governance' than either rules and authority

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<sup>12</sup> See Duthilleul (2005: 46).



or historical materialist approaches to global governance allow us to see. ‘Local’ conflicts over hiring practices or workplace politics *can* spill over in unexpected ways to ‘international’ institutional spaces because of the deliberate actions of the workers involved. The practical activity of an IO *can* often be shaped in important ways by creative efforts to bring ‘international’ resources into local conflicts. Notably, in both cases discussed in this section, as with those in the preceding section, the argument that the practices in question constituted ‘forced labour’ was only one of a number of arguments deployed. Indeed, the collection of actors using the ILO to protest against apartheid and the CGKT took a similar approach. The forced labour conventions, then, were deployed quite deliberately as one among a number of resources; SUDES had more luck in the end with the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation. Of course, neither of these cases really led to substantial intervention on the part of the ILO, and we should not exaggerate the frequency with which such strategies were adopted. These instances nonetheless show the ways in which the ILO’s supervisory machinery could become entangled in seemingly ‘local’ conflicts, and ways in which conventions have become tools in struggles very different from the contexts for which they were designed.

#### ‘THE PAST HAUNTS THE PRESENT’<sup>13</sup>

‘Forced labour’ has been revived quite vigorously as an object of concern for the ILO from the late-1990s onwards. However, ‘forced labour’ in the sense originally intended by C29 or C105 is not the object of contemporary initiatives. In stark contrast to older debates about forced labour, the state appears primarily as an enforcer of rules prohibiting forced labour and trafficking, rather than as the main culprit in the practice of forced labour. The revival of forced labour at the ILO sits at the interface of several broad trends, all of which pull in conflicting directions. Moreover, initiatives to regulate forced labour have been embedded in variable ways in different levels of political activity in Africa. This section first traces the re-emergence of forced labour as a concern for the ILO in the 1990s, it then examines some initiatives in Africa relating to ‘traditional slavery’ and child labour. These engagements have been somewhat troubled, in spite of the shift in focus of the ILO and the enthusiasm of some international partners -- notably the ICFTU and Anti-Slavery International -- in large part because of the reluctance or ambivalence of governments and trade unions in the region. Here again it is useful to take an actors and entanglements approach. That is, rather than critique the ILO’s new understandings of forced labour (Rogaly 2008; Lerche 2007; Phillips and Mieres 2015), it is useful to investigate the politics of actually putting this new agenda into practice.

#### *Reviving ‘forced labour’*

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<sup>13</sup> The phrase is from ILO (2001: 4).

The renewed emphasis on forced labour, as well as its redefinition to include trafficking and slavery, reflects a number of broad shifts in the global political economy. Four factors are worth outlining briefly.

First, the ILO has been confronted with the erosion of the corporatist modes of economic and political order in which its operations had historically been deeply embedded. Robert Cox (1977) had noted already in the mid-1970s that the erosion of tripartite corporatism posed significant challenges for the ILO's continued relevance. The problem only intensified with the acceleration of the neoliberal project in the 1980s and 1990s. The ILO's eventual response, reflected in the 'Decent Work Agenda' announced in 1999 (ILO 1999a) was to reorient itself towards a more flexible agenda focused on the promotion of employment and social protection coupled with the elimination of the worst abuses, including forced labour and child labour. What matters for the present moment is that the renewed attention to forced labour should be understood in the context of a longer-standing crisis of prevailing modes of labour governance that forced the ILO to adopt new tactics and concerns (*cf.* Lerche 2007).

Second, and relatedly, the core institutions of the international labour movement centred on European workers, especially the ICFTU and ITUC, have also increasingly been under pressure to redefine their relationships with workers in the global south. As a number of authors have noted, the ICFTU and ITUC, whose leaderships remain strongly rooted in social-democratic traditions of labour relations that are both under threat and have never really been applied to workers in most of the world, face significant challenges in forging substantive relationships with these workers (see Bieler 2012; O'Brien 2000). Forced labour has been one issue around which the ICFTU and subsequently the ITUC have sought to articulate these relationships. The ICFTU issued a report on forced labour in 2001, in collaboration with Anti-Slavery International (ICFTU/ASI 2001). The report included a case study that drew heavily on research by a local organization, *Enfants Solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde* (ESAM), in Benin and Gabon focusing on child trafficking that was initially published with ASI in 2000 (Fanou-Ako and Adihou 2000). The ICFTU, and subsequently the ITUC, have involved themselves with networks of humanitarian activists and researchers oriented towards problems of forced labour and child labour. Because the ITUC remains an important constituent group of the ILO, and has even helped mobilize complaints about forced labour in some instances (see below), these groups have played a significant role in pushing the renewed attention of the ILO in many instances.

Third, as previous authors have pointed out in more extensive detail (LeBaron and Ayers 2013; Phillips and Mieres 2015) the transformation of global production networks has dramatically altered both the extent and form of forced labour. There is little space with which to trace out these arguments in any great

detail here, but for the moment it should suffice to highlight a few crucial mechanisms by which these processes have taken place. Neoliberal labour market reforms have increased the precarity of work across much of the global south, as well as increased reliance on informal mechanisms to secure the reproduction of labour -- these transformations have increased the vulnerability of many workers to deepening forms of exploitation, including forced labour (see LeBaron and Ayers 2013; Phillips and Mieres 2015). Further, the increasing importance of buyer-driven production networks dominated by global branded retailers in many sectors oriented around low-skill, labour intensive production (e.g. garments and textiles, electronics), has both contributed to the dramatic growth of subcontracted production and increased pressure on smaller contracting firms to cut costs (Phillips 2016; Taylor 2007). This has often led both to the increasing precarity of labour, and concomitantly to increased vulnerabilities to a number of different forms of forced labour (see LeBaron and Ayers 2013 on Africa). The main point for present purposes is that broader transformations in regimes of production and accumulation on a global scale have both increased the prevalence and changed the shape of unfree labour. The governance of forced labour in the present context, then, is faced with a decidedly different matrix of practices than the original set of problems covered by C29.

Finally, especially since the end of the Cold War, international migration has increasingly been understood as a criminal or a security issue. This is most visible in the negotiation of international frameworks for the criminal prosecution of human trafficking. The UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime was established at a conference in Palermo in 2000, including a 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children' (the Palermo Protocol). The Palermo Protocol puts a heavy emphasis on intra-state cooperation with respect to the criminal dimensions of trafficking, which has led to an underemphasis on the labour dimensions of migration, including trafficking. The growing international policy attention paid to trafficking has had ambiguous consequences for the ILO. On one hand, increased policy attention to trafficking dovetails well with the growing emphasis on forced labour and child labour at the ILO. On the other, the emphasis on criminal and security dimensions of the problem creates certain tensions with the ILO's approach to the problem. This is visible even at very basic definitional levels -- as in the problems with existing forced labour statistics raised by the ILO, discussed below.

The confluence of these developments led to the elaboration of a rapidly expanding set of new governance arrangements related to forced labour. It has generally been much easier for the ILO to work on child labour and child trafficking in Africa, especially in West Africa, than it has been to work on forced labour and 'slavery' more generally. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) was established in 1992. Notably, IPEC drew explicitly on C29 and C105 in defining its mission, and (particularly in West

Africa) has often emphasized the trafficking dimensions of child labour. Programmes on 'forced labour', *per se*, were somewhat slower in coming. SAP-FL was not established until 2002, and programming in the region is still tentative (see below), in spite of support from several public and private donors. Nonetheless, both forced labour and the elimination of child labour were among the 'core conventions' listed in the ILO's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. There is thus a strong element of crossover between IPEC and the ILO's recent programming on forced labour, including at the operational level in some instances.

The ILO has consistently presented these new initiatives as a revival of its 'historic mission' of combatting forced labour: 'The adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-Up in 1998 signalled a renewed international resolve to relegate forced labour to history' (ILO 2001: 1). The new forced labour agenda is, however, different from previous periods in at least two significant ways. First, forced labour has been reinterpreted as a predominantly private and (more importantly) illicit phenomenon. The debates about C29 did emphasize the elimination of forced labour for private purposes, but in colonial political economies, most forcible recruitment for private employers was done by 'public' security forces (e.g. Gide's Pasha) and backed by legislative compulsions to work. In any event the convention concerned itself primarily with laws that permitted forcible recruitment. C105 focused explicitly on state coercion. Rather than a question of legal compulsions to work, forced labour is now understood in terms of fraudulent recruitment, various 'traditional' forms of slavery, human trafficking, and child labour. This has led to a significant repositioning of the state in forced labour governance -- rather than a question of shaping policies or restraining states' resort to coercive recruitment practices, eliminating forced labour becomes a question of strengthening state capacity to enforce laws. To wit, the ILO's 2001 report suggests that 'The issue of effective governance within countries is high on the agenda of the development community. Attaining better enforcement of laws that ban forced labour forms a natural part of repairing failures in governance that characterize many manifestations for forced labour' (ILO 2001: 3). At times, this has meant very directly and literally working with law enforcement and judiciary officials -- training on forced labour for judges and police officers has been run in Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, and Ethiopia. Moreover, where previously the ILO's supervisory work was targeted at evaluating the compliance of legislation with ILO standards, the new agenda required a relatively novel attention to the actual practice of forced labour.

Second, and relatedly, the ILO has moved towards different, and much more active, forms of research. Previously, the ILO relied largely on evidence of forced labour submitted by external actors (as in most of the cases described above), or information on legislation submitted through regular reporting. Since

2001, the ILO has set about trying to actively map the practice of forced labour. The 2001 report made note of the limited availability of information about forced labour, suggesting that the major reason was that ‘forced labour is increasingly exacted in the illicit, underground economy’ (ILO 2001: 4), areas that escape national statistics and are often hard to trace. Belser and de Cock (2009) note several shortcomings of existing statistical information on forced labour. Aside from the general difficulty in obtaining information on illicit activity, the ILO relies on a limited number of national surveys; which themselves are hampered by an overreliance on crime statistics and an overemphasis on sexual exploitation over other forms of forced labour; and, finally, there are definitional problems around the concept of ‘forced labour’ itself. The ILO recently published a set of guidelines seeking to address these issues (ILO 2012a), but the difficulty persists. According to one official:

The figures we found in 2005 are lower than those we got in 2012, but we can’t say that that’s due to an increase in [the incidence of forced labour], it’s probably due to a better estimation. Forced labour is a crime; so it’s underground, it’s hidden. The more you dig the more you find.<sup>14</sup>

In short, tracking forced labour remains very difficult, yet the statistical mapping of forced labour is a central technology deployed by the ILO in seeking to govern forced labour. The ILO has issued two global estimates of the incidence of forced labour, in 2005 and 2012 -- which found, respectively, 12.3 and 20m people in situations of forced labour globally (ILO 2005; 2012b). A further report was issued in 2014 on the ‘economics of forced labour’, estimating the global annual profits produced by forced labour at roughly USD 150b, and highlighting the importance of poverty and income shocks to vulnerable households as key determinants of forced labour (ILO 2014a). The significant point here is that this growing emphasis on statistical research as a technology of government has, in fact, deepened the reliance of the ILO on enrolling ‘national’ partners. The ILO depends heavily on national surveys of forced labour for its estimates of forced labour. Current estimates, then, are somewhat hampered by the absence of national data in many cases, and as a result the ILO has made efforts to strengthen state institutions to enable more comprehensive data collection.

The ILO has also started to take steps to update existing rules on forced labour. In 2014, the ILC debated and passed a protocol updating C29. Notable provisions included the elimination of the ‘transition period’; as well as provisions on technical assistance including the adoption of national tripartite plans of action for the elimination of forced labour and a commitment to ‘release, protection, recovery and rehabilitation of people affected by forced labour’. These

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with ILO Official, Geneva, June 2014. S/he is referring to estimates in ILO (2005: 10-15) of 12.3m and ILO (2012b) of 20m people in situations of forced labour globally.

changes to the convention reflect the shifts already underway in the previous twenty years in the sets of practices, resources, and spaces through which the ILO sought to govern forced labour.

The end result has been the deployment of a relatively new range of technologies of government. This new set of routines and techniques connects the standard-setting role of the ILO much more to its other 'development' activities (discussed further in Part III) -- 'the nature of modern forced labour calls for a truly global programme or awareness building, backed by meticulous research and development of appropriate statistical methods to identify problems and their solution' (ILO 2001: 90-91). Technical assistance programmes, in this context, are seen as means to 'address the structural roots of forced labour; strengthen the organizations that challenge it; conduct broad campaigns against it; and establish and reinforce the labour administration and criminal justice institutions needed to back up policy interventions with punishment of perpetrators' (ILO 2001: 91). These are not, however, necessarily unproblematic shifts for the ILO.

One major potential problem, recognized from the start, is that the 'social partners' of the ILO -- particularly in some national contexts -- might not necessarily be well-suited for participation in technical cooperation against forced labour. That is, 'for employers' and workers' organizations, tackling forced labour may mean reaching out beyond their normal clients and constituents' (ILO 2001: 103). Moreover, government actors have not always been willing participants in 'forced labour' projects either. It has been easier for the ILO to develop projects around child labour and child trafficking, although these have been deployed in interesting ways by trade unions and government actors in the region. Some of these problems are explored in greater detail over the next two sections. Here then, is in a certain sense the corollary to the arguments presented in the previous sections: the practice of governance *depends* on actors' willingness to entangle their own action in 'global' programmes. In the absence of these entanglements, 'global' programmes often do not amount to much in practice. The entanglements of state, trade union, and social movement actors in Africa with programming on forced labour have shaped both the practice *and* what we might call the 'non-practice' of governance in important ways.

#### THE ILO AND SLAVERY IN NIGER AND MAURITANIA

SAP-FL projects have been relatively difficult to get off the ground in the region, especially as compared to child labour. There have been several technical assistance projects focused on forced labour in Africa since the establishment of SAP-FL in 2002. There have been projects to train law enforcement and judiciary officials in Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia. The ILO has also provided some training to government labour statisticians in West Africa on the measurement of forced labour and child labour.

Another set of projects, worth discussing in a bit more detail, is currently in development in Niger and Mauritania dealing with measures to prevent ‘traditional slavery’.<sup>15</sup> These have been more difficult for the ILO, but do show some ways in which activists have sought to use international spaces and resources to advance ‘local’ aims, as well as the ways in which these resources can become objects in struggles in ‘national’ politics. The ILO commissioned a study on the prospects for the 1998 Declaration in Niger, which identified slavery as a problem (Oumarou 2001: 23-26). Anti-slavery advocates began using the ILO to pressure the Nigerien government. ASI financed a study of slavery in Niger, conducted in 2002 and 2003. Timidria, a local anti-slavery organization, did the bulk of the actual research. The study identified roughly 11 000 people as belonging to a hereditary ‘slave caste’, generally working for a master as shepherds, agricultural workers, or domestic workers. In some cases they performed wage work for others and were compelled to turn over their earnings to masters (Abdelkader 2004). Based on the study, ASI and the ICFTU began making observations to the CEARC about slavery in Niger in 2003, arguing that it represented a violation of C29. Both organizations have continued to press complaints about forced labour in Niger to the CEARC; more recently the ITUC has also used the World Trade Organization’s General Council Review of Trade Policies to make similar claims about Niger.

The initial response on the part of the Nigerien government was to reply to the ICFTU observations with rather vague reports on existing legislation and practice, and by arguing that the ASI report exaggerated the true extent of slavery in the country. The ILO, meanwhile, began to commission research specifically on slavery in the country -- generally turning up results similar to the earlier studies, and also highlighting problems of discrimination facing ex-slaves (Sekou and Abdoukarimou 2009). Research on child labour in Niger also pointed to links with patterns of slavery (ILO 2007a). In reaction to these efforts, the government criminalized slavery in 2003, and the Ministry of Labour created a national commission against forced labour and discrimination in 2006. The commission, however, only existed on paper. The ILO, through SAP-FL, has subsequently sought to provide financial and technical support to the commission, as well as

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<sup>15</sup> The term ‘traditional slavery’ was used by my interview participants and in most of the policy documents cited here. It corresponds to a broader tendency to talk about slavery in West Africa, and particularly in Mauritania, as a residue of older practices -- Bales (1998), for instance, explicitly contrasts the ‘old’ slavery in Mauritania with the ‘new’ slavery practiced in Thai brothels or Brazilian charcoal manufacturing. This is problematic -- it would seem to posit a timeless ‘African’ practice of slavery isolated from the dramatic social, economic, and political changes witnessed across the continent over the last few hundred years (Lebaron and Ayers 2013). Slavery, in Niger as in elsewhere is a historically dynamic process (see Rossi 2015).

participating in advocacy activities trying to make people aware of the legislation on slavery in the country.

Initially the government was not willing to participate. In 2010, the government fell to a military coup spurred by civil unrest resulting from opposition to an effort to amend the constitution to allow the president to serve a third term. The military turned power over to a new civilian government in 2011, which has been more willing to participate in the ILO project on forced labour. The new government also created a second national committee, this one on human trafficking, in 2012. The SAP-FL project currently taking shape, then, involves support for coordination between the two commissions, as well as some advocacy work. The latter is aimed at raising awareness among the general public about the anti-slavery laws in place in Niger. It is difficult to offer much substantive commentary on the impacts of this activity; at the time of writing the project in Niger is still in the planning stages. However, it should be noted that the Nigerien state does exercise a considerable degree of agency in these developments -- the SAP-FL project has been delayed, subverted, and diluted by a number of actions taken by the state. Niger now has two 'paper committees' dealing with forced labour, whose function will largely depend on the input of the ILO and other IOs. Moreover, it is possible that the technical cooperation project will permit the Nigerien government to give the impression of taking action against slavery, drawing on the moral legitimacy of the ILO as a resource, while doing very little to limit slavery in practice. Anti-slavery advocates in Niger have been able to bring a considerable degree of pressure to bear on the government by drawing on the resources and spaces connected to the ILO's governance of forced labour, but the government may be able to draw on resources connected to the same organization to diffuse those pressures.

Slavery in Mauritania has probably attracted more international attention than in Niger. A number of journalistic and academic commentaries on Mauritanian slavery were published starting in the late 1990s (e.g. Bales 1998). The ICFTU also submitted observations to the CEACR about slavery in Mauritania starting in 2001; the *Confederation Libre des Travailleurs Mauritaniens* (CLTM) subsequently provided comments in 2003. As in Niger, much of the research Mauritania underpinning these complaints was being carried out by local activists -- in this case primarily *SOS Esclaves*. Mauritania, however, has been if anything even more resistant to anti-slavery initiatives than Niger. Slavery was outlawed in the early 1980s, and criminalized in 2007, but there has been very little change in practice. In spite of several efforts from the ILO to establish technical cooperation projects under SAP-FL, and the availability of considerable funding from the European Union, thus far Mauritania has yet to agree even to the kind of project being negotiated in Niger. Indeed, a number of local anti-slavery activists were even arrested in August of 2014.



The ILO's practices, resources, and spaces dealing with forced labour might be used for conflicting purposes. Debates about slavery in both countries are indicative of the ways in which the new forced labour agenda might offer means of 'local' actors of working around the resistance of states. The conditions under which the ILO and ICFTU/ITUC have shifted their attention to forced labour in the private economy are external to Niger or Mauritania, but these shifts have nonetheless opened up certain possibilities for Nigerien and Mauritanian actors. Timidria and SOS Esclaves in particular, as well as CLTM to some extent, have relied on assistance from ASI, the ICFTU/ITUC, and indirectly the ILO in pushing for policy on slavery. The supervisory machinery of the ILO, including the networks of actors with access to the CEARC, were important spaces through which research on the extent of slavery in Niger in Mauritania could be circulated. Equally importantly, they provided spaces in which governments could be made to respond to findings about slavery. Moreover, the new technical cooperation agenda has made available a new set of resources with which to try to negotiate the role of the state in dealing with slavery. The ILO supported or helped circulate research reinforcing the Timidria findings, although not to the same extent in Mauritania. Nonetheless, the reluctance of states in Niger and Mauritania -- dramatized especially clearly in the arrest of anti-slavery activists in Mauritania -- remains a significant obstacle. According to one interview participant: 'there's money, there are resources to work on this issue, but we can't work if the government doesn't want us to work'.<sup>16</sup> The ILO is at best a partial work-around for actors facing hostile 'national' institutions. Moreover, participation in ILO initiatives can in fact be a means of legitimizing state institutions that will not have much impact in practice at minimal cost. The regulation of forced labour in Niger and Mauritania, then, is best understood as a struggle between different actors -- in this case states and transnational networks of anti-slavery campaigners -- for control over the resources made available by the ILO. Moreover, the difficulties of the ILO in extending these programmes -- the 'non-practice' of governance -- is best explained by these entanglements.

#### TRADE UNIONS, FORCED LABOUR, AND CHILD LABOUR

A second illustration of the importance of entanglements to the 'non-practice' of governance comes from trade union activities on forced labour and child labour. The ICFTU/ITUC have been central to the revival of forced labour as an object of 'global' concern. Trade unions in Africa, while they have generally been supportive of efforts to eliminate forced labour, have not been centrally involved in many of the programmes on the ground dealing with forced labour. Trade unions have, however, been more willing to engage on problems of child labour in ways that reflect the more general dynamics noted in this chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with ILO Official, Dakar, November 2014.

ITUC-Africa has been somewhat lukewarm in its support for efforts to eliminate forced labour, although it has recently begun to articulate ‘forced labour’ as part of a broader response to globalization. ITUC-Africa introduced a new initiative on ‘Human and Workers’ Rights’ in 2009, in which forced labour and child labour were identified as problem areas. The ITUC connects forced labour, trafficking, and child labour to the impacts of neoliberal globalization in Africa, suggesting that ‘these problems can be addressed by the trade unions working together and harnessing the energies of all partners, as part of and closely linked to broader effort to achieve the goals of the decent work agenda and the Millennium Development Goals’.<sup>17</sup> Child labour has generally received more attention from unions. This is still highly variable; a 2007 evaluation of a programme on child trafficking for labour exploitation in West Africa, for instance, found highly variable levels of trade union involvement, ‘from absent in Ghana through low-level in Cameroon to high involvement in Burkina Faso and Mali’ (ILO 2007b: 20). In Ghana, indeed, some trade unions shifted course quite quickly (see below).

National-level programmes in Africa have often proceeded with little direct involvement of workers. Indeed, ASI’s study of Niger explicitly notes that the *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Niger* had been far more interested in dealing with child labour than slavery (Abdelkader 2004: 16); (Niger’s most recent Decent Work Country Programme, incidentally, also identifies child labour, but not slavery, as a priority area [ILO 2012c]). Nonetheless, at least two recent examples of trade union activities on child labour are comparable in many ways to the uses of C29 and C105 discussed above.

Some national union activities are visible with respect to child labour. As was the case in the earlier invocations of forced labour discussed above, these forms of participation are often multidirectional. More recently, though, the Ghana General Agricultural Workers’ Union (GAWU) -- the agricultural affiliate of the national Trades Union Congress (TUC) -- has operated a programme, supported by the ILO and International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers (IUF), which offered training to marginalized populations in certain kinds of production in an effort to reduce the reliance on child labour for family income. Two points are notable. First, unlike many African unionists, GAWU members in cocoa plantations and in fisheries are often in direct competition with child labourers. Second, GAWU puts a considerable emphasis on the usefulness of the projects for recruitment -- in providing services to people in agricultural or informal settings, GAWU is able to build support and help to enrol new

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<sup>17</sup> The project proposal can be found at <http://www.ituc-africa.org/Defense-des-droits-syndicaux.html>.

members.<sup>18</sup> Participation in ILO-supported programmes for the elimination of child labour is thus also simultaneously a means of strengthening GAWU's own position in rural communities. A similar project is now in place in Benin, dealing with women working in artisanal mining. The project aims to prevent children working in the sector by providing help setting up 'income generating activities', as in Ghana, and also providing daycare. Here again, these initiatives are a means of organizing artisanal miners.

Efforts to regulate child labour have also produced important spaces in which trade unions have sought to advance varying claims. In Malawi, a National Conference on Child Labour was held in 2012, supported by the ILO and IUF. The Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) participated. Notably, the President of the MCTU made a speech linking child labour explicitly not only to broader problems of poverty, but also to structural adjustment and frustrated expectations of democratization:

The advent of multiparty democracy in 1994 brought increased hope for millions of people who are unemployed and underemployed – hope that jobs will be created and poverty eradicated. However, Malawi is still characterised by low economic growth, high unemployment and underemployment. Economic growth has been negative despite the country's low wage strategy, which was implemented to promote economic growth. Workers have been subjected to retrenchments, especially in the parastatals that have privatised since 1994. The price of basic commodities has skyrocketed.

He also concluded by linking the struggle against child labour to the need for a broader respect for human rights in Malawi.<sup>19</sup> Here participation in internationally-supported national frameworks for child labour governance provided an opportunity for the MCTU to articulate broader challenges to systemic issues in the national political economy. In all of these cases, the ILO is tangentially involved -- funding workshops, providing training, or (in the case of ITUC-Africa) primarily by providing the language of 'decent work' in which to articulate claims.

These engagements are troubled in ways that are not entirely dissimilar to earlier engagements with the conventions and the ILO's supervisory frameworks. The place of trade unions in the new governance frameworks for forced labour is highly ambiguous. Moreover, trade unions, as in previous periods, have often been relatively ambivalent about forced labour. Nonetheless, in some cases

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<sup>18</sup> A number of trade unions elsewhere in Africa have used different ILO projects to similar ends, often by providing financial services. See Chapter 7.

<sup>19</sup> The conference programme and copies of several of the speeches delivered are available at <http://www.eclt.org/malawi-conference/>.

dealing with child labour the resources and spaces created in part by the ILO have been used by trade unions to challenge neoliberal reforms or as recruitment strategies in rural communities or informal economies. Moreover, local anti-slavery organizations in Niger and Mauritania have also been able to draw on resources and spaces linked to the ILO's regulation of forced labour, as well as links to ILO partner organizations like ASI or the ICFTU/ITUC, as means of advancing an agenda facing hostile national governments. If this is probably an outcome that the ILO would consider desirable in this instance, the extent to which Mauritanian and Nigerien governments have been able to disrupt ILO programming nonetheless demonstrates the myriad subtle ways in which these programmes can be contested. Here again, then, we can see an illustration of the argument that 'global' networks of governance can facilitate certain forms of multi-scalar action by subordinate actors in the global political economy.

## CONCLUSION

The international governance of 'forced labour' in Africa has a rather convoluted history. However, if we concern ourselves primarily with the 'rules' and with processes of decision-making, much of this complexity remains hidden from view. The 'rules' were negotiated in a few landmark debates in Geneva in which the colonial powers (in the 1920s) and the western bloc in the Cold War (in the 1950s) played the leading role; recent revisions have taken place under the pressures of neoliberal globalization and the end of the Cold War and in the context of growing concern about 'new security threats', including transnational crime and human trafficking. The practice of governance, however, was marked instead by the entanglements of myriad different actors with the ILO's formal regulatory machinery, informal networks and contacts, and more recently, technical assistance programmes. By way of conclusion, this section summarizes some of the most important functions that the forced labour conventions and the ILO's regulatory machinery dealing with forced labour have played across the whole period examined in Part II.

Information about forced labour produced or circulated with the help of the ILO, and the networks of workshops, conferences, and informal contacts built up around the ILO and the League of Nations in the interwar period unintentionally facilitated challenges to the legitimacy of colonial rule. This is illustrated most clearly in the case of Ford's speech on behalf of the ITUC-NW. Post-war debates about forced labour saw colonial issues largely sidelined by Cold War conflicts within the ILO. However, the Anti-Slavery Society and WFTU tried to advance various different sets of claims about colonial practices and about labour abuses in apartheid South Africa. The emergence of 'development' concerns, as well as the engagements with settler colonialism in the UN/ILO and ILO committees marked out some important areas of conflict around the boundaries of postcolonial statehood. Nonetheless, 'forced labour' remained largely marginalized in the ILO's activity in Africa from the early 1960s

until roughly 2000. Contemporary debates about forced labour are linked into a complex set of discourses about ‘traditional’ slavery, trafficking, poverty, and development. They have been invoked in a variety of conflicts over political order and state-making cutting across national and regional boundaries. Trade union politics have often been sidelined in discussions of forced labour, in no small part because of the ambivalence of unionized workers themselves. Nonetheless, spaces and resources connected to efforts to regulate forced labour or child labour have been used to expand union membership or challenge broader development models.

The governance of forced labour has, historically, operated in practice through a variety of different levels of social conflict. The full complexity of the governance of forced labour is hidden from view if we concern ourselves only with the ILO’s rules and regulatory frameworks themselves. Neither do debates in Geneva about forced labour in and of themselves capture the full significance of the engagements of various actors in the spaces built up around the ILO. The regulation of forced labour can neither be usefully understood in terms of the rhythms of global capitalism, at least not insofar as we might be interested in the practice of governance itself.

We can draw some theoretical implications for global governance more broadly out of the preceding discussion. First, while historical approaches to global governance are valuable, we ought to be wary of tying analyses of global governance to singular histories of global capitalism or hegemony. While it can be fruitful to think about the practice of forced labour in terms of its insertion into capitalist relations of production, we still need to recognize that the practice of *governance* involves complex and contradictory patterns of entwinement in various historical trajectories. The governance of forced labour has been entangled in various ways and at various times with resistance to colonial authority, efforts to legitimate and to constrain postcolonial statehood, conflicts over ‘development’ strategy, resistance to settler rule, some ‘local’ conflicts over labour discipline or recruitment, transnational anti-slavery campaigns, efforts by agricultural unions to promote their membership, or challenges to state policy. This considerable variety -- made visible by the approach taken in this chapter -- helps to show the significance of various forms of entanglement stretching well beyond ‘decision-making’ activity in Geneva.

Second, the relatively sporadic trajectory of forced labour governance over the time frame covered here shows the importance of the interface between the practices and resources of governance and various target actors. Practices and resources of governance depend on the enrolment of various state, trade union, and other actors. Or conversely, if the ILO or other ‘global governors’ are unable to find willing participants, governance gets nowhere.

Third, and relatedly, the convoluted history of ‘forced labour’ at the ILO suggests the importance of the interplay between ambiguity and agency in making ‘global’ politics. It is difficult to anticipate the consequences of C29 or C105 from their contents. They have had highly variable outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa, depending heavily on the ways in which various African and external actors have sought to deploy the rules, information, and material resources or engage in the institutional spaces produced through the ILO’s practices of governance. Indeed, in some instances actors deployed the same resources and engaged in the same spaces towards conflicting ends -- the differences between the ATUC- SR and Nkrumah’s engagements with the forced labour conventions and settler colonialism, and the tensions between Timidria and the Nigerien state over slavery, are notable examples. The very fact that it took 84 years to pass a protocol updating C29 is itself indicative of the flexibility of the ILO’s governance arrangements surrounding forced labour. They were deployed in a variety of ways in a variety of circumstances for which the original conventions were not deliberately designed.

The history of forced labour governance in Africa, then, shows the usefulness of adopting an ‘actors and entanglements’ approach to the study of global governance, rather than emphasizing the rules and sources of authority, or linking the ILO’s governance of forced labour to the history of capitalist production and ‘hegemony’ in world politics.

## PART III: STATES, WORKERS, AND ‘DEVELOPMENT’

### PREFACE TO PART III

Part II addressed the circulations, distortions, and struggles bound up in the ILO’s regulation of forced labour. The following chapters shift from standard setting to a more loosely articulated set of governance arrangements related to ‘development’ assistance. Chapter 4 traces the development of the ILO’s ‘development’ agenda out of crises of colonial authority stemming from the Great Depression and WWII, through colonial debates about migration and productivity in the 1950s, and the impacts of decolonization in the 1960s. The remaining chapters trace interventions into particular policy areas. Chapter 5 examines the operations of the World Employment Programme in the 1970s. Chapter 6 examines interventions dealing with the ‘informal’ sector since the early 1990s, focusing in particular on projects relating to social protection for informal workers. Chapter 7 examines a variety of initiatives related to workers’ education.

Evidently, this is only a limited cross-section of the ILO’s work -- and indeed the individual chapters are only able to present a small sample of the activities carried out in any particular area. These chapters nonetheless highlight particularly clearly the usefulness of an actors and entanglements approach by tracing out the ways in which global projects of governance can become entangled in struggles over the production of particular kinds of actors. The ILO’s visions of African states and workers were linked to the production of particular sets of practices, resources, and spaces captured under the rubric of ‘technical cooperation’, or more recently of ‘capacity building’. However, these technologies of government have never been unproblematically deployed. ‘African’ workers and states have often sought to re-appropriate them in a variety of different, sometimes conflicting ways.

Part II dealt with the ILO’s standard setting activities, which are easy enough to subsume under the heading of ‘governance’. The following chapters move towards an analysis of the ILO’s ‘development’ activities. There is a considerable debate about the balance that the ILO should strike between ‘standard-setting’ and ‘development’ activities. Standing (2008), for instance, argues that the ILO’s move towards development interventions represents a diversion from its fundamental standard setting role into an area where it lacks both the resources and the expertise to be effective. There is equally some internal debate on this point at the ILO. According to one official working with SAP-FL, for instance, ‘Our role in this context is not to do things in a given country, our role is to set up instruments’.<sup>1</sup> In short, the argument that not only is

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with ILO official, Geneva, June 2014.

‘development’ activity not really ‘governance’ *per se*, but that it is potentially a distraction from what should be the ILO’s role in global economic governance holds some sway even within the organization. Before proceeding any further, it is worth elaborating why ‘development assistance’ constitutes a form of governance, as this might not be entirely self-evident.

There are at least three reasons, why we should consider the interventions discussed in the following chapters as forms of global governance. First, as the following chapters all demonstrate, the dynamics of the ILO’s development assistance are in many ways similar to those involved in the governance of forced labour. Second, in basic empirical terms ‘development’ activities occupy a considerable portion of the time and budget of many IOs, including of course the ILO. The ILO has been involved in the international politics of ‘development’ since at least the early 1940s. Indeed, the line between standard-setting and technical cooperation activities is often rather blurry in practice. The ratification of ILO conventions comes with a set of reporting requirements, which for many governments in developing countries are difficult to meet because of resource and staffing constraints. The ILO increasingly provides technical assistance to governments aimed at facilitating reporting on ratified conventions. A common approach in Africa is to hold a national workshop with the ministry of labour, other relevant ministries, and workers’ and employers’ associations to draw up a report on conventions that have been ratified. Similarly, the ILO provides technical assistance to member countries in the region in bringing legislation into line with ratified conventions. Without ‘development’ activities the ILO’s supervisory machinery is relatively thin in many developing countries. Indeed, the relationship cuts both ways. Technical assistance is also at times used to encourage compliance with conventions or to sanction violations. For instance, the government of Swaziland has effectively prohibited trade unions since 2012. This is a fairly unambiguous violation of the ILO’s core conventions on freedom of association. Part of the response, notably, has been to withdraw technical assistance activities from Swaziland:

We won’t go look for donor money in a country that’s not compliant with our standards. So in Swaziland we’re not making any enquiries at all. And yet we’ve indicated to government that if they comply with minimum standards we will certainly proactively look for money. But we can’t bring donor money in if they’re not complying with minimum standards. That’s not how we operate.<sup>2</sup>

While the scale of technical assistance funds marshalled through the ILO is not sufficiently large that this represents a coercive instrument with the same kind of force as trade sanctions imposed by the WTO or a conditional loan from the IMF, this is the closest the ILO comes to backing its standards with coercive power rather than ‘shame’ or persuasion. Notwithstanding the potential effectiveness of

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with ILO official, Pretoria, October 2014.



this strategy, moreover, the point is that in practice the line between ‘standard setting’ and ‘development’ activities is blurry at best.

Finally, we could push the argument further and say that drawing attention to the ‘development’ activities on which many IO’s spend most of their time and budgets, rather than focusing on rules or decision-making procedures is a signal *benefit* of an actors and entanglements approach. There is, in any event, plenty of precedent for thinking about ‘development’ in terms of governmentalities. In Escobar’s (1995) phrase, development discourses and practices constitute a process of ‘making and unmaking’ the ‘third world’. James Ferguson highlights the production of state authority through transnational patterns of development practice. In *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), he argues that ‘development’ interventions in Lesotho were based on a persistent misidentification of Basotho communities as a ‘national’ economy based on ‘traditional’ agricultural production in need of market access, when in fact the country’s economy was primarily based on migrant labour for South African mining. Interventions designed to bring Basotho communities ‘into’ the market, then, overlooked the extent to which poverty in Lesotho resulted from the ways in which they were already incorporated into a transnational system of political economic power. However, Ferguson suggests that ‘development’ interventions had a persistent set of ‘instrument effects’. The most notable of these was to obscure and depoliticize the expanding power of the Basotho state. ‘Development’ discourses and practices thus operated as a kind of ‘anti-politics machine’. In a later essay, Ferguson and Gupta (2002) similarly argue that conventional imaginations of the state as a commanding and encompassing force in relation to society are reproduced through routinized patterns of ‘development’ practice. Ferguson’s work emphasizes the production and normalization of state authority through the practice of ‘international’ development.

Alongside the constitution of the state, Escobar (1995) puts a strong emphasis on the production of particular visions of ‘the social’ in the third world through ‘development’. ‘Technical’ interventions construct poverty in terms of problems to be resolved by better policies, and poor people as inert objects of intervention. ‘Development’ discourses, in short, articulate particular understandings of ‘third world’ populations with distinctive implications for political action. This analysis might fairly easily be extended to the ways in which labour, work, and labour rights are framed in ‘development’ discourse. Taken together with Ferguson’s emphasis on the production of state authority through development practice, these approaches highlight the *production* of states and social forces, including labour, through the project of development articulated through international or transnational institutions. That is, they call attention to the role of international development practice in an ongoing process of shaping social order.

Of course, the ‘post-development’ approach suffers the same basic problem as ideas about ‘governmentality’ more broadly. Namely, the emphasis on the production of subjectivity or depoliticization through practices of governance makes it difficult to account for slippage, ambiguity, and (most importantly) agency. Post-development authors have also been rightly criticized for holding to a problematic conception of the history of ‘development’, which wrongly dates the development mandate of global institutions to Truman’s Point IV speech of 1949. They thus ignore the roots of ‘development’ cooperation in a number of earlier developments, including American monetary policy operations in Latin America alongside the colonial programmes discussed in the next chapter, and hence overstate the depoliticizing, anti-communist underpinnings of development governance (Helleiner 2014). The actors and entanglements approach adopted here thus builds usefully on ‘post-development’ perspectives. By drawing on Gramsci’s methodological approach emphasizing the relation between social forces, authority, and historical change (as well as an alternative historical narrative) it highlights the fundamentally ambiguous and contested character of development interventions, without abandoning the crucial insight that the day-to-day practices deployed in the process of ‘development’ assistance constitute an important set of technologies of government. Still, the broader point is that being able to think seriously about the bulk of what most IOs actually *do* on a day-to-day basis, rather than concentrating on high-profile, periodic events where ‘the rules’ are drawn up, is a strength of the present approach.

The range of practices, resources, and spaces deployed in pursuit of ‘development’ is much broader than that which the ILO has deployed with respect to forced labour. ‘Development’ interventions have involved (among other things) the creation of research reports, the mobilization of ‘experts’ to provide technical advice to national governments, the creation of national and regional spaces for debating the role of social policy, the creation of training programmes, and even (as is notably the case with the ‘informal’ sector) the invention and dissemination of particular concepts and theoretical frameworks. With respect to workers’ education the ILO has deployed a range of experts, seminars, and training documents, all of which were very much bound to particular imaginations of ‘labour’, but which encountered a myriad of slippages, ambivalences, and conflicts in practice. These practices themselves have shifted over time in terms of form and content, in response to a variety of different pressures, over the course of the trajectories covered in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 4: 'DEVELOPMENT', SOCIAL POLICY, AND DECOLONIZATION, 1940-1970

This chapter traces the emergence of 'development' approaches in the context of colonial crisis, brought on by war and the great depression, through to the efforts of the ILO to establish a programme of technical assistance in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. The ILO was unable to establish a programme of technical assistance 'on the ground' in Africa in the 1950s, but did participate actively in regional colonial efforts to understand and react to the shifting relations of force with respect to the political economy of labour after WWII. These colonial debates also deeply shaped the ILO's approach to postcolonial Africa. After most countries gained independence in the early 1960s, the ILO's technical assistance programming expanded rapidly in the region, but remained deeply troubled by unsettled struggles over the constitution of political authority and within the labour movement over the relationships between labour and 'national' development projects. This trajectory reveals particularly clearly both the limits to the discursive production of subjectivities and the extent to which the agency of targeted actors can force the continual realignment of technologies of governance. The ILO's development assistance activities in the period of decolonization were consistently articulated in ways that sought to depoliticize labour relations and mitigate social conflicts -- they fit closely, in short, with the depoliticizing tendencies of international development assistance identified by 'post-development' thinkers (e.g. Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994) and by a number of broadly historical materialist authors (e.g. Murphy and Augelli 1993; McMichael 2012). The depoliticizing intents of these programmes, however, were frequently disrupted in practice as they became entangled in the messy political struggles around decolonization and postcolonial order.

### WAR, DEPRESSION, AND COLONIAL CRISIS

As noted in Chapter 2, limiting the ILO's approach to regulating the worst excesses of colonial labour recruitment made sense only in a context in which it was understood that workers in Africa were fundamentally 'different', and not suitable for the same standards of work and livelihood as European working classes. However, the NLC itself developed out of tensions already emerging over the modes of labour control deployed in colonial territories. These imaginations of difference came under even greater pressure from a wave of strike activity after the mid-1930s. One of the most important early catalysts, especially in terms of its impact for the ILO in particular, was a series of strikes and riots in British colonies beginning in the Copperbelt region of Northern Rhodesia in 1935. Subsequent strikes in Gold Coast and at the port in Mombasa in 1939, and on the Copperbelt again in 1939 reinforced the sense of disorder. Labour action in sub-Saharan Africa, moreover, also coincided with unrest in the British Caribbean and Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns in India.

Debates about these ‘disturbances’ show a gradual fraying of colonial imaginations of difference -- in short, the ideas about African workers underpinning the debates around C29. The report of the commission invited by the Colonial Office to examine the 1935 Copperbelt strike, for instance, noted that ‘tribal’ authority in the Copperbelt was weak, and unable to either represent workers’ grievances or to ‘succeed in any way in controlling the disturbances when they had arisen’ (Russell *et al.* 1935: 40). Thus, the commission concluded that ‘the choice lies between the establishment of native authority, together with frequent repatriation of natives to their villages; or alternatively, the acceptance of definite detribalisation and industrialisation of the mining population under European control’ (Russell *et al.* 1935: 40). Notably, though, nowhere does the commission’s report mention either trade unions or social security for mine workers. Later developments would make these alternatives increasingly difficult to ignore. A second set of strikes in 1940 was followed by another commission. A review of its report was published in the ILR -- it made note of the commission’s relatively uneasy stance on unionism among African workers. The ILR report also noted the dilemmas posed by urbanization and the need for policy choices around migration and settlement of African workers:

Of these problems the primary is that of the choice, where choice is possible, between the creation of an urbanised permanent wage earning population and that of the maintenance of the labour supply through migrant labour, the natural destiny of which will be to return to African agriculture in the intervals between contracts of employment. (ILR 1942: 546)

Two points are important to highlight here. First, it was workers’ own actions on the Copperbelt in 1935 and 1940 -- in conjunction with protests in the Caribbean, in India, and elsewhere in Africa -- which called into question the imagination of colonial difference that had shaped the NLC. This is particularly visible in the extent to which the above passages revisit the assumptions outlined in Chapter 2 that Africans were ill-suited for wage-work and incapable of participating in trade unions. The ‘disturbances’ intensified and heightened the salience of longstanding debates (recall the debate at the Berne Conference in 1916 about colonial labour). Second, the ILO was aware of, and even participating in, the imperial debates spurred by these shifting patterns of political action. As noted in Chapter 2, Wilfred Benson, who was responsible for most of the research and policy documents that made up the ILO’s early post-war development agenda, had close links to British colonial policy circles. Benson was even relocated to London during WWII (while most of the rest of the organization was based in Montreal). He carried out his work there in close contact with the British colonial policy community (see Maul 2012).

Developments in British colonial policy were thus highly influential for the ILO. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CDWA), passed in 1940,

was a crucial part of the British effort to restore colonial authority. The act identified four ‘pillars’ of the new ‘development’ agenda: education, cooperatives, local government reform, and trade unionism (Lee 1967: 147-148). The CDWA also did away with the longstanding requirement that colonies be self-financing. It committed the British government to invest treasury resources in the development of infrastructure and social institutions in colonial territories. This was unquestionably seen as a means of preserving the empire -- a contemporary commentator described the CDWA as ‘a testimony surely of almost heroic faith in the future of Britain and her empire at a time when her fortunes seemed to be at their lowest ebb’ (Jeffries 1943: 7). In practice the war inhibited the implementation of the CDWA -- the funds disbursed to the colonies (aside from the Caribbean territories) were limited at best, and mobilizing colonies in support of the ‘war effort’ took on an increased importance. Nonetheless, the move to ‘development’ in Britain spilled over into the ILO’s work on Native Labour. Benson provided a positive commentary on the CDWA to the Colonial Office in the name of the ILO shortly after the CDWA was passed (Maul 2012: 37). Subsequent commentaries on the progress in implementing the CDWA were also published in the ILR (ILR 1941a; 1941b). All of these documents express a general approval of the principles underlying the CDWA on the part of the ILO, while advocating for more rigorous implementation.

For present purposes, the significant point is that a pronounced shift in the balance of political forces in Africa -- increasingly disruptive workers’ mobilization and changing imperial visions of African labour -- provoked the British Colonial Office, and along with it the ILO, to shift the range of practices and resources it deployed to influence colonial labour issues. Neither the contents nor the practice of the Native Labour Code were seen as adequate. Of course, as Chapter 3 highlighted, this seeming obsolescence did not prevent the regulatory instruments developed in the context of the NLC from being redeployed as resources elsewhere. But, the ILO nonetheless developed new modes of intervention in response to a rapidly changing situation.

#### THE ILO AND ‘DEVELOPMENT’

The shift in thinking implicit in the idea of ‘development’ is visible in the contrast between two key documents. The Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919 had declared that the ‘the well-being and development of the peoples not yet able to govern themselves’ was a ‘Sacred Trust of Civilization’. The term ‘development’ was used here, but it was clearly articulated in terms of a paternalistic moral responsibility towards less civilized peoples. By contrast, the ILO’s 1944 Philadelphia Conference declared that ‘poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere’. The ILO’s preparations for the Philadelphia programme involved an unprecedented exercise in information gathering on health, population, education, and labour issues in ‘underdeveloped’ territories, most of which was carried out from London by Benson. Much of this research

went into a discussion paper drawn up for the Philadelphia conference (ILO 1944). A subsequent report similarly argued that:

The modern world is beginning to recognise the dangers resulting from the poverty of underdeveloped areas and to realise that the supply of cheap raw materials from these areas is less important than the expansion of their purchasing power... Modern policy cannot return to slavery. The alternative is the development of measures for better health, housing, education etc. (ILO 1945: 16).

‘Civilization’ was replaced with ‘modernity’ -- and rather than being the passive objects of a sacred trust, colonized populations were asked to participate in the process of raising their own productivity. The Philadelphia Declaration advanced the idea that ‘development’ responsibilities stemmed from economic interdependence rather than any moral imperative to civilize. However, while the ILO explicitly disavowed paternalism, it continued to understand ‘underdevelopment’ in terms of the shortcomings of colonized populations instead of in structural or systematic relationships in the world economy.

‘Development’ was thus a rather ambivalent break with colonial practice for the ILO. The 1944 report recognized the ‘sharpening of poverty as the peoples became more and more dependent on the world fluctuations in demand for colonial products’ (ILO 1944: 1). Yet, the primary focus -- in that document and elsewhere -- was always on the articulation of localized policies for promoting the well-being (and productivity) of colonized populations, rather than the reform of the global system as a whole. The report assigned considerable scope for colonial officials in adapting social policies to the diversity of circumstances prevailing in colonized territories. The Philadelphia conference passed a recommendation on ‘Social Policy in non-Metropolitan Territories’, reflecting most of the same concerns and prescriptions, which was later promoted to a convention in 1947. While the 1944 report -- in line with the CDWA -- highlighted a role for (non-radical, non-political) trade unions and cooperatives in ordering and representing the interests of colonized populations, it also noted that ‘In some territories and among some workers the current possibilities of effective organization are not so great’. In such cases, ‘it might be of value for the administrations to appoint... persons with appropriate experience to defend the interests of workers and to encourage their closer association’ (ILO 1944: 11). Perhaps even more importantly, the report argued against raising living standards too quickly: social welfare, defined solely by material standards, may lead to a desire to impose particular forms of material welfare; *it would not be psychologically sound* to enforce conditions, however admirable in themselves, which are likely to provoke resistance among the people they are designed to benefit. (ILO 1944: 16, emphasis added)

‘Development’, then, was understood at the ILO within a framework that emphasized orderly, gradual, and European-directed change, even as it shifted tentatively away from vague understandings of ‘civilization’ and moral

development towards a more concrete engagement with poverty alleviation. To some extent, this approach stood in contrast to the more ‘structuralist’ ideas about development that were brewing elsewhere -- especially in interactions between the American officials and Latin America -- and were even reflected in the negotiations of the Bretton Woods order (Helleiner 2014). In no small part, this contrast might well be explained by the relative proximity of the ILO’s early ‘development’ programming to the Colonial Office; British officials were more ambivalent about the idea of ‘development’ than their American counterparts, in ways that aligned closely with the ILO positions sketched here, even at Bretton Woods (Helleiner 2014).

The ILO’s approach to development, then, emphasized technical problems within ‘local’ or ‘national’ contexts nearly from the start. The ILO was, thus, (perhaps ironically) well placed to answer the move under the Truman administration’s Point IV programme, influenced by the onset of the Cold War, to a more explicitly depoliticizing, anti-communist development agenda based on the diagnosis and treatment of problems with *national* economies and policy frameworks. This compatibility was reinforced by David Morse’s move from the Truman administration’s Department of Labor to the Director General’s office at the ILO in 1948, shortly before the announcement of Point IV. Indeed, Morse’s replacement as Assistant Secretary of Labor explicitly contrasted the ILO’s approach to labour and development to statements on development issues from a number of soviet sources in a statement promoting the legislation for the Point IV programme to the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs.<sup>1</sup>

The post-war development agenda, at the ILO and elsewhere, was explicitly depoliticizing, but nonetheless deeply ambiguous. The ILO’s move into development assistance was *simultaneously* a (tentative) remaking of colonial practice, an unprecedented recognition of the social and economic rights of colonized subjects (if not, as yet, their political independence or even basic citizenship), and a continuation of the ILO’s much older research and advisory activities. It was also to a certain extent influenced by geopolitical context: it provided a means of meeting the Cold War imperative to keep colonial workers and newly independent governments in the western camp. Even further, the leadership of the ILO certainly recognized the new international ‘development’ agenda as a way to carve out a more substantive role for the ILO in post-war policymaking (see Maul 2012: 123). Matters were yet more complicated in practice because technical assistance on the part of the ILO was also troubled by the persistence of imaginations of difference between colonized and ‘developed’

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the speech was sent to the ILO: ‘Statement of Mr. Phillip M. Kaiser, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on H.R. 5615, “The International Technical Cooperation Act of 1949”’, copy in ILOA Z 6/1/7.

populations. For instance, in response to an inquiry from the head of the ILO Section on Non-Metropolitan Territories, asking about the possibility of formulating a recommendation about social security for underdeveloped or colonial territories, the head of the Social Insurance Section replied that the main stumbling block would be that 'no one yet knows whether or how social insurance will work when applied to an illiterate population having no acquaintance with the insurance principle'.<sup>2</sup> Such views were common. A draft statement for a meeting planning the ILO's contribution to the TAP even suggests that in the immediate term there would be some policy areas -- especially working conditions and health and safety -- for which 'dependent' territories were not yet sufficiently equipped to receive assistance.<sup>3</sup>

#### MIGRATION AND PRODUCTIVITY -- 1948-1960

In any event, for the most part TAP would not be applied in African territories at first. In the early 1950s, despite the efforts of the ILO, only independent countries were involved directly in TAP -- in sub-Saharan Africa this meant only Liberia and Ethiopia. However, the ILO was involved in efforts to link labour issues to the new development agenda in Africa. This section maps out some debates among ILO experts and colonial administrators about how to approach African labour in the 1940s and 1950s. The most prominent recurrent conversation involved how to deal with labour migration. While everyone involved more or less agreed that managing the flow of migrants into urban areas and increasing the productivity of African workers were the most important goals of 'development' programming insofar as labour issues were concerned, there were considerable disagreements over how to go about meeting these ends.

Inter-colonial administrative structures limited the active role of the ILO. The ILO did play a significant role in international institutional mechanisms in which colonial administrators sought to manage labour relations within the new framework of 'development'. The ILO established a Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories. After a string of international meetings, starting in 1946, of 'expert' delegations from the colonial powers on various 'technical' facets of development, European officials established a 'Committee on Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara' (CCTA) in 1949. An 'Inter-African Labour Conference' (IALC) was convened in Jos, Nigeria in 1948, and afterwards brought under the rubric of the CCTA and held at regular intervals. South Africa explicitly promoted the IALC and CCTA as means

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<sup>2</sup> Stack to Blleloch, 4 August 1947, ILOA O/200/15

<sup>3</sup> 'Technical Assistance: ILO Programme, Notes for Opening Statement' ILOA Z 6/1/7/1, p.6. The date and author are unclear, but most likely this was a statement delivered by Morse for an internal meeting.



of forestalling the development of ILO field projects.<sup>4</sup> In practice, though, the ILO was usually represented at the meetings of the IALC, memberships in the IALC and the Committee of Experts overlapped, and they typically dealt with the same issues. Migration and measures to increase productivity were the most common.

Debate about migration in the 1940s and 1950s revolved around the two options that had been laid out in debates about the Copperbelt (see Cooper 1996: 252-256). The first was to try to ‘stabilize’ a limited set of ‘working class’ Africans living in urban settings by various measures aimed at creating permanent communities and higher living standards. The other option was to restrict the movement of ‘native’ populations using passes and limits on urban settlement. The objectives of either approach were to control the flow of migrants to urban areas, to protect ‘traditional’ society in the countryside, and manage the perceived strain on resources and threat of social unrest in the cities. They differed on two main points: first, the stabilizing option required seeing at least a segment of the African population as ‘workers’ on the European model, while the restrictive option held more strongly to the idea that all Africans were essentially ‘tribal’; and second, the stabilizing option made African labour much more expensive, and in recognizing them as ‘workers’ even opened the possibility that Africans might demand to be paid the same and hold the same political rights as Europeans doing similar jobs. However, both options were responses to the same perceived underlying dilemma -- how to manage the ‘detrribalization’ of African workers involved in colonial labour systems. Moreover, in both cases ‘social policy’ practices were intimately connected to the preservation of colonial authority.

As noted above, misgivings about the suitability of Africans for ‘modern’ social security were prevalent. These concerns were reflected in the first key meeting of the Committee of Experts, in 1947 in London. There was some debate over how the ILO should approach the issue of migration. The South African employers’ representative endorsed the system of restricted migration adopted in the Witwatersrand Gold Mines in South Africa. Some other committee members variously argued for protections of migrant workers on the jobsite, especially from poor wages, or that migration was necessary given the uneven distribution of labour (ILO 1947: 8-10). Notably, though, the final text advocated something that looked a good deal like the Witwatersrand system: it recommended mandatory remittances, contract term limits, and the allowance (or requirement) of ‘visits’ to home areas (ILO 1947: esp. 19-25). The first IALC in Jos the following year (ironically given the South African position on the role of the IALC and ILO) nonetheless came out in favour of the stabilizing option. They recommended the

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<sup>4</sup> The fullest statement to this effect comes from an undated aide-memoire for the South African Minister of External Affairs, ‘11<sup>th</sup> Session of CCTA: ILO Expert Committee on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories’, in National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (NASA) BTS 8/26/5 Vol. 1.

establishment of trade union rights, along with social security 'to assist the wage earner in meeting his immediate family obligations' and pension programmes 'where tribal organisation has ceased to be effective' (qtd. Cooper 1996: 222). In short, in the late 1940s, there was little consensus over the appropriate course of action for colonial governments with respect to Africans performing wage labour.

African workers themselves often forced the issue. Urbanization proceeded apace in most territories. Moreover, by the late 1940s miners, dockworkers, and railway workers -- workers directly involved in the infrastructure of colonial export economies -- were organized into trade unions capable of disruptive strikes, had begun to establish links to metropolitan union confederations, and were pressing for labour law reforms and social security programmes. General strikes in cities or even across whole territories occurred in Nigeria in 1945, Dakar in 1946, Dar es Salaam, Mombasa, Sudan and Tunisia in 1947, and Zanzibar in 1948; railway strikes took place in French West Africa in 1947-48, and in Ghana and Southern Rhodesia in 1947; urban protests involving workers also took place in Douala in 1945 and Ghana in 1948 (see Oberst 1988). Moreover, African workers increasingly established and drew upon links to the international labour movement in order to press for reforms to colonial labour policies. In 1948, a WFTU sponsored 'Pan-African Conference' was held in Dakar. CGT-sponsored unions from French West Africa dominated proceedings, but territorial confederations from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia were present, along with some unions from South Africa, the Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, Madagascar, and North Africa. The French West African delegates called for a revised *Code de Travail* based on metropolitan standards, and the conference resolved in favour of trade union rights, better pay, and social security (Cooper 1996: 224). Indeed, the CGT and the Communist party in Paris supported a colonial campaign for the *Code* that would take place over the next few years (see below; Chapter 2). Colonial governments, and the ILO for that matter, may well have been rather ambivalent about the stabilizing option, but they were under increasing pressure to move that way anyways.

South Africa, and to a lesser extent Portugal, were thus increasingly out of step with the rest of the region. The report to the Philadelphia Conference in 1944 had approvingly described General Smuts' reform plans:

In the Union of South Africa... General Smuts has advocated, in amplification of the principles of trusteeship, wide measures of social reform, and far reaching recommendations have been made by government commissions with a view to the improvement of the position of the low-income groups among the population of the Union. (ILO 1944: 3).

In South Africa itself, an internal report on the wartime conferences and the possibility of the ILO forming a part of the new United Nations system was circulated. It suggested several broad principles related to the reform of the ILO,

including (notably) increased flexibility in the requirements of conventions and recommendations. It concluded that these options for reform 'should be carefully considered in South Africa in the light of their affect [sic] on local conditions and the general interest which appears to exist concerning the peculiar problems of this country'.<sup>5</sup> The stabilizing option, including non-racial unionism, was on the table in South Africa until the elections in 1948 (Mamdani 1996: 98-99; Chanock 2001: 437). Internal divisions over social policy for 'natives' in South Africa, then, were reflected before the institution of apartheid in a considerable ambivalence about the ILO, which was increasingly seen as a force for colonial reform. After 1948, South African officials increasingly identified the ILO as a threat.

By 1950, the IALC at Elizabethville had concluded that 'It must be acknowledged in a general manner that the stabilization of workers at the site of employment constitutes a goal to be achieved' (ILO 1950a: 13). Solutions emphasized raising levels of productivity, and providing better training and education. Training and education were framed not only as a means of making workers more productive, but also as issues of dignity: 'Technical training has the effect of raising the esteem of the worker in his own eyes. It also has the effect of raising his esteem in the eyes of others, which is very important for African workers' (ILO 1950b: 5). The twin issues of productivity and stabilization were also intimately connected to various policies for social security -- family allowances, housing, and healthcare were mentioned particularly frequently (ILO 1950b). Although the wellbeing of workers was emphasized in this respect, the conference did so in a way that only reinforced existing tendencies toward depoliticization and paternalism. The last lines of the same report are telling: 'In matters of stabilization, like in matters of training, [colonial] governments can and should take the initiative... The future of the indigenous population depends largely on their foresight' (ILO 1950b: 10).

The Committee of Experts met again in Geneva in 1951, and largely followed in the same vein as the Elizabethville meeting. It reached more substantive conclusions with respect to social protection. The Committee's recommendations included family wages; adequate housing; education and training; improved healthcare; cooperatives, especially for food marketing; social security, including old age and disability insurance; and trade union education (ILO 1952: 108-113). But the report still cautioned that growth of productivity would always need to be balanced against the possible disruption of existing patterns of life:

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<sup>5</sup> F. C. Williams, 'The International Labour Office in its Relation to World Social Structure: A Report on the Probable Future of the International Labour Office with Special Reference to Constitutional Amendment', December 1945. NASA HEN 477/1/20/3.

The social and political structure of African territories has its roots in an economy based on small-scale individual exploitation, often in the context of a communal property regime. In such regions, over-hasty introduction of mechanization or large-scale agriculture in search of higher productivity will raise technical and social problems that will not be easily resolved. (ILO 1952: 40)

In the early 1950s, then, 'development' solutions to the 'problem' of labour migration remained hamstrung by the difficulty in seeing African societies as anything other than 'traditional' or 'tribal'. Partially as a result, pension policies in particular were slow in coming on the ground. The campaign for the *Code de Travail* in French West Africa had made demands for pensions and social security, but the *Code* did not ultimately make mention of pensions. Even the British, who were outwardly the most supportive among the colonial powers of social security and stabilization, pleaded that fully implementing the provisions of the 1947 convention was 'unrealistic' in the short term in their reports to the CEARC (see Cooper 1996: 362).

Ironically, these arguments were echoed quite closely by officials in the Native Affairs Secretariat in South Africa, commenting on the inapplicability of proposed ILO conventions on social security to the 'Native' population:

The Union is in a difficult position as regards the inclusion in social security measures of its native population on account, mainly, of the difference in the cultural background and mode of life of purely tribal natives and those persons who, having severed all ties with tribal traditions, have become urbanised and therefore accustomed to a standard of living approximating that of the European section.<sup>6</sup>

For 'natives' in 'tribal' areas, care for the poor was left to the community, 'and it is certainly not desirable that the state should seek to destroy this practice by providing a comprehensive scheme of social security'. Moreover, given the widespread poverty of native populations, their ability to contribute to social insurance schemes was relatively limited, and 'in fact it is largely for this reason that it has not yet been found practicable to provide for benefits for natives in the form of pensions, as opposed to lump-sum grants'.<sup>7</sup> The Secretary for Labour would repeat most of these arguments verbatim in a letter to the ILO explaining why South Africa would not ratify the proposed convention.<sup>8</sup> International arguments about pensions and stabilization then, remained ambiguous and unsettled enough in the early 1950s that officials representing the paradigmatic

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<sup>6</sup> Secretary for Native Affairs to the Secretary for Labour, 'International Labour Conference, 1951: Objectives and Minimum Standards of Social Security', 27 October 1950, NASA NTS 207/280 (2).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Arthur D. Lee, Secretary for Labour, to The Director General, International Labour Organization, 10 December 1951, copy in NASA NTS 207/280 (2).

repressive system of labour migration and the most outwardly vocal supporters of stabilization could make closely parallel arguments.

While the debate about pensions stalled, however, vocational training, employment services, and housing policies were primary objects of discussion. In these areas too, ambivalent views about the suitability of Africans for urbanization continued to hamper both the ILO and colonial experts. The Committee of Experts met in Lisbon in 1953. The bulk of the discussion in Lisbon focused on housing. Housing policies went to the root of the debate about migration and stabilizing, and spoke to the role of the state in providing social protection. The ILO prepared a report giving estimates of the magnitude and causes of shortages of workers' housing in colonial territories, then proposing a range of solutions from workers' cooperative organizations and employer provided housing through to various policy options for governments including housing and zoning legislation, resettlement schemes, and financial aid. The report suggested that it would be ideal in the long run if workers were to own separate family homes, but 'until workers can be encouraged to become owner-occupiers the provision of rental housing for workers, especially for those in the low-income groups, must be regarded as a social service' (ILO 1953a: 113). This implied a primary responsibility for government in the provision of housing.

Discussion of the report in Committee was still bedevilled, however, by concerns about order and overly rapid urbanization:

Reference was made to the danger of permitting towns to expand beyond a certain limit; then they became unwieldy to administer and control. Under such circumstances, everything should be done to encourage the erection and development of satellite towns with suitable and cheap transport facilities for workers to get to and from their places of work. (ILO 1953b: 7)

And further:

It was generally agreed... that the primary aim of policy should be to encourage home ownership by workers who were stabilized near their places of employment, as well as workers in rural areas, and that the individual house was best suited for this purpose as well as customarily desired by workers in the areas concerned. (ILO 1953b: 7)

The committee agreed on a number of conclusions. These included the responsibility of governments for the provision of housing, and the general principle in favour of home ownership 'in order to assure respect for human dignity, to give maximum freedom and security and as incentives for stability and better living' (ILO 1953b: 23). The Committee also suggested that international and regional organizations should have a role to play in providing technical assistance on the matter of housing (ILO 1953b: 22).

The Committee of Experts met again in Dakar in 1955. Here the Committee gave more explicit consideration to social security proper. Debates continued to reflect concerns about the feasibility of social security in colonial territories. The Committee identified a number of features of colonized populations that posed difficulties for the introduction of social security programmes -- the persistence of 'collective responsibility' for welfare in 'tribal' communities; the relative weight of unskilled agricultural employment; the absence of adequate registries of birth, marriage, and death, and illiteracy among workers. Meanwhile, the introduction of development programmes and industrialization 'had changed certain traditional features of social life so that some sections of the population had become permanent wage earners and no longer formed part of the communal pattern' (ILR 1956: 627). These 'classes of wage earners who... could no longer rely on the solidarity engendered by the family or tribal community... were consequently vulnerable to the ordinary risks of life and to the fluctuations of employment' (ILR 1956: 628).

Yet it was not easy to nail down exactly who was 'stabilized' enough to need these social security measures. The 1957 IALC in Lusaka dealt explicitly with the issues raised by the differentiation of 'stabilized' from 'tribal' populations. This was noted in discussions of old-age pensions:

The committee considered various technical aspects of old age pensions. In respect of the field of application it gave special consideration to criteria for the definition of a stabilised worker. In certain countries the only criterion is the period of residence, whilst elsewhere other criteria apply, such as technical qualifications, a minimum period of service, and the period of residence in non-tribal areas. In these circumstances the choice should be left to the initiative of the individual Governments, who could usefully be guided by solutions already adopted.<sup>9</sup>

The conclusions of the report clearly suggest that this delineation of 'stabilized' workers depended on the exercise of government control: 'The necessary steps should be taken to establish the identity of workers and their entitlement to benefits, these measures being subject to control by the competent authorities'. Further, 'Where contributions are payable, these should be paid to Government organisations, or where collected by private organisations to a management committee on which employers and employees should, as far as possible, be represented subject to government control'.<sup>10</sup> Social security, and the stabilization of an urban workforce more broadly, were intimately interlinked with the expansion of state control.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Inter African Labour Conference, Fifth Session: Final Report', n.d., NASA NTS 703/280.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Two key themes emerge out of these debates. The first is the ambivalent subject position assigned to the 'African worker' in colonial governmentalities. In the discussions at the IALC and in the Committee of Experts we can see an oscillation between a half-formed imagination of a 'stabilized' African, who owned his family home, worked for wages, and paid contributions to his pension fund, and an African unable to shake the bonds of his 'tribal' nature (women, meanwhile, are striking for their virtual absence from these debates except as wives to workers). In colonial imaginaries this ambivalent 'African worker' subject always threatened to slip over into disorder, anomie, and criminality. This association -- coupled with the continued participation of South Africa and the hesitance of even the more outwardly 'progressive' colonists in face of the potential costs of stabilization -- kept the IALC and the Committee of Experts from explicitly disavowing more overtly repressive policy courses to limit labour migration even as international policy discourse converged on 'stabilization'. The second key theme is the role assigned to the colonial administration. If the 'stabilized' African worker was going to come into being, it would be through the use of social security, housing policy, and like interventions *by the state* to delineate 'stabilized' African subjects from their 'tribal' compatriots. Social policy in this sense was as much an instrument of political control as a means of redistribution or entitlement. Colonial experiments with social security, housing policy, vocational training, and wages policy, then, should be understood as so techniques of government oriented to the articulation of particular forms of social order.

The role of the ILO here is worth unpacking. The ILO played an indirect role in shaping and refining the practices through which colonial governments sought to 'stabilize' African workers, and its workshops and the production of reports were important practices through which the ILO sought to influence colonial policy. The institutional set-up of the IALC and the Committee nonetheless prevented the emergence of technical assistance schemes directly operated by the ILO. This was not for lack of interest on the part of the ILO. The Committee of Experts concluded in 1951 that the newfound emphasis of the UN system on technical assistance to underdeveloped areas 'would fully justify' the application of the ILO's TAP facilities in colonial territories.<sup>11</sup> Wilfred Jenks, a long tenured Deputy Director General at the ILO, suggested to the Committee of Experts in 1953 that 'all... subjects on the agenda for this session... concern fields of activity from which administrations might well derive benefit from the international programme of technical assistance of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies' (ILO 1953c). Two years later in Dakar, Jenks would express frustration that so little technical cooperation under ILO auspices was

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<sup>11</sup> 'Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, Second Session, Geneva, 26 November - 8 December 1951: Draft Report', copy in NASA BTS 8/25/6 Vol. 1A.

happening in sub-Saharan Africa, in spite of the apparent success of the ILO in 'development' programming elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> The importance of the resistance of the colonial powers in limiting the role of the ILO is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the speed with which technical assistance funds to Africa and expanded after 1960 (see below). In any event, even in the 1950s, the ILO's participation in these debates -- as with the forced labour commissions taking place around the same time (Chapter 2) -- did mark out the ILO as a space in which conflicts over postcolonial social order could be pursued.

Another significant point for the purposes of this study is that in the face of the slippery, unstable nature of the African worker as a subject of colonial discourse, workers themselves articulated crucial challenges to colonial authority. The colonial discourse that the ILO contributed to producing constantly ran up against the material trajectory of urbanization and the growth of a politically influential 'working class'. 'Stabilizing' policies in practice contributed to creating more formally organized bases for resistance to colonial rule. African workers themselves continued to push for better wages, housing, union rights, and social security. These challenges to colonial labour systems bled over into challenges to colonial authority itself.

There is little agreement on the character of the relationship between organized labour and the process of decolonization, but few would disagree that unionized workers did play a significant part in the end of formal colonialism. Much of the debate is effectively captured by the contrast between Ousmane Sembene's (1960) fictional *God's Bits of Wood*, which presents the 1947-48 railworkers' strike in French West Africa as a key moment in the emergence of national consciousness in Africa, and Frantz Fanon's (1967) *Wretched of the Earth*, which presents unionized workers as a privileged urban 'labour aristocracy' (borrowing the term from Lenin), too complicit in the colonial project to be a site of resistance either to colonial rule or neocolonial capitalism. Both lines of argument could be politically disempowering for workers. Many postcolonial regimes were eager to claim that unionists, like Sembene's railwaymen, were part and parcel of a broader popular campaign of anticolonial resistance (see Nyerere 1967, discussed below), or indeed that organized labour was in fact a privileged segment of a population that could only be represented as a whole by the state (see Mboya 1968, discussed Chapter 6).

Yet, the reality was undoubtedly messier. Cooper notes that the significance of unions in the process of decolonization stemmed from two factors. First, as noted above, in relatively narrow colonial export economies, workers situated at strategic nodes (mines, plantations, railways, or ports) were able to

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<sup>12</sup> Wilfred Jenks, 'The ILO in Africa', annexed to letter from Secretary of Labour to Secretary for External Affairs, 21 December 1955, NASA BTS 8/26/5 Vol. 1A.



exert a profoundly disruptive influence with work stoppages. Second, and at least as importantly, ‘the discourse that labour movements employed in the postwar era -- putting claims to resources in the terms in which imperial rule was now asserting its justification -- made them hard to combat without calling into question the modernizing project on which France and Britain had staked so much’ (2005: 205). Workers were able to redeploy the ideas about stabilization circulating at the IALC and the Committee of Experts in order to make claims for greater pay and higher standards of living. In the process they undermined the imagination of difference upon which the colonial project rested. They also stretched the material limits of colonial rule -- administrations could not really argue with workers’ claims, but were unwilling to actually shoulder the cost of wage increases and social security (see Cooper 1996; 2005). Yet, this mobilization of ‘development’ discourses against the colonial state also opened up a complex matrix of problems surrounding the relationship between labour and nationalist movements. Workers’ successes in gaining higher wages and increased social protections may have helped undercut colonial authority, but it also widened gaps between unionized workers and the broader population.

#### THE ANTINOMIES OF DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization thus marks an important departure for present purposes because it presented an opening for the ILO to expand its technical assistance activities in the region, but also brought into the open latent conflicts about the relation between labour and postcolonial regimes. The Committee of Experts was replaced by the tripartite African Advisory Committee (AAC) and African Regional Conference (ARC); held for the first time in 1959 and 1960, respectively. The IALC was held on a number of subsequent occasions, but was increasingly dominated by the ministers of labour from newly independent African states. The movement towards independence thus presented an opportunity for the ILO to expand its activities in Africa. However, the ILO was keen to prevent its programming becoming embroiled in ‘politics’. The AAC at Luanda in 1959 had highlighted a number of the conflicts the ILO sought to mitigate. Workers’ representatives raised concerns about freedom of association after independence, employers were particularly opposed, and governments were often ambivalent (ILO 1959a: 20-21). Freedom of association could hardly be left off the agenda by the ILO, but was subsumed under the rubric of ‘joint consultation and collective bargaining’. This new heading sat alongside vocational training on the agenda for the upcoming ARC as a measure aimed at raising productivity (ILO 1959b). The political implications of freedom of association, in short, were largely scrubbed out. Indeed, the Director-General’s Report to the first ARC at Lagos in 1960 was explicit about the ILO’s desire to avoid political conflicts:

‘Fears were expressed that an all-African Regional Conference would tend to assume a political character... The view was strongly put forward that the debates at the Conference should be confined to

technical issues arising from the subjects on the agenda.’ (ILO 1960:

1)

Here the depoliticizing aspects of the development discourse employed by the ILO are plainly visible.<sup>13</sup> TAP, however, also could be linked to calls for farther-reaching reforms of the international economy. It was a worker delegate, representing the African unions affiliated to the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), who wrote to the ILO proposing a resolution calling for technical assistance for Africa to the ILO prior to the ARC in 1960. The IFCTU affiliates coupled the technical assistance resolution with a request for the ILO to study means of regulating world commodity markets.<sup>14</sup> In spite of these persistent ambiguities over the very purpose of the programme, technical assistance to African countries did in fact expand rapidly. In 1952, only 2.7 per cent of spending on technical cooperation had gone to African projects, the proportion reached 27.2 per cent in 1962, and 33 per cent by 1964 (ILO 1966b: 14).

The political realities of decolonization, and especially struggles over the place of labour in the postcolonial order, largely ensured that the ILO’s effort to focus on ‘technical’ problems was impossible in practice. Here it is worth briefly laying out in broad strokes -- at the risk of some oversimplification -- the context of the relationship between labour and the state that was taking shape at the time of decolonization. The ability to control trade unions took on increased political salience as post-colonial governments settled on a developmental and political

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, the obvious point here is that the dividing line between ‘technical’ and ‘political’ concerns is fuzzy at best. In the first instance, designating something a ‘technical’ problem is a political act insofar as it seeks to proscribe certain forms of action. Nor are claims about the ‘technical’ nature of a given problem necessarily incompatible with a more radical politics. Even a figure like Franz Fanon (1967: 75-84) could conclude his discussion of violence and decolonization in *The Wretched of the Earth* by arguing for technical and financial assistance from the former colonial powers. Fanon frames his call for this kind of assistance less as a method for disciplining Africa in order to bring it up to ‘European’ standards and more as a kind of reparation for the contribution of colonized territories to European wealth. Still, ‘technical’ projects can in practice be subsumed under deeply political, even radical agendas. In any event, the more important point for present purposes, as the following pages show, is that the very kinds of conflicts that ILO officials sought to use ‘technical’ approaches to mitigate sprung up anyways, and with important consequences for the ILO’s technical assistance.

<sup>14</sup> Pan-African Workers’ Congress Affiliated to the IFCTU to David Morse, 20 November 1960, ILO Archives, Geneva (ILOA) RC 159-1-1392-2-1; see also ILO (1961: 255-9) for the final text of the resolutions, which were all adopted with little debate.

model predicated on control over export production and trade with core countries, which Bayart (2009) has labeled a 'strategy of extraversion' and Cooper refers to as a 'gatekeeper state' model. Railways and ports remained crucial choke points on export economies that were central to the survival of postcolonial regimes. To use Wright's terms, although organized workers in postcolonial Africa often had limited 'associational' power insofar as they represented a small segment of the workforce, they exercised a considerable degree of 'structural' power because they occupied key nodes in export economies. The cooptation or suppression of trade union activity in transport and mining took on an enhanced significance in this context, as indeed it had in the colonial period -- this control was, however, by no means assured. The decade following decolonization was characterized in many African countries by ongoing struggles over the scope and limits of state power, the shape of national development, and the boundaries of political contestation.

This unsettled dynamic is visible in conflicts around the relationships of trade unions and nationalist parties. To some extent, these conflicts have already been touched on in the discussion of Ghana and Cameroon in Chapter 3, for present purposes it is worth outlining that these were widespread struggles. Some post-colonial regimes recognized the value in claiming that trade unions had always been part of the nationalist movement. Julius Nyerere, in a pamphlet released in 1961, very clearly articulated the arguments that many leaders would make for subordinating labour to the nationalist party. He compares Tanzania to Britain -- the Labour Party, he argues had emerged had emerged out of union struggles against capital and the state, while in Tanganyika Nyerere suggests that:

Our development has been the other way around. When... we established our nationalist movement, its first aim was political -- independence from colonialism. Within this nationalist movement, and very much a part of it, one of our objectives was to help the growth of a trade union movement... Once firmly established, the trade-union movement was, and is, part and parcel of the whole nationalist movement. (1967: 282)

Factually, Nyerere's claim is questionable -- trade unionism developed around the transport infrastructure of colonial Tanganyika prior to and largely independent of the organized nationalist movement (see Iliffe 1975). The politics of the argument, however, are very clear. It suggests that national struggles for independence from colonialism ought to take priority over other interests for workers. Nyerere's effort at assimilating all pre-independence political activity into the rubric of the 'nationalist movement' is a powerful political tactic. Yet the fact that he felt a need to articulate this view in the first place is itself indicative of a recognition that workers did not all see things the same way. Nyerere survived an army mutiny supported by the labour movement in 1964 before bringing trade unions more directly under the control of the Tanganyika African National Union, either imprisoning or giving ambassadorships to the former leadership of the trade

unions (Bienefeld 1975). Similar patterns are in evidence elsewhere. Kwame Nkrumah's struggles to establish control over Ghanaian trade unions, discussed briefly in Chapter 3, were in large part responsible for support from some sections of the trade union movement for the coup that removed him in 1966. The military government that succeeded him, however, was no more sympathetic to labour independence than Nkrumah (Damachi 1974; Jeffries 1978; Kraus 1979). More 'conservative' governments faced similar problems. While the *Union Camérounaise* government faced no widespread revolt after independence -- as discussed above, the radical factions in the union movement had been largely marginalized by the early 1960s -- wildcat strikes were prevalent in the context of prohibitions on industrial action and the arrests of several trade union leaders in the early 1960s (Bayart 1973; Konings 1993; also see Chapter 7). In at least one instance, workers even outright rejected conventional industrial relations structures in order to mitigate state control. The Malawi Congress Party's efforts in the early 1960s to establish control over transport workers were frustrated by deliberate refusals by workers to establish formal union structures (McCracken 1988: 288-289).

These conflicts over the place of organized labour in the postcolonial order spilled over into the activities of the ILO. Debates over freedom of association, the political subordination of labour to governing parties, and the international affiliation of trade unions came up repeatedly at the ARC and in the ILO's seminars and workshops. The ILO organized a major workshop on the role of workers' and employers' organizations in 'development' in Abidjan in 1963. The seminar included 45 participants representing trade unions, employers, and governments. There were a number of important disagreements. In a discussion on the role of governments in industrial relations, 'several participants stressed the principle of autonomy of the industrial parties and observed... that government should not interfere in the internal affairs of workers' and employers' organizations', noting that in some countries governments had tried to turn trade unions into 'instruments of the state' (ILO 1964: 298-299). They were countered by participants highlighting 'the dangers of a multiplicity of small, weak, and inexperienced trade unions which competed with each other and might have loyalties to forces outside the country' (ILO 1964: 299). Such debates in seminars or at the ARC were not necessarily problematic in themselves. The ILO even promoted the 1963 Seminar as an opportunity for a 'broad exchange of views' (ILO 1964: 1). However, they reflected underlying political problems that were difficult for the ILO to manage. This would become increasingly apparent as the decade wore on (see also Chapter 7).

The Governing Body placed the issue of technical cooperation on the agenda for the Third Session of the AAC in Dakar in 1967. In preparation for the meeting, the ILO conducted an assessment of its existing technical assistance activities in Africa. The reports commissioned from ILO field offices in Dakar,

Lagos, and Addis Ababa are useful for present purposes because they give a good sense of some of the difficulties faced by the TAP programmes. The emphasis on depoliticization and the management of conflicts as underlying objectives for technical assistance was apparent. The Lagos director's report argued explicitly that technical assistance would result in reductions of conflicts around labour issues. If workers' responsibility for participating in tripartite bargaining through properly organized trade unions would be recognized, this process would 'improv[e] the general level of education among workers, thus narrowing the gap between workers and employers in this regard, which will bring about a better mutual comprehension by gradually erasing extant inequalities'.<sup>15</sup> The same report also notes a number of practical difficulties, however. These included political instability and the inability of the ILO to make much progress with projects that did not interest national constituents.<sup>16</sup> The report from the Dar es Salaam office is more explicit about the extent to which technical assistance programmes were entangled in ongoing political conflicts. A workers' education mission in Malawi was abruptly cut short because of 'unstable conditions' in both the government and the trade union movement -- after which the government cut off its support for the project.<sup>17</sup> A mission to Uganda to train unionists was described as 'progressing satisfactorily save that the expert has so far not found it possible to train trade union personnel owing to a protracted cleavage in the trade union movement arising from the existence of two rival national centres for the trade union movement'.<sup>18</sup> It was not only fragmented labour movements that caused problems for the ILO. The report from Addis Ababa notes that a project on management training in Sudan was being held up by inter-ministerial conflicts within the Sudanese government: 'The Department of Labour does not appear to be the appropriate sponsoring government agency because inadequate relationship appears to exist between top management of industry and the Department of Labour', and 'in view of poor inter-ministerial co-operation, the ILO project sponsored by one ministry cannot get access to sectors of the economy where other ministries feel their own projects should function'.<sup>19</sup>

There is an important tension visible here. The ILO's officials repeat the emphasis on avoiding political conflicts evident in the Director General's speech to the first ARC. However, the reports give a good sense of the extent to which conflicts within governments and trade union movements around a number of

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<sup>15</sup> David T. Luscombe to Director General, 9 December 1966, attached report, p.16, ILOA ADC 159-3-412-1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 23-4.

<sup>17</sup> Director, Dar es Salaam Office, Report on Technical Assistance in Africa, p. 5, ILOA ADC 159-3-412-1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> 'Note on ILO Technical Assistance Programmes During 1966 in Countries Covered by the Office of the ILO in Addis Ababa', ILOA ADC 159-3-412-1.

axes -- ranging from broad debates about the relationship of labour to the state to bureaucratic or personal struggles to claim a greater share of organizational resources or authority -- made the ILO's programmes difficult to apply in practice. TAP, then, despite the best efforts of the ILO, was evidently entangled in struggles over the relationship of labour to the state and over the consolidation of state authority and trade union organization more broadly. Indeed, these struggles often made it difficult for the ILO to carry out the kind of work it wanted to do (see also Chapter 7).

## CONCLUSION

The trajectory of 'development' interventions in sub-Saharan Africa up to 1970, then, was profoundly shaped by ongoing undercurrents of political struggle, which the ILO found difficult to manage. Here the actors and entanglements approach is particularly useful for highlighting the ways in which African struggles against colonial rule and over the shape of postcolonial order shaped the practice of 'development'. It has been common in IPE to relate the depoliticizing aspects of the 'development' infrastructure in the post-war period to an American-led effort to manage Cold War concerns in the context of decolonization (e.g. Murphy and Augelli 1993; McMichael 2012). The actors and entanglements approach offers a more complete (and thus much more variegated) picture, in which 'development' is not only much more explicitly contested, but also enrolled in a variety of different struggles.

The ILO's initial engagements with 'development' emerged out of the crisis of colonial authority in the decade prior to WWII. Colonial governments were frequently ambivalent about the role of the ILO. This meant that in the 1940s and 1950s the ILO's contributions were limited to the IALC and Committee of Experts' debates about the formulation of certain policy approaches, rather than the direct administration of technical assistance. Nonetheless, the ILO contributed to the articulation of a distinct set of technologies of governance through which colonial authorities sought to manage the 'labour question'. These practices were ultimately unable to stem the tide of anti-colonial resistance, and indeed contributed to the formation of organizational bases for challenges to colonial rule. 'Decolonization', then, was an ambiguous development from the perspective of the ILO. On one hand, it created the possibility for a rapid expansion of development assistance in sub-Saharan Africa. On the other, the formal transfer of sovereignty only intensified conflicts over the shape of postcolonial order, and especially over the relation between organized labour and nationalist governments. The result was that the ILO's 'development' activities after 1960 were entangled in increasingly complex conflicts over the relationship between states and labour. Despite the persistent intent on the part of the ILO to limit the politicization of its activities, then, its early development assistance activities -- both before and after decolonization -- were entangled in ongoing political struggles by a variety of direct and indirect forms of action by

African workers and political parties.

## CHAPTER 5: THE WORLD EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME: 1968-1990

This chapter turns to an analysis of the ILO's interventions into employment policy in the 1970s and early 1980s. The chapter argues that, while the ILO was more successful in getting WEP missions up and running than it often had been in the first decade after independence, WEP programming never managed to escape the entanglements of political struggles any more than the previous decade's programming. If we want to understand how WEP played out 'on the ground', then, we need to situate the missions in the context of the changing political economy of labour in the 1970s. The chapter proceeds in three parts. The first part of the chapter traces the emergence of the WEP in the context of broad shifts in global and African political economy in the early 1970s. It highlights the 'technical' and 'depoliticizing' framework within which the WEP was developed. The second section examines the 'pilot' WEP mission to Kenya in which the concept of the 'informal sector' was first developed, tracing the ways in which the mission itself and the report intersected with ongoing conflicts around the role of labour in the Kenyan political economy. The third section examines the circulations of ILO expertise and ideas about 'employment' more generally, into other African cases through WEP missions in the remainder of the decade.

### THE 'DISCOVERY' OF EMPLOYMENT

A number of important changes took place at the ILO in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For present purposes, the creation of the WEP in 1968 -- to a great deal of fanfare -- is most salient. WEP reflected a set of partially conflicting developments. Many ILO officials locate the genesis of WEP in the 'discovery' that without widespread employment, economic growth did not necessarily lead to 'development' in the sense of greater human wellbeing (see Saith 2005: 1168). In contrast to conventional approaches to development at the time, emphasizing economic growth and capital formation, the ILO sought to place 'employment generation into the center of the national planning and development efforts as an explicit policy objective in its own right, instead of leaving it as a residual and eventual consequence of "successful" development efforts' (Bangasser 2000: 5). Importantly, employment was seen in this context as a means to increasing human wellbeing rather than an end in itself. In explaining the purpose of the WEP, outgoing Director General Morse would argue that:

Productive employment by itself is very much an economic concept.

But it leads... to a wider sharing of the fruits of development...

Where poverty is widespread, these elementary gains are the first and almost the only meaning of social progress. (1968: 519-520)

The 'discovery' narrative in many of these 'insider' accounts from the ILO overstates the unique-ness of the ILO in this respect. Similar 'discoveries' of the social were certainly taking place across the complex of organizations involved in global development governance at the time -- the shift to 'human development'



under Robert McNamara at the World Bank is particularly notable here (see Rojas 2015; Best 2013).

Moreover, in significant ways, WEP continued within the general *problematique* that had been laid out in the stabilizing debate in the 1940s and 1950s. One official, introducing an early event on WEP in 1971, framed the problem of employment in terms that would not have looked out of place in a report from the IALC: ‘People are moving from the rural areas much faster than the small modern sector that attracts them can absorb them. If this continues, large numbers of unemployed people will be living in slums by the end of the decade’.<sup>1</sup> The first project document for JASPA as a whole, written in late 1972, similarly notes that ‘The concentration in the cities of large and growing numbers of dissatisfied young people had potentially a politically explosive character; it creates a social climate where delinquency flourishes; it affects, therefore, the very fabric of society’.<sup>2</sup> The policy prescription was different -- generating more jobs as opposed to stabilizing a segment of the workforce -- but the same underlying fears of overly rapid urbanization, dangerous slums, and disorder were always present.

WEP also reflected institutional pressures on the ILO that were emerging because tripartite corporatism was coming under pressure in Europe and North America. The then-dominant Keynesian economic policies were eroded by so-called ‘stagflation’. These developments had ambiguous consequences for the future of the ILO, which were only compounded by the increasingly strained relationship between the ILO and the US (Cox 1977). Cox discusses WEP in the context of the constraints posed on innovation at the ILO by the context of American hegemony (1977: 417-422). Standing (2008: 363) even describes the turn to employment, including the growing attention paid to the informal sector, as a distraction from the broader crisis of tripartite corporatism facing the ILO. Nonetheless, as relations with the US became increasingly strained, and particularly after the US refused to pay its contribution to the ILO’s budget in 1970 after the appointment of a soviet citizen as Assistant Secretary General, the WEP was increasingly relied on as a means of raising funds from the UNDP and from Northern European development agencies.

In any event, the really important point for present purposes is that the ILO put an enormous emphasis on WEP in its activities in Africa. Indeed, in the context of the deepening funding constraints facing the ILO in the early 1970s,

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<sup>1</sup> Thorkil Kristensen, ‘ILO Seminar at Kericho: Introductory Statement’, n.d., ILOA WEP 159-3-02-2.

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Office, ‘Draft Project Document, Submitted to the United Nations Development Programme: Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa’, 1972, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2).

WEP and JASPA were prioritized over other policy areas. The UNDP informed the ILO in 1972 that its funds for new international development projects were limited and that funds for JASPA would have to come in part by reallocating resources from other areas.<sup>3</sup> The response on the part of the African section of the ILO, after it became clear that this 'restrictive' stand on the part of the UNDP would not change, was that JASPA should 'obtain first priority on the envisaged agenda'.<sup>4</sup>

WEP involved at least five operational tracks in practice: devoting more field resources to employment issues; sending 'high-level missions' to particular African countries to advise on employment issues; running regional meetings of policy-makers to call attention to employment issues; sending 'minor' missions on request to governments; and developing a research programme on employment problems.<sup>5</sup> In practice, 'reinforcing the field structure' in the context of budget constraints meant approaching the UNDP for money to appoint 'employment' specialists to the African Regional Office in Addis Ababa and the field offices elsewhere in the region.<sup>6</sup> The ILO started to assemble multi-disciplinary 'Comprehensive Employment Missions' to report on a broad range of policies related to employment and unemployment. The first of these went to Colombia in 1969. The Comprehensive Mission approach, however, was rather expensive and time consuming, and in practice more limited missions to deal with particular issue areas ('manpower training' or employment statistics were particularly common) or sectors very quickly became more common.<sup>7</sup> Even in 1972, while one 'comprehensive' mission was launched (the 'pioneer' mission to Kenya), projects dealing with 'manpower planning' and employment service organizations were sent to Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia; rural employment projects were sent to Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania; and missions dealing with small-scale industries or handicrafts were sent to Dahomey, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nigeria, Swaziland, and Upper Volta.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Doo-Kingué to Francis Blanchard, 24 March 1972, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2).

<sup>4</sup> H.K. Nook minute to Jean Reynaud and A.A. Shaheed, 2 March 1973, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2); *cf.* Francis Blanchard to Michel Doo-Kingué, 21 April 1972, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2).

<sup>5</sup> Kjeld Phillip, 'High-Level Meetings for Permanent Secretaries in African Governments', 20 April 1970, ILOA WEP-159-3-01.

<sup>6</sup> 'Notes on a Meeting between Dr. Ammar and Mr. Blanchard, Friday 13 February 1971', ILOA WEP 159-3-01-3.

<sup>7</sup> 'Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa: Proposals for Action in the 1972-1973 Biennium', pp. 4-8, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2).

<sup>8</sup> S.B.L. Nigam, 'JASPA Activities During 1972', p. 3, ILOA WEP 159-3 (2).

JASPA was established at the ARC in 1969. The relationship between JASPA and WEP was initially somewhat uncertain. Generally speaking JASPA involved permanent staff working at field offices in Africa, while some early missions were carried out under the rubric of the WEP with minimal involvement from the field offices. This disjuncture was in part a result of the fact that the field structure for JASPA was still being established in the early 1970s, but the ILO saw a need to have concrete missions to show for its efforts as early as possible.<sup>9</sup>

The practice of WEP and JASPA pose something of a puzzle. The objectives of the ILO and of national governments in sub-Saharan Africa were scarcely ever a good fit. Indeed, dozens of WEP/JASPA missions had very little to show in terms of actual changes to government policies. Yet, the missions not only received enormous emphasis at the ILO, but continued to be invited by African governments on a regular basis. The programmes generated volumes of research and policy recommendations, but very few actual changes to policy. From a conventional perspective, it is hard to say what to make of this. The reports themselves had plenty of shortcomings -- many of which were pointed out by contemporary critics. The limited extent of reforms would seem to point to a certain weakness on the part of the ILO with respect to its authority over national governments -- yet none of the missions took place without the invitation of the governments involved. Indeed, often they were solicited by African governments. The answer, I think, is clearer if we think in terms of actors and entanglements. WEP missions and reports were frequently re-deployed by African governments to perform a particular legitimating function, in the context of ongoing struggles over the relationship between labour and the state. Participating in WEP was often a way of performing a commitment to social equity while minimizing the political role of potentially oppositional trade unions, with minimal cost if the specific policies recommended by the ILO were never actually implemented.

In order to understand these dynamics, it is important to understand that both WEP and JASPA were rolled out against the backdrop of some broad shifts in African political economies. These might be summarized (at the risk of some oversimplification) as the solidification of what Bayart (2009) has called the 'postcolonial historic bloc' in sub-Saharan Africa. Leaderships of strategically important groups were increasingly brought into networks of patronage centered

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<sup>9</sup> Abbas Ammar Minute to Mr. Mendes 3 March 1971, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1. There were eventually three separate field teams set up along with a group at the African Regional Office in Addis Ababa -- one for francophone Africa, which was often referred to by the French language acronym PECTA; one for Anglophone Africa; and in the late 1970s a related team was set up in Southern Africa, to give assistance to national liberation movements in the white rule states along with Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

on governing party/state complexes in a process of passive revolution (2009: 180-192). As I have noted previously, organized labour was one such strategically important segment of society -- among others like students, professionals, and intellectuals. At the regional level, this meant the establishment of a regional confederation committed to a nationalist, 'non-political' form of unionism. Single party or military governments were widely consolidated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A growing number of African countries were adopting bans on international union affiliation, and after 1973 most banned affiliation to confederations other than the nationalist-dominated Organization for African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), which was set up by the OAU. The ILO's relationship to OATUU is interesting in its own right, and is taken up further in Chapter 7 -- for the time being, though, the point is that by the early 1970s many of the conflicts that had posed such problems for the ILO in the 1960s were considerably more muted, and in many instances governing parties were gaining increased control over strategies for national 'development'.

These shifts had serious implications for the ILO's work under WEP. To a certain extent, the ostensibly 'technical' focus of WEP reinforced state claims to greater control over economic policy. This was visible even in internal controversies among ILO officials about who should participate in setting priorities for the programme. After the ARC in 1969, the ILO began planning regional seminars for policymakers to discuss the role of employment in development strategy in Africa. The first of these was held in Dakar in December of 1970. Workers' and employers' participation in the Dakar meeting were discussed. At an early meeting with an external consultant it was suggested that workers' and employers' organizations might be invited to Dakar. The ILO official reporting on the meeting immediately noted that 'this might create a problem regarding the number of participants'.<sup>10</sup> At a later meeting it was pointed out that 'there might be some long-term political advantage, especially vis-à-vis the Governing Body, if some form of employers' and workers' representation were devised' -- it was suggested that logistical problems might be avoided if the workers' and employers' groups of the GB were invited to nominate a candidate for participation.<sup>11</sup> The debate, in effect, revolved around whether the political cost in the tripartite GB could be minimized enough that excluding workers would be worthwhile. Eventually workers' participation was rejected. The reasoning was that, since the purpose of the meetings was to 'focus the attention of those people who effectively shape and implement development policies' on employment, and workers' and employers' associations did not fit that bill, it would not be worth

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<sup>10</sup> R. Mayer 'Points for Discussion for Dr. Ammar with Professor Feldheim', n.d., ILOA WEP 159-3-01.

<sup>11</sup> 'Notes on Meeting Convened by Dr. Ammar on Wednesday, 1 April 1970, 9:00am', ILOA WEP 159-3-01, p. 2.

the cost to invite workers and employers.<sup>12</sup> A reflection on the Dakar seminar equally noted that the exclusion of workers' and employers' organizations had been beneficial for discussions of national-level policy because 'we could expect that the involvement of particular interest groups... in a seminar of this type could take debates towards an impasse because they would tend to situate themselves according to their particular interests and not the general interest'.<sup>13</sup> This approach seems to have been carried forward with little further debate; I found no mention of workers' and employers' organizations at all in the planning materials for the second JASPA seminar in Kericho.<sup>14</sup>

This underlines the 'top-down', technical character of the model of development assistance adopted under JASPA. The ILO continued to be wary of the politicization of development activity. Indeed, these fears were substantive enough that at least one official even suggested that the decision on the participation of workers' and employers' organizations at Dakar should not even be referred to the tripartite GB, 'where the normal reflex actions could be expected'.<sup>15</sup> Yet escaping politics remained impossible in practice. In the first instance the idea that limiting participation to government officials would prevent the politicization of the programme depended on a problematic identification of governments as dispassionate representatives of the 'general interest'. At least some officials had misgivings about whether or not this was the case: there were reservations expressed as early as the planning for the Dakar seminar that the ILO's approach was 'too academic and [did] not concentrate sufficiently on what is politically feasible'.<sup>16</sup> Deliberately or not, the 'technical' emphasis of the ILO put the focus of development assistance squarely on the state and on policy reform, and tended to marginalize the active role of labour in the development process. It depended on the idea that governments were autonomous actors solely concerned with achieving the greater well-being of society as a whole through technical adjustments to policy -- a number of critics would later remark, quite

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<sup>12</sup> Aide Memoire for Discussion with Mr. Blanchard with a view to submitting a concerted recommendation to the Director General on the advisability of inviting employers' or workers' organizations to the African WEP seminars'; see also 'Meeting on Employment Policy, Dakar, 6-12 December 1970', n.d., both in ILOA WEP 159-3-01-1.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Feldheim and Yves Sabolo 'Analyse Critique des Résultats du Séminaire de Dakar sur le Politique de l'Emploi', 21 December 1971, ILOA WEP 159-3-01-3. The report is misdated in the file, it was written in December of 1970 shortly after the conference; it is referenced in Francis Blanchard Minute to Director General, 6 January 1971, same file.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance S. Zottos to Mr. Méndez, 'Progress Report on the Organization of the Kericho Meeting', 8 April 1971, ILOA WEP 159-3-02.

<sup>15</sup> H.A. Dunning to Dr. Abbas Ammar, 19 August 1970, ILOA WEP-3-01-1.

<sup>16</sup> Kjeld Phillip to Dr. Ammar, 27 August 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3-01-2.

rightly, that this view was politically naïve. The ILO effectively made policy prescriptions without much thought to who might actually be interested enough to ensure their implementation.

More broadly, the ‘technocratic’ approach of the ILO under WEP virtually always bumped up against the political situation within which the ILO operated. This was at times true even at the very basic level of planning missions. In early 1970, for instance, the Ethiopian government contacted the ILO to request that the first JASPA mission be sent to Ethiopia, pointing out that they had recently conducted a preliminary survey of underemployment and set up an interministerial committee on employment issues.<sup>17</sup> Wilfred Jenks apparently assigned considerable importance to maintaining close links with Ethiopia, and saw the WEP mission as a useful means in this respect.<sup>18</sup> Other officials worried that Ethiopia was ‘so different from all other African countries, especially the more advanced ones which have serious employment problems, that we can learn very little from a mission to such a country’.<sup>19</sup> These concerns were enough to prevent the ‘pioneer’ mission being sent to Ethiopia, but when the Ethiopian government raised the issue with Jenks again in 1972,<sup>20</sup> Jenks quickly committed the ILO to sending a mission to Ethiopia as soon as possible.<sup>21</sup>

The inevitably politicized nature of the missions shows up even in internal discussions of recommendations. Indeed, echoing complaints that the Dakar meeting failed to pay enough attention to the political feasibility of recommendations (discussed in the previous section), the ‘technical’ focus of individual WEP missions sometimes proved controversial even within the ILO. This was also the case with Ethiopia -- a brief memo regarding the mission report and policy recommendations from the head of the Workers’ Relations department is worth quoting in full:

The WEP report on Ethiopia illustrates once again the danger of looking at employment from a scientific point of view.

Presumably this report will not be shown to the Workers’ Group of the Governing Body, but if they should see it their future support for WEP would be gravely endangered.

I therefore suggest that the present draft be reviewed from a social point of view, with special reference to the following points:

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<sup>17</sup> Getahoun Tesemma to Mr. W. Jenks, 12 January 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3-78.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Meeting with Mr. Jenks: Ethiopia’, 3 February 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3-78.

<sup>19</sup> Kjeld Phillips minute to Dr. Ammar, 26 February 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3-78.

<sup>20</sup> Tsahafe Tazaz Aklilu Habte Wold to Mr. Wilfred Jenks, 3 July 1972, ILOA WEP 159-3-78.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Blanchard to M.E. Ndisi, 28 July 1972, ILOA WEP 159-3-78.

1) The argument that wages and salaries in urban employment and the public service are too high, and should be reduced.

2) The suggestion that present Ethiopian laws and regulations on minimum wages, hours of work, and safety and health are contrary to economic growth, and should be rescinded.<sup>22</sup>

The memo echoed conflicts over the report that were raised in Ethiopia as well. The recommendation on freezing wages in urban employment and the civil service was contested by the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions in a national workshop where the Ethiopian government had invited workers' and employers' organizations to comment on a draft of the report.<sup>23</sup> The recommendation, albeit in somewhat watered down form, nonetheless found its way into the final version of the report (ILO 1973a: 29). The 'technical' focus of the WEP, in short, sometimes only very thinly obscured political conflicts -- over the role of states and labour in the promotion of development, over the distribution of resources, and more broadly over the position of the ILO in the region -- both within the ILO itself and among different actors in 'national' contexts.

The WEP/JASPA approach thus allowed for considerable disjunctures between the ILO's objectives and the actual practice of the ILO's missions on employment. These disjunctures are particularly apparent when we take an actors and entanglements approach, as will be demonstrated in the following two sections.

#### INFORMALITY, POVERTY, AND THE STATE IN KENYA

The Kenyan mission, while not necessarily typical of JASPA's activities even at the time given its 'comprehensive' character, held tremendous significance for the ILO, and was widely debated within and beyond the ILO in the 1970s. In particular, the concept of the 'informal' sector is almost universally cited as a chief innovation of the ILO under WEP, and continues to inspire a good deal of research and practical work within and beyond the ILO (on which see Chapter 6). The Kenya mission thus had probably the farthest-reaching impact of any of WEP's work in Africa. It is, accordingly, worth discussing in greater detail.

Kenya seemed to exemplify very clearly the problem of 'employment' that WEP had identified. Kenya had managed to achieve rapid rates of growth in the

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<sup>22</sup> H.A. Dunning minute to Mr. Aamir Ali, 13 February 1973, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3.

<sup>23</sup> S.B.L. Nigam, 'Ethiopia Employment Mission, Summary Record of Discussions Held at the Workshop Organized by the Government of Ethiopia on 9-10 July 1973', 14 July 1974, p. 14, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3.

ten years following its independence from Britain, but it was not at all clear that the benefits of this growth were reaching the vast majority of the population. This problem of inequality was clearly identified in the preparatory work for the mission:

Perhaps more important than all the rest, there seems to exist, in Kenya, a very notorious dualism between the prosperous basis of certain aspects of the economic picture, highly productive farm units, relatively good infrastructure, sophisticated financial services, high-quality education, by European standards, in some schools, and the majority of the population. A striking proportion of economic resources seems to be directed towards the needs of a small proportion of the population... while the large majority stagnates. *This perhaps would explain unemployment as much as any other factor.*<sup>24</sup>

The problem of employment, then, was fundamentally a problem of equality -- but equality conceived in residualist terms. The poor were simply those 'excluded' from the 'modern' parts of Kenyan society.

Yet the mission also took place in a context where the state sought increasing control over economic decision-making and where the ILO sought to avoid 'politicizing' the issue of employment. This point may be underlined by tracing in more detail the ways in which the report fit into debates in Kenya about labour and development. Tom Mboya, a former union leader and key figure in the country's independence movement who served as Minister of Economic Planning and Development until his assassination in 1969, gave a lecture to the ILO's International Institute for Labour Studies in 1967 in which he contrasted organized workers with 'the "have nots" in society [who] are not normally well organized and *must rely on the government or political parties* to represent their interests' (Mboya 1968: 5, emphasis added). The government, meanwhile, was making moves to establish greater control over the trade unions. Kenya's Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) had been formed in 1965 after the government dissolved the Kenya Federation of Labour (KFL) and the rival Kenyan African Workers' Congress. The KFL had split over a combination of personal disagreements among the leadership of the KFL and interlinked questions of international affiliation and the 'political' independence of trade unions. Amsden, writing in 1971, noted that 'it is clear that Kenya's trade union movement is no longer free to participate in opposition politics. With this avenue of activity blocked, COTU's new administration has taken the path of least resistance' (1971: 118).

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<sup>24</sup> 'Basic Ideas for the High-Level Kenyan Mission', annex to Jorge Mendez minute to Dr. Ammar, 26 April 1971, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1. Emphasis added.



This ‘non-political’ character of the then-newly-formed COTU in fact contributed to making Kenya an appealing target for the WEP mission.<sup>25</sup> The Worker Relations Department was asked to report on the trade union situation in Kenya in terms of how it might impact the mission. The report concluded: ‘Relations with the ILO are excellent. The General Secretary and President of COTU have both attended the International Labour Conference and are very well-disposed towards the ILO. They can be expected to give their full cooperation to the mission and will appreciate a request to cooperate’.<sup>26</sup> A similar report on employers’ organizations noted approvingly that ‘Both the [Federation of Kenyan Employers] and the COTU... co-operate fully with the government, and in particular the Labour Ministry, mainly through the labour advisory board which is composed almost entirely of FKE and COTU representatives’.<sup>27</sup> It was acknowledged that because of this proximity of the labour movement to the government ‘certain traditional trade union freedoms have been curtailed in the whole process of labour evolution that still continues’,<sup>28</sup> but this did not temper the generally positive assessment of the possibility for the ILO to work in Kenya. The ILO in fact actively encouraged ‘non-political’ (i.e. government-dominated) unionism in Africa where it would facilitate technical assistance projects (see also Chapter 7). The broader point, though, is that the basic problem facing the Kenyan mission was how to address inequality in a ‘non-political’ manner, relying on policy reforms managed by the state rather than on any independent role for the trade unions or other potential representatives of the ‘have-nots’.

The concept of the ‘informal’, as adapted by the ILO mission, did the job brilliantly. The Kenyan mission did not invent the term. A footnote in the ILO report credits the Kenyan academics participating in the mission with advancing the concept (ILO 1972: 6, fn. 1). It had in fact first been used by Keith Hart in a paper, based on doctoral research in Ghana and eventually published in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*. The paper had been presented to a conference at the Institute for Development Studies at Sussex (where the leaders of the ILO mission worked) in 1971 (see Hart 1973). Hart’s work is not cited in the ILO’s report on Kenya. Hart’s account of informal work in Accra centered on declining

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<sup>25</sup> Ironically, this sat at odds with the ILO’s emphasis on free and independent trade unions. This dilemma was common in the ILO’s work in the region at the time. It was manifested itself particularly clearly in the debates about ‘trade union unity’ examined in Chapter 7.

<sup>26</sup> B.E.D. Komba-Kono ‘Trade Union Organization -- Kenya’, 21 July 1971, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1.

<sup>27</sup> S. N’Diaye-Guirandou ‘Notes on the Kenya Federation of Employers and Kenyan Employers’ Associations in General’, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Kenya Employment Mission’, Annex to Paul B.J. Chu minute to Mr. de Givry, Mr. Abbas Ammar, EPPD, 10 June 1971, p. 1., ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1.

real wages for unskilled migrant workers. Precarious incomes and indebtedness, Hart observed, were closely linked:

Not surprisingly, faced with the impossibility of making ends meet, the urban worker in 1966 often ran up considerable debit accounts, used some of his pay to settle a few bills, went on a short term binge until penniless, and spent the majority of the month in penury and increasing debt, relying on extended credit facilities and a wide range of putative kin and friends to provide occasional meals, and even lodging, if necessary. (Hart 1973: 65)

More permanent solutions to this dilemma were often sought by chasing additional sources of income. Some workers in this situation could supplement their incomes by moonlighting -- a practice widespread enough, Hart noted, that it likely skewed estimates of formal employment rates calculated by subtracting the total number of formal jobs from census population figures (1973: 66). Still, employment incomes, particularly for rural migrants, remained precarious. Hart notes that 'Petty capitalism, often as a supplement to wage employment, offers itself as a means of salvation' (1973: 67). Hart paints a picture of a highly diverse range of legal and illegal 'informal' activities, of varying stability. Individual workers frequently relied on a range of formal and informal forms of work, along with the forms of credit and communal support mentioned above, to eke out precarious livelihoods. Two points are perhaps worth highlighting. First, 'informal' incomes, in this conception, are difficult to describe as a 'sector' unto itself. Hart argues that the prominence of 'informal' incomes in the lives of the urban poor in Accra suggests that talking about 'employment' policy in the traditional sense was an inappropriate translation of 'Western' norms to African contexts: "The question becomes not "How can we create work for the jobless", but rather "Do we want to shift the balance of income opportunities in the direction of formal employment for its own sake, or only to reduce participation in socially disapproved informal activities and in those informal occupations whose marginal productivity is too low"" (1973: 82). The second point is that this conception of 'informality' moves us a considerable distance from the 'traditional/modern' dichotomy highlighted above. Hart, for the most part, talks in terms of informal 'activities' or 'occupations' rather than an informal 'sector', and links the growth of these activities to the erosion of real wages. The informal is not, in this approach, a residue of incomplete modernization, but instead a symptom of growing precarity. This is worth underlining for present purposes primarily because it underscores the complexity of the politics of rolling the concept out in practice.

The ILO employment policy report cast its discussion of the 'informal' in residualist terms -- in fact, in the report the 'formal/informal' binary maps quite closely onto the older 'modern/traditional' conception of inequality, noted above. Of course, Kenya is different from Ghana, but Hart's basic point that the 'informal' represented a highly diverse range of livelihood strategies that were

often packaged with formal employment, financial techniques, and communal social protections by individuals likely applied equally there are well. The mission's employment plan for Kenya highlighted the 'exclusion' of most of the population from the 'modern' economy (now recast as the 'formal sector') and put its primary emphasis on 'linking' the formal and informal sectors:

Our strategy of a redistribution from growth aims at *establishing links that are at present absent* between the formal and informal sectors...

The various policies which we recommend... are intended to reduce risk and uncertainty on the part of those employed in the informal sector and to ensure a dynamic growth of this large segment of the Kenyan economy. (ILO 1972: 7, emphasis added)

The concept of the 'informal' did break rather decisively from the ILO's traditional focus on 'industrial relations' and tripartism (see Cox 1977: 417-421). In so doing, it unquestionably also made possible the consideration of unorganized, politically marginal forms of work as crucial components of the development process. However, engineering 'dynamic growth' in the informal sector through appropriate policies reinforced a politics that situated labour as the passive object of 'development' interventions. Moreover, the 'informal' as it was conceived in the Kenya report to a considerable extent reinforced dualist or residualist understandings of poverty. Importantly, then, the image of separate 'formal' and 'informal' sectors obscured power relations and linkages between the 'formal' capitalist economy and the 'informal' that already existed. As Colin Leys (1973: 426) noted in a perceptive critique:

Smallholders provide cheap food crops, pastoralists provide cheap beef, petty traders provide cheap distribution, 'subsistence' transporters provide cheap communications, the makers of shoes out of old tyres and the bicycle repairers and the charcoal burners and sellers provide cheap goods and services designed for the poverty life-style of those whose work makes the 'formal sector' profitable, and which enable them to live on their wages.

In short, the 'informal' was already intimately connected to the 'formal', particularly by ensuring the reproduction of labour, and especially the reproduction of what Marx called the 'reserve army' of labour which was unemployed or worked at poverty wages. Emphasizing the 'creation' of linkages 'that are at present absent' obscured these relational aspects of poverty and the power dynamics involved. The idea that the 'informal' was central to the creation of employment also closed down the active role allotted to workers in the development process. Indeed, while the report did briefly discuss the role of trade unions in agriculture (ILO 1972: 259) it had little or nothing to say about the possibility of organizing workers in the informal economy to have any kind of voice in policy-making, whether into existing union structures or independently. WEP and JASPA, then, not only depoliticized urban poverty, but also contributed to the marginalization of labour as an oppositional political voice.

COTU did contest these dimensions of WEP's work to some extent. Indeed, it had sought to carve out a greater role even before the mission itself had been launched. In 1970, the OAU secretariat convened a meeting on JASPA for African delegates attending the ILC. COTU delegates apparently asked for representation in the high level seminars discussed above and that missions 'should work in close co-operation with trade unions in the country examined'.<sup>29</sup> The federation also tried unsuccessfully in its comments on the report to have some recommendations included about decision-making structures for wages and incomes policy and employment creation that would involve input from trade unions.<sup>30</sup> That the politically marginalizing effects of the report were contested is significant -- indeed, we can see in COTU's engagements here some effort at using international networks to work around the 'blocked' avenues for political action domestically. The contested nature of the report underlines the ambiguous and conflictual nature of 'development' practice. Still, the concept of the 'informal' certainly obscured the power structures underlying relations of poverty in Kenya, and maybe more importantly in practice the particular technologies of government through which the concept was rolled out had distinct implications for ongoing struggles over the course of Kenyan development and control of the country's political system.

This point can be pressed further by examining the impacts of the report in Kenya. The commitment of the Kenyan government to the 'have-nots' was largely rhetorical. Partly in response to the WEP report, the Kenyan government did undertake a number of reforms to its development strategy; these are illustrative of the broader argument being made here. The Kenyan government published a sessional paper on employment in 1973 addressing the recommendations of the report (Republic of Kenya 1973). While most of the report was accepted 'in principle', many of the recommendations themselves were questioned. The Kenyan government's implementation of the recommendations, moreover, was highly selective. This in itself is indicative of the actual influence of the ILO over Kenyan policy making in that the report was certainly not intended as a menu of choices:

The ILO strategy, while perhaps not constituting a totally indivisible package, contains a core of mutually reinforcing recommendations. In particular, the recommendations on the structure of rewards, land policy, technology, protection, and the informal sector seem to be

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<sup>29</sup> 'Summary of the main points raised by the African delegates attending the International Labour Conference, at the meeting convened by the General Secretariat of the Organization for African Unity on ILO strategy concerning the Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa', 2 July 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3.

<sup>30</sup> Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya), 'Initial Comments on: Employment, Incomes and Equality in Kenya: A Report of UN-ILO Team of Experts (Geneva 1972)', ILOA WEP 159-3-227-1 (2).

inextricably linked to each other. For example, the educational reforms recommended would not work in the absence of a substantial change in the structure of rewards. Thus, partial implementation is likely to be ineffective and may even in some respects make matters worse. (Godfrey 1978: 41)

The Kenyan government's commitment to the 'have nots' seems particularly questionable in light of some of the recommended reforms that were *not* pursued: e.g. a progressive land tax and limits on individual landholding; the ending of demolition of slum housing (and consequently of informal business premises); redistributive incomes policy; and an end to harassment of traders, taxi-drivers, and vagrants (Godfrey 1978). This latter failure, indeed, in spite of the Sessional Paper's assertion that

The Government acknowledges that there is much counterproductive harassment of the so-called informal sector. This harassment will cease and more realistic standards and controls will be applied. The Government has already taken initial steps to ensure that the informal sector is provided with sufficient credit and management and technical services. (Republic of Kenya 1973: 27)

As Sandbrook observes, the Kenyan government's 'action fell well short of its rhetoric, insofar as the government shied away from structural reform' (1983: 238). Leys (1973) noted at the time that the more 'structural' or redistributive reforms recommended in the ILO report seemed to depend on the assumption that Kenyan elites would act contrary to their own interests.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, the structure of WEP and JASPA inhibited the extent to which follow-through on recommendations was really possible in a number of ways. First, because the missions were led by 'outside' experts, there was often diminished commitment or capacity on the part of the ILO for follow-up. The ILO put a considerable effort into publicizing the Kenya report, but notably, this was rarely directed at Kenya itself, rather at promoting the work of the Kenya mission and especially the concept of the 'informal sector' in order to raise the ILO's profile in other parts of Africa. Second, WEP was financed primarily through bilateral donor agencies rather than the ILO's regular budget. Donor support was provided for the missions themselves, but generally without any additional funds committed for follow-up; this meant that 'any fresh projects to follow up on the recommendations of the comprehensive missions had to compete with existing

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<sup>31</sup> This was, in fact, a common complaint about WEP/JASPA in general even within the ILO. For instance, in an early memo discussing the plans for JASPA, one official lamented the lack of consideration given to the political situation in different countries, noting that 'surely the employment problem cannot be tackled the same way in Brazzaville or Conakry and in Abidjan (assuming it can be tackled at all in the latter capital)?'. Rene Livchen minute to Abbas Ammar, 8 June 1970, ILOA WEP 159-3. See also below, p. 169.

projects or with proposals already in the pipeline' (Bangasser 2000: 7).

'Rules and authority' or critical approaches might well note that the Kenya mission report and the concept of the 'informal' more broadly were problematic because they were relatively superficial reforms that were implemented only halfway. And, insofar as we are concerned with the effectiveness of WEP or JASPA in reshaping the political economy of labour and development, this is an entirely accurate assessment. However, to stop here would overlook the utility of *the report itself* as a resource, and the ways in which it was deployed by the Kenyan government as a means of legitimizing its own relatively thin 'development' strategy. This is the crucial contribution here of an actors and entanglements approach. The report's utility as a resource for the Kenyan government, indeed, was *enhanced* by precisely the things Leys, Sandbrook, and others correctly note prevented it having much impact on actual relations of poverty in practice. In short, the fact that the 'informal/formal' dichotomy occluded the structural or relational dimensions of urban poverty, the constriction of space for trade union input, the 'technical' and 'non-political' nature of the report, the fact that the report came with a set of ambiguous policy recommendations, and the limited ability to follow-up on the part of the ILO, all enabled the Kenyan government to use the report in efforts to legitimize an economic policy framework that rhetorically placed the government as the protector of the 'have nots' in Kenyan society (to the exclusion of opposition parties or trade unions) by claiming the moral sanction of the ILO. This despite the fact that many of the ILO's actual recommendations were either rejected or watered down.

Indeed, a dispute with the Kenyan government stemming from a WEP working paper written by a junior ILO staffer in 1975 serves to illustrate how important the limits to follow-up on the mission from the ILO really were. In brief, the working paper (drawing heavily on two influential radical analyses of Kenyan political economy published around the same time as the WEP report [Sandbrook 1975 and Leys 1975]) argued that the Kenyan state was not implementing certain recommendations of the report because the Kenyan government continued to 'serv[e] the interests of the dominant classes' (Asp 1975: 2), and that it was specifically 'recommendations leading to fundamental structural change [that] have been rejected by the government' (Asp 1975: 7). The working paper itself was not presented with much nuance, and for the most part it reiterated arguments that had been made elsewhere (e.g. Leys 1973), but it should be obvious enough from the preceding that the argument was not entirely without merit. It was also, for fairly obvious reasons, rather objectionable to the Kenyan government that it should be published with the implicit endorsement of the ILO. The Ministry of Labour wrote to the Director General's office to demand the retraction of the paper, which it described as 'poor and malicious... and written in

bad taste'.<sup>32</sup> In response to the complaint, the Director General wrote a letter of apology to the Kenyan Government, the ILO stopped circulation of the paper in question, and the employment department changed its policies on working papers to prevent the circulation of working papers outside the department without approval.<sup>33</sup> In short, the Kenyan government took steps to preserve the limited, advisory character of the report by asking for the censure of a working paper that called into question its commitment to actually implementing it.

#### 'BASIC NEEDS' IN PRACTICE

The point that the practice of JASPA was closely entangled with struggles over state authority is further supported by the trajectory of WEP in the latter part of the 1970s and early 1980s. Most 'insider' accounts suggest that after the mid-1970s, the initial excitement around WEP was fading (Bangasser 2000: 8; Saith 2005: 1168; Standing 2008: 363-364). Re-evaluations of the WEP's work were carried out in 1976-1977 in preparation for Phase II of JASPA due to start in 1977. An important early proposal from JASPA staff in Africa was to include a stronger emphasis on rural poverty, and especially on policies that discriminated against rural producers in favour of the narrow 'modern' sector in urban areas.<sup>34</sup> These shifts were solidified in 1976, when the ILO hosted a global 'Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income Distribution, and Social Progress and the International Division of Labour'. The Director General's office introduced the concept of 'Basic Needs' oriented development, based on the idea that 'development planning should include, as an explicit goal, the satisfaction of an absolute level of basic needs' (ILO 1976: 31). These 'needs' were defined as including minimum requirements for consumption, as well as essential services (drinking water, sanitation, etc.). The concept was in many senses a continuation of the WEP's emphasis on employment as a means of promoting wellbeing. It was also ambiguous enough, however, to encompass a wide range of policies in practice. Indeed, it was widely taken up across the UN system, including notably at the World Bank where President Robert McNamara was highly enthusiastic about the concept (see Best 2013; Rojas 2015). The DG's office prepared a report on a 'Basic Needs Strategy for Africa' at the ARC the following year (ILO 1977a). It highlighted means of incorporating women and youth into integrated development programmes, alongside the organization and representation of rural workers; the promotion of rural development through cooperatives; labour-intensive rural public works; policies to promote productivity in the urban informal economy; and minimum wages legislation.

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<sup>32</sup> J.I. Othieno to F. Blanchard, 16 March 1976, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-3-1 (3).

<sup>33</sup> A. Béguin minute to Mr. Emmerij and Mrs. Mosimann, 5 April 1976, ILOA WEP 159-3-227-3-1 (3).

<sup>34</sup> 'Preliminary Thoughts on JASPA's Orientation for Phase II', p. 8, 'The Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa: Past Activities, Impact, and Future Orientation of Work Programme', pp. 19-20, both ILOA WEP 159-3 (5).

There were also some changes in JASPA's mode of practice. There was a definitive shift away from the 'comprehensive' missions under the early years of the WEP towards smaller-scale research and advisory missions -- these typically had a more restricted scope that was defined by the terms of reference negotiated between the host government and the ILO. Moreover, the financial difficulties facing the ILO and UNDP more broadly meant that follow-up to national policy missions was virtually non-existent.<sup>35</sup> Control over the programmes was also devolved more clearly to the regional level, with field staff in the African offices taking on a greater role in the process.

Much of this would seem to have placed the ILO increasingly out of step with the prevailing attitudes towards development in much of the global south, including sub-Saharan Africa. The prevalence of demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1960s and 1970s is well documented and widely discussed (e.g. Cox 1979; Murphy 1984). These views were well-represented in the UN system, particularly through organizations like the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (see Taylor and Smith 2007). Developing country leaders arguing for the NIEO sought to place the emphasis on structural causes of underdevelopment -- this would, seemingly, point to a very different set of concerns and a radically different set of policy prescriptions to those embedded in the much more 'local' or 'national' focused agenda of 'Basic Needs'. This potential disjuncture between 'Basic Needs' and the preferences of developing country governments was not lost on ILO officials either -- Louis Emmerij would recall that:

The developing countries that were at the time in the midst of a fight for a New International Economic Order became suspicious. They were trying to change international income distribution while the basic needs strategy focused very much on national income distribution. (Saith 2005: 1169)

Despite all this, however, JASPA was strikingly persistent in practice. In the face of constant and worsening funding challenges, and a growing disjuncture between the objectives of African governments and the ILO's concerns about 'Basic Needs', JASPA missions persisted well into the 1980s. Indeed, the demand for missions probably *increased* in the second half of the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> This, again, is a highly unexpected trajectory if we start from the perspective of rules and authority. The puzzle is best explained by the fact that JASPA held out appeal for

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<sup>35</sup> Gérard Thirion, 'Note sur les Relations JASPA/PNUD', 27 January 1977, ILOA WEP 159-3 (5).

<sup>36</sup> References to increasing demand for missions, for instance, can be found in G. Feral, 'Le Programme de Travail 1977-1978 et la Préparation de la Seconde Phase du Projet', October 1976; 'JASPA Programme of Work in 1977', 24 November 1976; both ILOA WEP 159-3 (4).



many African states in its usefulness for regularizing and legitimizing models of state power rooted in a top-down, technocratic approach to development and the marginalization of labour as an independent political force. In short, we can make sense of the persistence of JASPA much more easily if we start from the perspective of actors and entanglements.

Indeed, several African governments sought to shape the contents of JASPA reports on promoting 'Basic Needs' in ways that enhanced their usefulness as resources. Notably, very often this meant that the ILO headquarters' emphasis on changing policies that discriminated against the agrarian sector vanished in practice. It could also mean that critiques of existing policy were tempered in interesting ways. The Zambian government, for instance, demanded revisions to sections of the draft report of a JASPA mission in 1976 that were critical of the government. In response to a passage criticizing the government's lack of commitment to employment objectives in implementing previous development plans, the Zambian government wrote that 'The Party and Government feel that it is grossly unfair to accuse them of lack of commitment to plan implementation'. The government's comments continue by asking that 'in order to effectively reflect Government efforts toward economic development more mention should be made of exogenous factors, completely outside the control of Zambia which contributed to the failure to achieve plan targets'.<sup>37</sup> The published version of the report added a paragraph at the request of the Zambian government:

These tendencies have been most seriously exacerbated by the succession of external development which time and again since Independence have obstructed Zambia's attempts to pursue a steady path of sustained development... Zambia has been forced on several occasions to undertake major, rapid and extremely costly measures to restructure its trade links, its transportation routes, its fuel supplies and sources, the types and specifications of imported equipment - in short, to replace the whole set of inherited links with the south towards new alignments consistent with priorities of Independence... The net result in terms of Zambia's internal developments, is that a substantial proportion of Zambia's resources - K650 million according to recent estimates - which might otherwise have been available for more broad based development were pre-empted by the immediate needs of dealing with the problems in neighbouring countries to the

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<sup>37</sup> 'Report to the Government of the Republic of Zambia by a JASPA Employment Advisory Mission: Comments on the Draft Report by the Government of Zambia', annex to D.A. Simonda to Mr. Winston R. Prattley, 20 September 1976, ILOA WEP 159-3 (4).

south. (ILO 1977b: 53)<sup>38</sup>

In short, the ILO added a paragraph to the Zambia report shifting the blame for previous development failures from problems in implementation by the Zambian government onto the regional security situation. External factors, not least the troubled relationship between Zambia and the settler state in Southern Rhodesia, doubtless did inhibit economic growth in Zambia to a considerable extent. But the main effect of inserting these changes into the report was to enhance its usefulness as a resource for the legitimization of the Zambian government's existing development strategy. Indeed, the new paragraph came without any policy recommendations; it was presented simply as an (implicitly ILO-endorsed) explanation for previous failures.

Probably the most dramatic illustration of the broader dynamics highlighted here, however, comes from the ILO's engagements with the military regime in Ethiopia in the early 1980s. The ILO, as noted above, had fairly close relations with the Imperial Government of Ethiopia prior to the 'Revolution' in 1974, after which ILO programming was effectively stopped, in spite of the fact that the African Regional Office remained in Addis Ababa. Indeed, at the time of the revolution the ILO was in the preliminary stages of planning technical assistance under WEP for a massive resettlement scheme designed to eventually use several million hectares of government land for agriculture.<sup>39</sup> The perceived significance of Ethiopia for the ILO in Africa thus lent a degree of urgency to efforts in the early 1980s to establish JASPA missions to Ethiopia. Preliminary research trips were carried out in early 1982, followed by a major policy mission in August-September.

The terms of reference for the policy mission, interestingly, are explicit that it would be carried out 'within the framework of the overall economic and social objectives of the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia'.<sup>40</sup> That these objectives were largely inconsistent with the objective of WEP and of the ILO more broadly almost goes without saying. A portion of the project document (presumably written by an Ethiopian official) even goes as far as to describe unemployment as 'one of the major economic and social problems which socialist Ethiopia inherited from the feudo-bourgeois regime', and to note the

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<sup>38</sup> The paragraph appears verbatim in 'Report to the Government of the Republic of Zambia by a JASPA Employment Advisory Mission: Comments on the Draft Report by the Government of Zambia', annex to D.A. Simonda to Mr. Winston R. Prattley, 20 September 1976, p. 2, ILOA WEP 159-3 (4).

<sup>39</sup> 'Mission to Ethiopia for Consultations on a Pilot Project in Land Settlement 26 August-28 August 1974; and Louis Emmerij to Mr. Teferra Haile Selassie, 23 October 1974, both in ILOA WEP 159-3-78

<sup>40</sup> Shyam Nigam letter to UN Agencies, 10 May 1982, quote from attached document, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3-1.

ways in which the nationalization of land, finance, industry, and large farms had contributed to the reduction of the problem: 'Nationalization... not only helped to minimize wastages of resources which is the main feature of anarchy of production, but has facilitated to introduce measures beneficial for workers'.<sup>41</sup>

The mission itself nonetheless made a set of recommendations that hewed fairly closely to the standard WEP script. Some recommendations in the final mission report -- especially suggestions about overhauling exchange rate policies and labour market regulations, and allowing greater private initiative -- caused a degree of conflict within the Ethiopian government, with different ministries apparently expressing very different evaluations to ILO officials.<sup>42</sup> The report was eventually published, but only in limited circulation and after delays for revisions requested by the Ethiopian government.<sup>43</sup> Because of the way that the Ethiopian regime interacted with the project, then, the mission and report ended up operating less as means of helping the Ethiopian regime to reform its economic system, as the ILO might have intended, and more as a tool for the legitimation of the precarious 'socialist' regime in Ethiopia. Indeed, at the time of the missions, the regime was already engaged in a series of counter insurgency campaigns that would lead to catastrophic famines starting in 1983.

This was doubtless far from a 'normal' WEP project. Nonetheless, it is easier to place in the broader context of WEP and JASPA if we examine JASPA as a set of discourses and practices that became embroiled in conflicts over the relationship between state and labour. JASPA reports, as noted in an internal assessment of the constraints faced by the project in 1983, tended to prioritize exchange rate, monetary, fiscal, and price policies over structural issues and make relatively vague policy recommendations with little commitment to follow-up projects.<sup>44</sup> Of course, these problems were to a considerable extent fundamental to the practices of governance deployed by the ILO, not simply intellectual failures on the part of the missions. As one official noted in an internal memo expressing frustration with the persistence of academic criticisms that JASPA's recommendations were politically naïve, 'international organizations have to work within the given framework of a country's economic, social, and political systems... it is not possible for us to refuse the request of a government on the

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Project of the Government of Ethiopia, Employment Advisory Mission, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3-1.

<sup>42</sup> J.P. Martin minute to Mr. Jain and Director General, 11 February 1982, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3-1. The minute is misdated; it discusses events that had not taken place yet in February of 1982.

<sup>43</sup> See J.P. Martin to Keith Griffith, 31 May 1983, ILOA WEP 159-3-78-3-1.

<sup>44</sup> William Keddeman, 'Making Sense of JASPA: A Closer Look at Problems, Constraints, and Options', September 1983, p. 4, ILOA WEP 159-3 (9).

ground that it should first change its political system or abolish the “real vested class forces”<sup>45</sup>.

It is in highlighting these dynamics that the actors and entanglements approach is particularly valuable: it is one thing to critique the contents of the ILO’s reports or the ideas and approaches underlying the WEP, it is another (potentially more fruitful) task altogether to map out the ways in which those reports and ideas were actually mobilized. The real practice of development governance is difficult to predict on the basis of the contents of policy recommendations. The recommendations made by WEP missions in themselves were often of limited import in practice. Indeed, as in Zambia or Ethiopia, recommendations that did not suit governing authorities could often easily be modified; or, as in Kenya, they could simply be ignored. The salient commonality between the Kenya mission in 1972, Zambian report in 1977, and the Ethiopian report in 1982 was that (in the face of ongoing struggles to establish state authority and over the distribution of economic gains) they marked out ‘employment’ as a technical matter to be resolved *for* workers from the top down, while recommending a few superficial policy changes and more or less validating the existing approach being taken by the government. The vague nature of JASPA policy recommendations and the thin commitment to follow-up *strengthened* the utility of the employment missions *as resources* by African governments -- the mission reports themselves became resources that could be circulated and deployed for a variety of purposes without necessarily making concrete commitments to put money towards a particular problem or to make substantive changes to legislation.

We should not lose sight, however, of the fact that the particular forms of state authority which were enacted through these kinds of engagements were virtually always tenuous and contested. This is perhaps most viscerally obvious in Ethiopia, which was fighting an active counter-insurgency campaign at the time of the ILO’s mission and which would see a successful challenge to the very territorial integrity of the state by a secessionist movement in Eritrea not long after. But even in cases where the basic integrity of the state was not directly challenged, as in Zambia or Kenya, among many others, the control of the state over labour was always fairly limited. These issues are explored more in Chapter 7. For the moment, it should suffice to say that ‘non-political’ unionism of the type practiced by COTU or by the Zambian Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU) was frequently in practice a question of co-opting union leaderships. Rank and file workers in many instances did not necessarily buy in.<sup>46</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>45</sup> Shyam B.L. Nigam to Mr. L. Richter, 4 May 1982, ILOA WEP 159-3 (9).

<sup>46</sup> On this point a considerable number of sociological studies carried out in the 1970s are probably the best evidence. Among others, see Luke (1984) on Sierra Leone; Jeffries (1978) on the Sekondi railway in Ghana; Cohen (1974) on

'informal' sector and agricultural workers frequently resisted or evaded efforts at formalization or state control. The point here is that the ILO's interventions were redeployed by state actors in the context of both active and covert struggles between different social forces -- in a few instances, as with COTU, workers also sought in subtle ways to use the ILO's work towards their own ends. The use of international resources as means of securing authority, then, was never entirely successful because it ran up against the material and political limitations of the postcolonial historic bloc -- or, in Gramsci's terms, against the shifting relations of force. It is still, however, the dynamic that best explains the trajectory of WEP and JASPA in sub-Saharan Africa.

## CONCLUSION

The ILO's activities dealing with employment policy, especially around the concepts of the 'informal' economy and 'Basic Needs', are usefully understood as forms of governmentality. The ILO articulated particular visions of social order and forms of state through the various forms of mission work carried out under WEP and JASPA. WEP and JASPA deployed and circulated specific sets of resources and practices -- study missions, reports, and seminars in particular -- as mechanisms for enacting that vision of 'development'. These programmes tended towards a 'depoliticized' imagination of poverty reduction to be accomplished through the resolution of 'technical' issues in policy-making. The ILO's programmes failed to have the impacts they anticipated, however, because of the ways in which they ran up against ongoing struggles over the shape of social order. 'Informal' workers themselves resisted or evaded state control -- like with colonial interventions into 'social policy' then, interventions into employment ran up against the actions of target populations. ILO reports, meanwhile, were redeployed in what might be called 'legitimizing performances' by African regimes. They enabled governments to appear to be 'doing something' about poverty without much potential for follow-up. They were thus used as means of enacting a commitment to the 'have nots' or to 'employment' in the face of an often strikingly different reality.

This is not simply to argue, however, (as many contemporary authors did) that the ILO was politically naïve or its policy recommendations too vague. Rather, an actors and entanglements approach helps to recognize the ways in which the utility of the ILO's development practice under WEP/JASPA was *enhanced* by the ambiguity of its recommendations (at least for some actors and for some purposes). Another way of putting this point is simply that more rigorous calls for reforms would scarcely have led to JASPA being as attractive or durable as it was. The logic of 'shame', so central to the operation of the ILO's standards regime, (Weisband 2000) was in fact studiously avoided. The real

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Nigeria; Bates (1971) on Zambia and the shorter essays collected in Sandbrook and Cohen (1975).

practical impacts of ILO policy, then, stem from the enrolment of ILO resources, usually in the form of mission reports, into struggles to stabilize and legitimate state authority in the post-colonial context. When the particular post-colonial model of the state began to come unglued in the 1980s and 1990s, it had profound implications for JASPA, for the ILO's work on employment, and for the concept of the 'informal'. These are examined more in the following chapter.

There are certain parallels to the dynamics of contestation over the legitimation of postcolonial statehood highlighted in Chapter 3. The WEP employment missions played a similar legitimizing function to the deployment of complaints about forced labour in Portuguese colonies by Nkrumah's Ghanaian government. Technical cooperation was thus entwined in conflicts over the meaning of 'development' and the political status of organized labour. In spite of their outwardly technical nature, 'development' interventions in practice were in fact deeply political, multi-directional, and often deeply ambiguous. The broader point is that these dynamics are made especially clear if we approach the WEP/JASPA as a set of practices entangled in broader struggles over the articulation of social order. As was the case with the forced labour conventions, the ILO's 'success' in transforming employment policy in the 1970s was rather limited. The significance of the WEP, however, lies less in the contents of the framework itself and more in the ways in which WEP/JASPA interventions were deployed in the context of struggles over the formation of state authority. The point here is that from conventional perspectives, WEP would seem to have been largely a failure. Robert Cox suggests that whatever critical or radical analyses might have been advanced through WEP were largely snuffed out by the limitations posed on the ILO by the workings of American hegemony (1977: 417-421). These analyses are largely correct, but they take little account of the significance of the actual practice of the programme. The actual trajectory of WEP in practice was profoundly shaped by the encounter between the ILO's relatively limited, 'technical' agenda and ongoing struggles over the relationship between the state and labour in the 1970s and early 1980s. Here again, calling attention to the importance of these struggles is a significant contribution of an actors and entanglements approach.

## CHAPTER 6 - STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT, SOCIAL PROTECTION, AND THE 'INFORMAL'

The previous chapter traced the relationship between the WEP in the 1970s and early 1980s and certain shifts in the politics of statehood in sub-Saharan Africa. It was argued that the concept of the 'informal', and the employment missions and reports more broadly, were often deeply ambiguous, but held a certain utility for African governments as legitimating resources. As a result, WEP/JASPA should be understood in terms of its entanglements with struggles over statehood and social order in sub-Saharan Africa. The WEP was both the flagship ILO development programme in the 1970s and indicative of modes of practice that were deployed in other policy areas as well. Economic crisis, structural adjustment, and shifts in the global structure of production created a context in which both the ILO's practices of governance and the trajectory of African political economies were dramatically transformed. This chapter traces out some of the mutations of the idea of the 'informal' sector -- which, of course originally emerged out of the WEP -- especially in relation to social protection.

This chapter examines the complex, fluid interactions between the changing practice of the ILO's development assistance and the changing politics of labour in neoliberal Africa by examining efforts to govern the 'informal' sector from the early 1990s to present, focusing especially on efforts to provide social protection to informal workers. The next section briefly traces some of the major shifts both in African political economies and in the ILO's 'development' practices. The subsequent section traces the revival of debates about the informal sector in the early 1990s. The emergence in the mid-1990s of 'microinsurance' as a technique for extending social protection to informal workers is examined in the following section. The final section traces the evolution of 'microinsurance' practice, focusing on engagements with insurance supervisors in West Africa and efforts to implement microinsurance policy in Senegal.

### THE ILO AND NEOLIBERAL AFRICA

The ILO itself came under increasing pressure as the forms of tripartite corporatism around which the organization was oriented collapsed from the 1970s onwards. The ILO found itself increasingly sidelined even from debates about international labour standards as the labour movement pursued labour standards embedded in the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions, which were seen as having more power to enforce rules (see O'Brien *et al.* 2000). The ILO's response was rather sweeping. It strongly de-emphasized its old framework of conventions. The 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work reoriented the institution's focus towards eight 'core' conventions dealing with four issues: the elimination of child labour, the elimination of forced labour, guarantees of freedom of association, and anti-discrimination policies.

Shortly thereafter, in 1999 the ILO announced a new 'Decent Work' agenda with four main objectives: promoting employment, promoting rights at work (especially the core conventions), promoting social protections, and promoting 'social dialogue' (ILO 1999a).

Another important set of institutional transformations was in the nature of the ILO's technical assistance itself. The basic model of technical assistance under WEP and JASPA -- in which an ILO or academic 'expert' would undertake a research mission over a period ranging from a few weeks to a few months and then write a report making a number of policy recommendations -- was increasingly seen as inadequate. In the 1990s, the ILO shifted increasingly towards direct engagements with community groups -- supported by the state, but with less direct engagement with governments. A key component of the DWA, similarly, has been the institution of 'Decent Work Country Programmes', which are meant to provide a roadmap of sorts for the achievement of Decent Work objectives and the coordination of development assistance in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> In this sense the ILO participates in the more widely noted trend towards the enrolment of 'civil society' in global governmentalities (Jaeger 2007; Lipshutz 2005; Sending and Newman 2006). More recent practices, somewhat similarly, have turned towards a more ongoing embeddedness with state structures, often assisting in the creation of committees to manage particular issues (as in the case of forced labour in Niger, see Chapter 3) and iterative engagements with state officials. Here again, the ILO's practices correspond with the shifts noted in the practice of other organizations. For instance, Harrison (2004) notes the increasingly direct entanglement of the World Bank with the governments of Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda. Best (2013) and Cammack (2004), among others, note the growing emphasis at the World Bank and IMF on the promotion of 'ownership' of reforms by national governments. Woods (2006), indeed, notes that the success of the IMF and World Bank in compelling developing countries to adopt liberalizing reforms even in the era of structural adjustment depended largely on their ability to find local intermediaries sympathizing with the project of structural adjustment.

These changes in global development practice have equally mapped on to important shifts in the structure of African political economies in uncertain ways. The postcolonial state was marked, notwithstanding a wide degree of variation, by a heavily interventionist approach to economic development (whether nominally 'socialist' or not), the predominance of a single party, and by the control over the 'gate' between national and global circuits of exchange. By the 1980s, this model was in profound economic and political crisis -- indeed at least one author suggests that the label 'postcolonial' had probably ceased to effectively describe

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<sup>1</sup> See Bernards (2013; 2015) for discussions of the application of these programmes in Africa



the condition of statehood in Africa around 1990 (Young 2004). The solution initially proposed by the World Bank (1981) was simply to scale back the role of the state in the economy. The process of structural adjustment was carried out with varying degrees of intensity and success (see Woods 2006: chpt. 6), but some form of retrenchment of the state was carried out virtually everywhere. Significantly, this pattern of neoliberalization was heavily contested. The wave of liberalization was met by a similarly widespread wave of popular protests -- driven partly by the impacts of structural adjustment. These protests were frequently followed in the early 1990s by at least partial forms of 'democratization' or political opening (see Bratton and van de Walle 1996). It is fairly clear that prevailing trends of statehood in Africa were dramatically transformed. It is less clear, however, just how substantive these transformations have been. Abrahamsen (1997: 147-151) usefully suggests that these changes should be seen as a 'continuation of Africa's passive revolution' -- a set of partial reforms, drawing on external resources, through which existing elites have sought to reinforce their position in the face of crisis. 'Shrinking' states in sub-Saharan Africa are less in control of the 'gate' than in the postcolonial period, but remain embedded in increasingly complex networks of practices of extraversion.

Equally, the transformation of the state has been accompanied by dramatic changes in the nature of production. The underlying situation began to shift dramatically in the 1980s. Structural adjustment required the reconfiguration of the post-colonial historic bloc in ways that diminished the significance of labour (see e.g. Tidjani 1998; Wood and Brewster 2007). First, the retrenchment of the state itself often led to the shrinking of the labour movement insofar as public employees made up a considerable proportion of the unionized labour force in many instances. Second, privatization, labour market deregulation, and retrenchment have often meant that a growing share of work is casualized and precarious. The political salience of the 'informal' sector, however problematic the concept itself, has increased considerably.

#### 'THE DILEMMA OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR'

Wuyts (2002) notes that the growing informalization of labour in the global south under structural adjustment led to a shift in emphasis from 'employment' to 'poverty' in mainstream development discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. While the ILO was relatively marginalized by this shift, the concept of the 'informal' itself was an important means by which the organization sought to position itself in the early 1990s. The defining feature of the 'informal' sector as a concept, as in the Kenya mission, remained its ambiguity. It identified a real enough phenomenon insofar as it pointed to the growing proportion of people employed outside of 'standard' employment contracts (which had never been accessible to more than a small minority of the world's population anyways). But any analysis of the myriad forms of small-scale enterprise through which the urban poor sought to make a living -- including self-employment, various more or

less formalized cooperative arrangements, wage work for unregistered businesses, off-the-books casual work, and so forth -- that starts from the assumption that the defining feature of these forms of work is their 'exclusion' from the (often very small) segment of the economy that was legible to the state (i.e. the 'formal' sector) risks lumping many disparate forms of economic activity under one rubric. Moreover, it does so in a way that prevents any serious engagement with the power relations that actually created 'informal' work.

It is worth tracing out some of the major critiques of the concept of the 'informal'. A first important set of criticisms centers on the vague nature of the 'informal' as a concept. It seems to refer to an exceptionally broad range of economic activities embedded in very different contexts (see Mead and Morrisson 1996). Some have argued that this ambiguity inhibits effective policy responses. Guy Standing notes of the ILO's understandings of the informal that

The confusion about definitions and measurement contributed to the confusion about the appropriate policy stance towards it. Should it be subject to 'lighter' regulation than the 'formal sector'? Should protective regulations be weakened for the 'formal sector' so as to facilitate its growth and absorption of at least part of the informal? Such questions were debated ad infinitum, to little effect. (2008: 364)

A second, perhaps more substantive, line of critique highlights the residual nature of the concept of 'informality'. The formal-informal dualism was based from the start on a kind of residualism that militated against recognizing the functional interconnections and power relations operating between 'formal' and 'informal' forms of activity (not unlike the ILO's understandings of forced labour). As Roitman (1990: 679) notes 'informal' spheres 'exist and are analyzed as reactions to state and formal market "failures"'. The 'informal', in short, is defined almost entirely as an absence. The notion of the 'informal' economy thus obscures power relations lying at the root of poverty by suggesting a binary between 'formal' and 'informal' economies, explaining the poverty of the latter by its exclusion from the former. Phillips (2011), relatedly, argues that 'informality' often results from adverse forms of incorporation into global production networks. The point is simply that from most serious analytical perspectives, the 'informal' is a problematic concept.

However, it is not enough to simply write of the concept of 'informality' as unhelpful in understanding urban poverty. As I argued with respect to forced labour in Part II, an actors and entanglements approach, while not dismissing these critiques, directs us to go beyond the critique of policy itself to explore the actual uses of the concept as a technology of government. Here the political uses of the 'informal' are significant. One ILO official, writing a retrospective 'institutional history' of the concept of the informal, offers a particularly sharp critique of the ways in which the ILO had actually deployed the concept:

The avoidance of looking into the causes of the informal sector had a political payoff for the various interest groups within the ILO community. In the short run, at least, it gave the impression of “doing something” about this social problem without requiring either the ILO or its constituents to face up to the fact that the informal sector has always been largely unrepresented in the ILO’s traditional tripartism... By concentrating attention on “helping” those suffering from informality (that is, by concentrating on the symptoms rather than correcting the causes of the informal sector), we have been able for three decades to claim that we were responding to an increasingly virulent social disease without having to change our own *modus operandi*... (Bangasser 2000: 15-16)

The point, in short, is that by focusing on providing assistance to a residual stratum of ‘informal’ workers who existed ‘outside’ normal labour relations, the ILO was able to avoid difficult questions about its own institutional set-up or grappling with structural questions. Despite the fact that this approach often hindered the effectiveness of the ILO’s assistance to ‘informal’ workers in terms of actually diminishing poverty, the very ambiguity of the ‘informal’ did perform a political function for the ILO. The key task, taken up in the remainder of this chapter, is thus to trace out the actual deployments of the concept and (especially) to look at the kinds of ways in which it has become entangled in different historically situated struggles.

In order to do so, we do well to start from the reconsiderations of the ‘informal’ taking place at the ILO in the early 1990s. A key juncture here was the decision to focus the Director General’s report to the ILC in 1991 on the ‘informal’ sector. The report, of course, drew on a growing body of work ‘on the ground’ by ILO staff and consultants, especially under JASPA and the parallel Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean. The report, interestingly, acknowledged the ambiguity of the ‘informal’: ‘even after two decades of investigation by scholars and international civil servants, there is still no generally accepted definition of the term “informal sector”. All we know for certain is that it exists’ (ILO 1991: 1). The report identified the ‘dilemma’ posed by the informal as ‘whether to promote the informal sector as a provider of employment and incomes; or to seek to extend regulation and social protection to it and thereby possibly restrict its capacity to provide jobs and income for an ever expanding labour force’ (ILO 1991: 2). The report concluded that it was possible to pursue both objectives at the same time. The DG’s report laid out a broad plan of action based around four themes: improving productivity in the informal sector; improvements to welfare for the poor; establishing a regulatory framework and forms of social protection for the informal economy; and organizing informal workers.

This new approach did add important dimensions to the previous emphasis

on the informal under JASPA and the WEP. Previous activities had virtually all emphasized productivity by way of promoting linkages between formal and informal activities. One partial exception, indeed, is worth discussing. The ILO had run a project in Rwanda, Mali, and Togo between 1982 and 1988 that had sought to organize small-scale craftsmen into self-governing associations as a means of facilitating access to credit, organizing training, and providing a greater political voice (Maldonado 1989). Here incipient efforts at providing autonomy and political representation for informal workers sat somewhat awkwardly with efforts to increase productivity by facilitating access to credit and training. Indeed, the officials involved themselves recognized that the technical nature of the project itself made the achievement of ‘voice’ on the part of informal workers relatively difficult, even if they shunted the blame onto national bureaucrats:

The beneficiaries are looked upon as tools for carrying out official projects and not as partners capable of implementing projects of their own devising. The minds of the bureaucrats are thus fixed on immediate and visible results to the detriment of lasting changes that require a careful consideration of local capacities and means. Officials often seem to have lost track of the causes they are supposed to serve. The resultant rigidity of the administrative procedures is equalled only by the flexibility and resourcefulness of the petty craftsman forced to live from hand to mouth. (Maldonado 1989: 80)

In short, the ILO’s incipient efforts to promote the autonomous organization of informal workers had largely run up against the persistence of a ‘productivist’ frame of reference and entanglements with state-making dynamics.

On this point the discussion of the report by the African delegates present at the ILC is particularly interesting (see ILO 1992). There is little space here to examine the record of debate at length, but it is striking how little discussion there was of either social protection or organization by the government delegates who spoke on the subject. They virtually all emphasized means of promoting better training or access to credit for informal enterprises, as well as the need for the informal economy to absorb the growing numbers of people displaced from the ‘modern’ economy by economic crisis and structural adjustment. Different workers’ delegates, meanwhile, raised two partially incommensurable arguments. The ICFTU’s delegate suggested that the ILO could not promote the expansion of the informal sector without abandoning its historic mission to promote employment and raise labour standards: ‘it is through vigorous application of international labour standards, rather than through markedly original... theorizing, that the ILO must confront the issues. Put simply, the informal sector must be formalized’ (ILO 1992: 9/15). This point was echoed, somewhat, by the OATUU speaker, who called the informal sector a ‘false theory’, and noted that ‘there is no country in the world... whose economy has been... transformed by its informal sector’ (1992: 17/19), arguing that the ‘informal’ should not distract from the

structural reconfiguration of the global economy necessary to bring about 'balanced development'.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, while few representatives of African national confederations spoke at the conference, almost all of those who did expressed the importance of organizing workers in the informal sector, including representatives from Gabon (ILO 1992: 12/17), Mauritius (ILO 1992: 13/26), Kenya (ILO 1992: 14/7), and Benin (ILO 1992: 17/29).

Visible here in incipient form, then, is a kind of fragmentation of efforts to govern the 'informal' sector. What happened to the concept in the 1990s has been aptly described as a 'dispersion' of the 'informal' across virtually all the activities of the organization (Bangasser 2000). Workers and governments approached the 'informal' economy from very different perspectives, but nonetheless found it possible to articulate these very different priorities within the (ambiguous) scope of the ILO's activities on the subject. Nearly every department of the ILO, in one way or another, started some kind of programming related to the 'informal' at some point in the 1990s. It would be impossible, of course, to discuss all of these realms of activity here. The remainder of this chapter thus takes up a small sample of interventions into the 'informal' into one particular policy area (the extension of social protection to 'informal' workers) and in one particular region (sub-Saharan Africa). The next chapter returns briefly to a discussion of efforts to organize informal workers into existing trade unions. What is significant about all of these efforts, though, as will be argued in the remainder of this chapter, is that the articulation of new approaches to the 'informal' sector is best understood in terms of the dynamics of entanglement between the practices, resources, and spaces produced by the ILO and the shifting relations of force in various African political economies.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Conventional social security systems in sub-Saharan Africa have never covered a majority of the population. In virtually all instances social security has historically covered only the narrow stratum of workers in 'standard' employment relations; indeed in some cases formal social security mechanisms exist only for public servants. There were a few ILO-linked efforts to promote the extension of coverage to various groups of non-standard workers from the late 1970s. Missions to Gabon (ILO 1982), Cameroon (ILO 1989), and Morocco (ILO 1990) dealt with the extension of social security to the 'self-employed', 'agricultural' workers, or 'artisans'. ILO officials also published at least one article on means of extending social security to the 'self-employed' in the late 1980s (Mouton and Gruat 1989). The article makes particular note of 'traditional' institutions and village

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<sup>2</sup> For the most part, both the ICFTU and OATUU have shifted their views on the informal economy in ways that have brought them much more in line with the position taken by the national confederations in 1991; these developments are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

associations, *tontines*, harvest insurance, informal associations, and mutual benefit schemes as potential alternative means of providing social protection to self-employed workers (Mouton and Gruat 1989: 52). The notion that the best means of covering 'informal' or non-standard population was through the design of alternate schemes -- particularly the use of small-scale financial practices -- played a considerable role in subsequent efforts to promote social protection.

After the 1991 ILC these activities were ramped up and brought under the rubric of the 'informal' sector. A major 'interdepartmental' project on the informal sector was organized in 1994-1995. The project was centered on three major cities in developing countries: Bogota, Manila, and Dar es Salaam, including an initiative to establish health insurance through existing organizations of informal workers in Dar es Salaam (Aryee 1996: 51-52). The decision to focus on developing alternative insurance schemes through organizations of informal workers, already to some extent present in the 1980s, was reinforced after a study in Manila that found that 'indigenous' schemes were 'more appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of operators', but suffered from administrative weaknesses which could be remedied through technical cooperation (Aryee 1996: 51). The interdepartmental project solidified the emphasis on providing social security for informal workers through alternative channels, often 'community' organizations.

The Social Security department subsequently took up a pilot project applying a similar approach in four countries -- Tanzania, Benin, India, and El Salvador. Based on the interdepartmental project, Social Security proposed three options for the extension of social protection: social insurance programmes designed specially for informal workers, the extension of formal social security schemes to the informal sector, and the provision of non-contributory social assistance (van Ginneken 1996). Separate social insurance schemes, in practice, were the major emphasis. The interventions in Benin and Tanzania, drawing heavily on the experience of the interdepartmental project, started by scouting out appropriate informal workers' organizations in target cities to run social insurance programmes. In Benin, the pilot project proposed involved using several informal workers organizations to collect contributions, while drawing on a public-private microfinance institution, the *Fédération des Caisses d'Épargne et de Credit Agricole Mutuel* (FECECAM) to manage money. The basic model proposed was to have officials of informal sector organizations collect contributions and deposit them at an account with the local branch of FECECAM. Agreements would be established with local clinics to permit card-carrying members to draw on the funds to pay for medical care (Gauthé 1997: 24). The Beninois project was never implemented in full, but the basic model was carried forward. In Tanzania, the project proposed extending the model of the Dar es Salaam intervention to Arusha and Mbeya (Kiwara and Heijnis 1997). It identified 'viable' groups of informal workers in the two cities, based on criteria including having upwards of 400

members, a common bank account, stable leadership, and the nearby availability of healthcare providers (1997: 75-76). The Tanzanian government also organized a similar pilot scheme in the rural Inguna region on the basis of the Dar es Salaam experiment -- although in this case member contributions were augmented by matching funds from the World Bank (Kiwara 1999: 138-140).

Officials in the Social Protection department would advance the concept of ‘microinsurance’, referring to autonomous community-directed organizations linked into larger structures to facilitate the pooling of risk (Dror and Jacquier 1999), to describe these emerging forms of social protection. The microinsurance approach was formalized further by two related developments. The Social Protection Department established an initiative on ‘Strategies and Tools against Social Exclusion and Poverty’ (STEP). Under STEP, the ILO carried out a major study of healthcare mutuels in nine countries in West and Central Africa, which made similar recommendations for international assistance -- governments needed to establish a regulatory and institutional context, international donors should focus on training at the local level (Atim 1998). In June of 1998, the ILO also held a workshop in Abidjan on the promotion of ‘Mutual Health Organizations’ involving a number of donor agencies, francophone African governments, and mutual associations -- effectively to discuss the research project. The ‘Abidjan Platform’ (ILO 1999b) similarly emphasized the promotion of local community initiative as a means of providing healthcare, calling for technical assistance, particularly in the form of training, while notably restricting the use of outside funds in order to preserve the autonomy of community mutuels.

Here the shift in the ILO’s practices of government away from the old model exemplified by WEP is noticeable. The ILO approached different targets (i.e. often dealing with community organizations rather than directly with the state), and through different means (often directly engaging in training or even in the institutional arrangement of microinsurance schemes). This was acknowledged by ILO officials themselves:

Over the last 50 years, the bulk of technical cooperation -- both in the ILO and in most other international agencies -- has concentrated on extending social security to formal sector workers. We have now reached the stage where the emphasis on “top-down” design has to give way to a participatory (“bottom up”) approach. (van Ginneken 1999: 34)

The policy mission approach was replaced with longer-term direct engagements, especially providing training, with existing community organizations in collaboration with the state. Indeed, the concept of ‘microinsurance’ explicitly counterposed ‘community’ to the failures of both markets and states to address the social protection needs of the ‘informal’. A STEP document on health insurance in West Africa, for instance, argues:

A new and seemingly promising approach has been emerging in

recent years. It consists of designing coherent and linked national health insurance systems based on several mechanisms (insurance, universal systems, targeted social assistance), which rely on a variety of actors (community based actors, social security institutions, public programmes) and a variety of sources of financing... (ILO 2007c: 5)

A similar report on social protection for informal workers in Southern Africa notes that in countries with limited fiscal capacity, 'with support and assistance from government and NGOs, non-formal workers can organize some aspects of social insurance schemes for themselves successfully'; adding that existing community mutual aid organizations can be a useful means of doing so (ILO 2003: 8). Insurance is seen to play a role here as part of a complex assemblage of state, community, and private institutions delivering social protection. As will be shown in the next section, this has never quite worked out as cleanly in practice as on paper (perhaps not surprisingly). But interestingly, this shift in practices also posed significant problems of the Social Security department of the ILO in continuing to promote social protection interventions for the informal sector.

Most of the activity of the Social Protection Department from the early 2000s was oriented towards the articulation of the Social Protection Floors (SPF) recommendation which was eventually passed in 2012 (on which see Deacon 2013). The ILC passed a resolution launching a campaign for 'social security for all' in 2001. The department eventually developed a 'policy vision' based fundamentally on universality. It suggested that for countries lacking widespread coverage the emphasis should be on establishing 'a modest, basic set of social security guarantees for all residents' (ILO 2009: 36), and (crucially) asserted that 'governments remain the ultimate guarantors of social security... neither the market nor informal arrangements can guarantee adequate levels and universal access to effective social security' (2009: 40). There is a good deal more worth discussing about this shift, but it had two main implications for present purposes. The first was a sort of backlash against the 'community' level schemes developed in the 1990s. In the words of one official: 'We criticized the ad hoc interventions that we had at the community level in the past. We wanted to work more on national systems, and that makes it complicated'.<sup>3</sup> Second, the SPF meant a renewed emphasis on universal, non-contributory programmes at the expense of interventions targeting particular populations: 'The emphasis is clearly on the floor. So we called for avoiding narrow targeting, because when you target on the extreme pool, you leave out broader coverage'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, some officials in the Social Protection department remain quite sceptical of the concept of microinsurance, concerned that it might lead to the privatization of social protection. Microinsurance policy thus passed over the ILO's Social Finance

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, ILO Official, Pretoria, October 2014.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



branch in the early 2000s, and was also rapidly taken up by a growing network of other international and regional regulatory institutions (see next section). We can see the idea of ‘microinsurance’, then, as a particular technology of government that was circulated both within and beyond the ILO. It was initially developed out of debates about providing social protection for informal workers, but has been (partially) transposed into other areas as the Social Protection Department shifted towards other approaches.

Clearly the ILO’s newer, emergent practices of government shift the emphasis away from government policy onto community organizations, and involve more ongoing patterns of interaction rather than *ad hoc* reports. These new practices and resources are also evidently rolled out against a dramatically different historical backdrop than was the case in the 1970s. The following section argues, however, that it is most useful to see these new forms of intervention as contested forms of practice that different actors seek to enrol into various historical struggles. This argument is pursued in the following section by examining the engagements of the Social Finance sector in the formulation of a microinsurance policy framework in Senegal.

#### MICROINSURANCE AND THE POLITICS OF INFORMALITY IN SENEGAL<sup>5</sup>

Even if it never got much traction in Social Protection, the concept of microinsurance was rapidly taken up by a number of other actors both within and beyond the ILO. Here the networks of activity emerging around the idea of ‘financial inclusion’ are particularly significant. The ILO’s Social Finance branch chaired a working group on insurance at the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), which began collecting case studies on microinsurance in the early 2000s. Some of the studies were eventually published in an edited volume (Churchill 2006). Around the same time, the ILO also began to issue training materials for microinsurance operations. An early guidebook on microinsurance for microfinance institutions was published in 2003, including recommendations on products that could be offered, as well as guidelines on risk management, managerial control, and pricing (Churchill *et al.* 2003). The ILO institutionalized this loose movement linking microinsurance activities to ‘financial inclusion’ by establishing the Microinsurance Innovation Facility (MIF) in 2007. MIF operates through Social Finance, with funding from the Munich Re and Gates Foundations, as well as the IFC.

This shift from the Social Protection department to MIF and CGAP also drove some mutations in the practice of microinsurance itself. If the emphasis on community autonomy that dominated the Abidjan Platform and other ILO activities in the 1990s never exactly went away, much of the practical work done

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<sup>5</sup> This section is derived from Bernards (2016).

by the MIF in promoting microinsurance has been carried out through engagements with insurance supervisors. Here some of the ambiguities of microinsurance as a practice of governance become especially apparent: the concept always implied an ambiguous balance between the three poles of community autonomy, social protection, and the financial sector. The original formulation of ‘microinsurance’ in the Social Protection department had strongly emphasized the community and social protection poles, but Social Finance (at least to some extent) worked with a different set of constituents. The ILO, even prior to the establishment of MIF, had built relationships with insurance supervisors in parts of Africa through the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS), which was also involved in CGAP activities on microinsurance. The IAIS and the CGAP working group (which again, was chaired by the ILO) co-published an issues paper on regulatory frameworks for microinsurance in 2007 based on the work of the CGAP group. The paper highlights the role of regulatory frameworks in promoting the expansion of microinsurance. It suggests that regulatory frameworks for microinsurance need to balance ‘how they can contribute towards developing and overseeing microinsurance activities while simultaneously continuing to promote safe and sound financial systems’ (IAIS 2007: 38). For instance, it notes that establishing different prudential standards for microinsurers, as opposed to conventional insurance, might be a means of promoting the growth of microinsurance (2007: 39). However, the report cautions that different capital requirements for microinsurers should only be applied where there are strict definitions of ‘microinsurance’ and limits on the scope of permitted activity for microinsurers.

There is a particularly important tension in these guidelines over the role of mutuals and cooperatives in relation to commercial insurance markets on the one hand and social protection functions on the other. The microinsurance paper notes the importance of clearly delineating the roles of public and market actors in providing social protection and managing risk (2007: 15). Significantly for present purposes, the informal sector in West Africa is explicitly referenced as an example of the limitations of public social security and the potential role of microinsurance, especially in providing social protection for non-standard workers. Citing STEP publications on healthcare mutuals in Senegal and Mali, the paper argues that ‘The experience in West African jurisdictions shows that public redistributive systems often do not function in the informal economy. The only way for the poor to be covered is to set up microinsurance mutuals that are very inexpensive’ (2007: 21). However, subsequent guidelines have also been published on the role of mutuals and cooperatives in delivering insurance. Here the role for community-based organizations in pooling risk is seen as a sort of stepping stone towards the development of commercial insurance markets:

Historically, when risks are too large for individuals and households to manage in their own right, they have looked to pool these risks.

This pooling may start through relatively intuitive, informal risk

pooling and later develops into more formalised products... and, eventually, insurance products provided by formal insurers. Thus informal, community-based risk pooling conceptually provides a trigger for the development of formal insurance. However, the development of insurance markets served by formal insurers has not always removed community-based risk pooling which can still play an important role particularly for parts of the community where access to the conventional insurance market is difficult. (IAIS 2010: 13)

Mutuals, then, should be brought under existing regulatory arrangements for insurance (2010: 14). However, the range of other purposes for which mutuals can be used potentially complicates things:

As [mutuals and cooperatives] can be part of a range of social and economic policy areas including financial services, agriculture, social welfare, health and community relations, the likely range of interested agencies can be greater than would be the case with... other forms of insurers... It is also likely that arrangements for effective, complete, and coordinated oversight... will have to consider a wider range of potentially competing objectives that will require special attention. (2010: 14)

Mutuals and cooperatives are identified simultaneously as stepping-stones or substitutes for both conventional insurance markets and public redistribution and social protection. In the IAIS guidelines microinsurance is simultaneously linked with the public provision of social assistance, with community-level mutual or cooperative organizations, and with the development of commercial insurance markets. The point here is that guidelines with respect to microinsurance awkwardly straddle a number of different objectives. There is a clear sense that the practice of microinsurance necessarily involves re-arranging 'community' organizations in one way or another. In this sense it is useful to understand microinsurance as a kind of governmentality, a technology of government that depends on arranging subjectivities in particular ways. But already it is clear that the kind of rationality of government underpinning microinsurance is, at least to some extent, ambivalent. Here again, then, the actual practice of governance is entangled in particular ways that are made most apparent if we focus on the encounter between technologies of governance and shifting patterns of relations of force. The following section will argue as much by looking at the practice of microinsurance in West Africa, with a particular emphasis on Senegal.

#### *Insurance and informal economies in West Africa*

In practice, MIF is entangled with efforts by African states to manage shifting labour market structures and patterns of political authority. It is read most effectively in the context of struggles over the political organization of non-standard workers. Engagements between the ILO, the World Bank, and the *Conférence Interafricaine des Marchés d'Assurances* (CIMA), a regional network

of insurance regulators harmonizing standards in fourteen countries in West and Central Africa,<sup>6</sup> are particularly worth examining. CIMA passed a set of regulations on microinsurance and index insurance (*Livre VII*) in 2012 aimed at encouraging the development of microinsurance institutions in member countries. The rules themselves were based on a report commissioned from Desjardins International Development (DID) by the World Bank on the microinsurance market in the region. The report identified the prominent role of community groups in existing insurance markets -- particularly healthcare mutuals -- as a particularly salient feature of the West African market. DID emphasized, as did the IAIS issues paper, the need to bring mutuals under existing regulatory requirements as much as possible (DID 2011: 56). It also highlighted the need for microinsurers to work with existing community and 'civil society' organizations (DID 2011: 63-64). There is, in short, a very clear emphasis in the DID report on using existing community groups as building blocks for the insurance market.

The CIMA rules do seek to bring mutuals and cooperatives under the insurance regulatory system, but also restrict the commercialization of microinsurance to a greater degree than might be expected from the DID report. In particular, the CIMA rules relatively strictly segment microinsurance product lines from other financial services. They require microinsurance enterprises to seek a license from national regulators specifying which types of insurance they are permitted to offer. Organizations offering credit or savings services are restricted to life insurance; conversely, microinsurers offering health, crop, or property insurance are prohibited from offering savings or credit products.<sup>7</sup> *Livre VII* similarly allows registered insurance providers to offer microinsurance products, but requires them to keep distinct accounts for their microinsurance operations.

The rules also seek to bring mutuals and community organizations under insurance regulations. Mutuals are subject to lower initial capital requirements than limited liability corporations (300 million Francs CFA rather than 500 million),<sup>8</sup> but are otherwise required to follow the same rules. There are a number

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<sup>6</sup> CIMA started as a French initiative in recently decolonized territories in 1962. The original francophone member states are Niger, Mali, Senegal, Côte D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Gabon, Chad, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. Two lusophone countries -- Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea -- have subsequently joined the organization.

<sup>7</sup> The regulation, in short, limits lenders (including conventional micro-finance institutions specializing in credit) to offering 'credit-life' products, relatively widespread products in which the insurance policy pays off the borrower's outstanding debt if he/she dies.

<sup>8</sup> In 2012, 500 million CFA Francs was roughly 1 million USD.

of other roles, aside from providing microinsurance themselves, which a variety of civil society organizations are allowed to play. *Livre VII* also allows communities to purchase collective microinsurance contracts and for a range of different organizations -- including community organizations, trade unions, and NGOs -- to act as intermediaries or delivery channels. The regional regulations, then, are set up largely within the market-constituting logic laid out by the IAIS and DID, but leave a considerable role for community organizations and set significant limits on commercial activities. Indeed, they carve out certain (relatively unprofitable but politically very important) areas of activity -- health insurance and crop insurance in particular -- as domains in which microinsurers must be set up more or less *de novo*. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that these are areas where existing community organizations and mutuals are relatively well established in providing analogous services.

The complexities implicit in this regulatory vision are particularly evident where the rules have been put in place in practice. MIF has played a role in supporting the application of the CIMA rules in member countries, here I focus primarily on Senegal. Senegal was an important participant in the STEP study of healthcare mutuals (Atim 1998) and Senegalese mutuals associations participated in the workshop on the Abidjan platform. Activity specifically relating to the CIMA rules in Senegal, however, actually originates in a World Bank report on index insurance for agriculture commissioned by a newly established public-private agricultural insurance provider. The report recommended a 'social safety net' for small farmers based on yield-indexed insurance (World Bank 2009). Nonetheless, the Bank's subsequent technical assistance has revolved around developing subsidized products to manage weather risk for groundnut farmers. The Social Protection Department of the ILO, meanwhile, was helping to develop a national policy framework for social security for informal workers. There was little specific discussion of microinsurance, but, as with many of the discussions under STEP in the late 1990s and early 2000s, finding alternative mechanisms for the delivery of social protection to informal workers was a main focus of the ILO's attention. A report published in 2013 had identified insurance mutuals and microfinance institutions as potential delivery and payment channels for a national 'Simplified Regime for Small Contributors' (RSPC) (ILO 2013a: 40). Much of this work would end up being re-directed towards microinsurance policy in 2014. The contrast between ILO and World Bank recommendations is significant because it reveals the subtle tension in practice between market-constituting and social protection logics.

The Senegalese Ministry of Finance and *Direction des Assurances*, MIF, and the UN Capital Development Fund, ran a national planning workshop on microinsurance policy in Dakar in August of 2014. The workshop settled on a

policy framework for microinsurance that was noticeably tailored towards the mobilization of community organizations in the provision of social protection -- especially health insurance. The ILO even sent the specialists in social security who had helped draft the report on the RSPC along with specialists in microinsurance. The workshop report is explicit about the 'social protection' framework within which the country's microinsurance policy strategy was to be developed: 'Current social protection covers about 20 percent of the population, as against the majority of Senegalese citizens... working in the rural and informal sectors, who are excluded' (ILO 2014b: 3, author's translation). The conference settled on a plan of action including financial education, training for microinsurers, advocacy, and regulatory reforms to support the expansion of microinsurance (ILO 2014b: 7).

A follow-up workshop was held in September of 2014, again in Dakar, aimed at elaborating more specific courses of action. Workshop recommendations stressed the need for a state-led financial education programme with the explicit objective to 'stimulate demand in an ethical and responsible manner' (ILO 2014c: 7, author's translation). It also laid out a consumer protection role for regulators, in line with the CIMA rules, calling for the *Direction des Assurances* to 'exercise a strict control over insurance companies and intermediaries, and to screen all insurance products that will be presented to the public' (ILO 2014c: 7, author's translation). The Senegalese plan, then, involves delegating social protection for informal and agricultural workers to the private or voluntary sector. The plan depends on the articulation of a complex network of 'local' organizations with NGOs and international organizations and state institutions. Even the negotiation of 'national' policy frameworks is taking place within a regulatory space defined by a global body in the IAIS and refined by a regional body of insurance supervisors in CIMA, with the financial support and active involvement of the ILO and World Bank. MIF is usefully understood, then, as a set of spaces through which the relation of public provision and state authority to the 'informal' are being established, negotiated, and potentially contested.

In order to understand the shape and significance of this programme in Senegal, then, we need to see it in the context of struggles over the ongoing crisis of postcolonial social order. Two interlinked developments, echoing the dynamics outlined in the introduction to this chapter, are particularly important. First, the political relationships between the state and urban labour in postcolonial Senegal were premised on a particular model of relations between trade unions and the ruling party called 'responsible participation', which has also been thrown into question by structural adjustment (see Ndiaye 2010; Diop Buuba 1992; Tidjani 1998). CNTS was established in the early 1970s after the government abolished the leaderships of existing national trade union bodies. The government adopted a policy of 'responsible participation' that granted CNTS a share of cabinet seats and made all salaried worker members of the ruling party into CNTS members

(and vice versa) in exchange for industrial peace. At least implicitly, the arrangement rested on the differentiation of salaried formal workers from the precarious urban poor. This arrangement was undercut from the early 1980s onwards by dual processes of structural adjustment and political opening. Among other things, the devaluation of the regional currency (the CFA Franc), encouraged by the World Bank and IMF, dramatically reduced real wages; privatization and cuts to social services led to major job losses in the public sector (a key source of CNTS workers); these costs of adjustment for workers led to intense debates within CNTS about whether or not to remain affiliated to the *Parti Socialiste*; and political pluralism encouraged the formation of rival trade union confederations. These trends were accentuated when the *Parti Socialiste* lost the 2000 election. CNTS subsequently opted to officially disaffiliate from the *Parti Socialiste*. The new government, meanwhile, encouraged the formation of new confederations out of rival tendencies in CNTS by greatly facilitating the registration of rival trade union centres. By 2010, CNTS remained the largest trade union body in the country with roughly 80 000 registered members, but there were 18 officially recognized ‘national’ trade union confederations (see ILO 2010: 28-34).

Second, precarious forms of labour have expanded considerably. Formal measures of unemployment have typically hovered around 10 percent (ILO 2013b; Diene 2014); but labour force participation rates for ‘working age’ individuals (15-64) are less than 50 percent. By most estimates the ‘informal’ sector accounts for the majority of value added across most sectors. The informal economy has also diversified considerably since the early 1990s, with petty street vending increasingly accompanied by the informalization of transport, manufacturing, fishing, and agriculture (Benjamin and Mbaye 2012: 48-58). Indeed, a different indication of the scope of precarious work comes from the fact that only 5 percent of the population participates in the national retirement fund -- a contributory scheme into which ‘formal’ workers typically pay (ILO 2013b: 31). In any event, widespread precarious labour threatens to undercut both the political significance of trade unions and the legitimacy of neoliberal modes of governance.

The present conjuncture Senegal is thus characterized by what Gramsci might call an ‘organic crisis’ of the mechanisms by which subaltern populations were organized in the postcolonial period. For the trade union movement, as we will see in the next chapter, this means heightened competition over a shrinking core of ‘formal’ workers, a dynamic which has itself made the political organization of unprotected workers into an increasingly critical strategic imperative. For the state, the political management of urban subaltern populations equally represents a considerable challenge. These dynamics explain to a considerable degree the ways in which the kinds of ambiguities highlighted by the ILO’s role in financial inclusion have actually played out in practice.

Microinsurance policy in Senegal boils down to an attempt to arrange community organizations in a way that reinforces the power of the state by drawing on the resources made available through participation in a particular global circuits of governance -- in this sense it should very much be understood as a set of practices aimed at bringing about particular subjectivities. It is also, at the same time, a kind of legitimating performance similar in function to that enabled by the JASPA missions, if different in form. It enables the performance of 'doing something' about poverty and the lack of accessible health care for the great bulk of the Senegalese population without any massive commitment of state expenditure or a radical overhaul of Senegalese political economy. We need to understand 'microinsurance', in short, in the context of the 'organic crisis' of the postcolonial state in Senegal. Yet, as with virtually all of the other examples examined in this thesis, it is also subject to contest. The latter part of the following chapter will examine an alternative programme aimed at using different forms of finance to articulate 'informal' workers in different ways. Here again, it is useful to maintain the emphasis derived from Gramsci's writing on the subaltern on the contested character of efforts to arrange subaltern populations.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced two major shifts from the approach to 'development' under JASPA: one to the nature of the ILO's governance, and another set of transformations of African political economies. The contemporary approach to 'development' assistance -- exemplified by the case of microinsurance, as well as the engagements with forced labour through SAP-FL discussed in Chapter 3 -- is different from the more passive approach employed under JASPA. The ILO participates actively in the formulation of national policy through various committees and workshops. These differences in approach, however, do not vitiate the basic theoretical argument being made here. In the case of microinsurance policy in Senegal, we can still see ILO initiatives -- in this case as part of a complex and multiscale network of interventions by several international organizations also including the World Bank, networks of policymakers as in IAIS or CGAP, regional institutions (CIMA), and private transnational organizations (DID) -- being redeployed as resources in an effort at the constitution of an emergent (if contested) mode of state authority drawing on the articulation of community organizations in the provision of social protection.

This chapter has shown particularly clearly the reciprocal nature of the relationship between governance and the multiple historical trajectories with which it is entangled. Transformations in the global structure of production, as a number of authors have rightly argued (e.g. Haworth and Hughes 2011; Standing 2009; Vosko 2002) have forced a dramatic reorientation of the ILO's activities. These shifting practices of governance at the 'global' level, however, are significant in practice for the extent to which they have become entangled in



ongoing forms of struggle in 'national' or 'local' spaces over the politics of structural adjustment. The ILO's Social Protection department developed a set of interventions dealing with small-scale community organizations in an effort to develop new forms of social protection for the informal sector, eventually solidified under the label of 'microinsurance'. When Social Protection shifted towards a renewed emphasis on universal public provision, 'microinsurance' practices were increasingly taken up by the ILO's Social Finance section, in conjunction with a growing network of transnational financial governors -- the IAIS, World Bank, and CGAP especially. In practice, however, the deployment of microinsurance is still subject to important ambiguities and slippages. In Senegal, microinsurance policy is increasingly shaped by efforts to articulate state authority, both by arranging community organizations and through the performance of a commitment to dealing with poverty and informality.

The previous two chapters have largely emphasized the agency of African state actors in dealing with the ILO -- workers' resistance to and complicity in these developments have been discussed, but mostly as background features of the story. Certainly this does not vitiate that general point about recognizing the agency of subordinate actors. In Chapter 1, I argued that the state should be seen as one actor among others; moreover, African state actors have had little to do with the construction of the policy frameworks I have examined in the last three chapters. Still, the articulation of state authority through engagements with the ILO and other IOs is never unproblematic or uncontested. This is evident to some extent in some of the slippages and failures identified over the previous two chapters. It is brought out most clearly, though, in the ILO's engagements with trade unions. The following chapter thus turns to an examination of the ILO's activities dealing directly with organized labour over roughly the same time period covered in Chapters 5 and 6.

## CHAPTER 7: ILO ASSISTANCE TO WORKERS AND ENDURING STRUGGLES

The previous two chapters, for the most part, have focused on the role of the ILO's relationship to ongoing struggles over decolonization and the constitution of state authority. This final empirical chapter considers the ILO's efforts to develop particular kinds of workers more explicitly. Programmes related to 'Workers' Education', and assistance to workers' organizations more broadly, have engaged workers' organizations in ways that present interesting contrasts and similarities to the struggles over statehood explored in the three previous chapters. The ILO's workers' activities provide an interesting mirror through which to view the dynamics presented in the previous two chapters. The workers' activities of the ILO put the highlight on a number of the theoretical points made in this project very clearly. First, they underline the importance of the encounter between global governmentalities and historically situated actors. The ILO's efforts to produce particular kinds of workers in Africa have rarely been successful. Second, ILO assistance to workers' organizations has often been redeployed in the context of different struggles that have had little to do with the objectives of the ILO. In some instances, as is demonstrated particularly clearly in the case of assistance to National Liberation Movements (NLMs) in Southern Africa, various actors have sought to use the same practices, resources, and spaces towards dramatically different ends simultaneously. Third, they underline the multiplicity and fluidity of scale in global politics. Trade union engagements with the ILO have historically been simultaneously local, national, regional, and global in scope. Trade unions have sought in various ways to position themselves strategically in relation to multiscalar networks of governance tied to the ILO.

The conflicts over the international affiliation of trade unions and the relationship between government and workers in the process of development highlighted in above played out very clearly in the process of workers' education projects. The ILO supported the development of 'trade union unity' in Africa in the 1970s even at the expense of freedom of association, and yet contributed to multiple conflicting initiatives. The chapter traces these conflicts by looking at ILO assistance to NLMs in Southern Africa. Since the 1990s, the ILO has pursued a much broader range of relations with workers' organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. These new activities, however, remain both troubled by and oriented towards competition between trade unions for members in important ways. This chapter considers some efforts at organizing workers in the informal sector. These are particularly salient in view of the projects relating to social security for informal workers presented in the previous chapter. ILO projects have fed multiple, even potentially competing, efforts to organize 'informal' workers within the same countries. I highlight this point by examining an initiative aimed at using credit cooperatives to organize workers in the 'informal' economy in Senegal.

Showing these multiple and subtle forms of struggle is a particular benefit of the present approach. Critiques of the ILO's understandings of tripartism or of the proper role for trade unions, as with critiques of the 'informal' or of forced labour governance, have tended to focus on the 'global' level policy formulations developed by the ILO (e.g. Caraway 2006). While again, these critiques are often useful, an actors and entanglements approach helps to trace out the ways in which these 'global' policy frameworks are bent and twisted in complex and multiple ways in their application to particular historical contexts.

#### WORKERS' EDUCATION, DEPOLITICIZED VISIONS, AND FACTIONAL STRUGGLES

The ILO launched a programme for workers' education in 1956. When the ILO started to develop a programme of technical assistance for decolonizing Africa, workers' education was identified as one of the priority areas. The Director General's report to the first African Regional Conference in 1960 included a full chapter on workers' education (ILO 1960), and the conference passed a resolution on areas of activity for the ILO in Africa, which included reference to the need to adopt an expanded programme of workers' education. The ILO subsequently despatched a handful of ad hoc missions for workers' education where trade unions or governments had made requests -- the first was sent to Nigeria in 1960, followed by missions to Senegal, Upper Volta, and Sierra Leone in 1962, Dahomey, Niger, Mauritania, Congo (Leopoldville), Nigeria, and Uganda in 1963. In all of these cases, as with the WEP/JASPA missions discussed in Chapter 5, the ILO appointed and funded a third party consultant (normally a European unionist or academic) to carry out the mission and make policy recommendations. The ILO also ran regional seminars in Dar es Salaam in 1962 and Douala in 1963. Stemming from these two workshops, the Workers' Education (WED) department launched a pilot project on trade union education in West and Central Africa in 1965, aimed at creating a more solid institutional basis for WED missions. The ILO appointed two 'experts' -- one for West and one for Central Africa.

The ILO clearly understood the role of workers education in development in terms of the production of a particular brand of industrial trade unionism centered on the resolution of workplace conflicts through the representation of workers' interests within tripartite institutions. Workers' Education activities, then, were often concerned with bringing about 'appropriate' subjectivities on the part of workers. Here the initial emphasis was on overcoming 'traditional' attitudes. The report of the Director General to the ARC in Lagos noted that 'Many... African workers, coming as they do from rural and tribal backgrounds to the life of the factory, office, shop, or even large plantations, need the knowledge to adapt traditional outlook and patterns of behaviour to the exigencies of modern industrial organisations of production, distribution, and consumption' (ILO 1960:

42). This perceived need to teach African workers how to act like good workers shows up across a number of policy documents and training tools. The training materials the ILO mission helped to develop included explicit lessons on the appropriate conduct of union stewards -- as in the following, from a mission to Zambia in 1967:

A man who readily concedes plainly improper grievances but fights hard for those with some substance gains the respect not only of his members but also often of management... A man who shouts and threatens on every occasion and who generally puts on a dramatic performance for the benefit of his members -- and then ends up being made a fool of and losing the case -- is not a man who commands respect. (ILO 1968a: 32)

This emphasis persisted into the 1970s:

The need continues to exist for education... of the employers and workers on the creation of necessary machineries and the *development of adequate attitudinal and other dispositions* to attract the respect and goodwill of governments and thus encourage their effective participation in the development of national economic and social policies.<sup>1</sup>

We can thus usefully see the ILO's workers' education activities as a particular form of governmentality. The organization clearly sought to bring about a particular set of subjectivities among unionists -- as seen particularly clearly in the references to 'respectable' participation in labour relations or 'adequate attitudinal dispositions'. Moreover, explicitly in the DG's report and often implicitly in the other instances cited here was a contrast between these 'appropriate', 'modern' forms of understanding and African 'underdeveloped' or 'traditional' dispositions. Workers' education is thus particularly interesting in view of the argument raised in Chapter 1 that technologies of government are affected by the encounter with historically situated relations of force.

The project of constructing 'modern' workers indeed continually ran up against the political economy of labour organization in practice. The activities of ILO 'experts' under the pilot project were deeply impacted by the realities of fragmentation and competition between different trade union centres and difficult relations between unions and governing parties. Some examples of the concrete problems these struggles posed for the Experimental Project can be found in the reports of the experts. Shortly before one mission to Haute Volta to lead a seminar in January 1966, workers went on strike to protest austerity measures adopted by the government. In response to the strike, the government banned all trade union meetings -- a policy that apparently included the ILO's seminar.<sup>2</sup> The protest,

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<sup>1</sup> 'UNDP Inter-Country Programme 1973-1976: Draft Brief for the Africa Region', December 1971, p. 4, ILOA WED 1-159 (1). Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Kesler Clermont to Mr. Paul B. Chu, 3 January 1966, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

however, ultimately helped bring down the government -- a development that allowed the seminar to go ahead.<sup>3</sup> The seminar itself even succeeded in forming a joint committee between rival trade union centres. However, the joint committee lasted only a few months before splintering into rival committees under each confederation.<sup>4</sup> Similar disruptions are observable elsewhere. A seminar in Dahomey was suspended after rival trade union centres contested each-others' right to participate.<sup>5</sup> In Gabon, a dispute over the wording of invitations to the opening ceremony of an ILO-led seminar between the government and three participating 'national' confederations led the government to refuse to allow workers paid days off for workers' education events.<sup>6</sup> The dispute was evidently reflective of deeper tensions between the government and trade union organizations -- the Ministry of Labour also resisted publicizing the seminar and refused to allow a formal closing ceremony.<sup>7</sup> The fate of a mission to the Central African Republic was particularly dramatic. A wildcat strike by airport workers in Bangui, in April of 1966, prompted the government to place the leadership of the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Centrafricaines* (UGTC) under house arrest. The ILO's workers' education expert had arrived three days after the strike to run a seminar that had been scheduled for the UGTC, and was told by the government to leave the country.<sup>8</sup> The ILO's expert was allowed to visit later in the year, but a tour of the interior of the country that had been organized by the UGTC was cancelled because the government feared it would be used for the purpose of 'political propaganda'.<sup>9</sup> Of course, there were plenty of successful or partially successful missions conducted under the aegis of the Experimental Project, but these examples are nonetheless indicative of the challenges posed by the contexts in which the ILO operated.

These national struggles, moreover, were overlaid with conflicts at the regional level. In the 1960s the ILO found itself navigating a complex and shifting

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<sup>3</sup> Kesler Clermont, 'Rapport Final Sur la Séminaire de Formation d'Instructeurs Syndicaux Tenu a Ouagadougou du 17 Janvier au 2 Février 1966, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Kesler Clermont, 'Rapport d'Activités dans les Pays Couverts par le Projet WED 3-159-2, Novembre 65-Avril 67', ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Kesler Clermont to Paul B. Chu, 29 March 1967, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Kesler Clermont, 'Séminaire de Formation d'Instructeurs Syndicaux, Libreville 12-26 Mai 1966', 15 May 1966, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Kesler Clermont, 'Rapport Final sur le Séminaire de Formation d'Instructeurs Syndicaux Organisé par les Centrales Syndicales Gabonaises Avec l'Assistance du BIT, Libreville, 10-25 Mai, 1966', ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Paul B. Chu minute to PD/Afrique, 5 May 1966, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

<sup>9</sup> 'Rapport sur la Tournée de Mr. Kesler Clermont, Conseiller Régional en Éducation Ouvrière au Caméroun, au Tchad, en RCA et au Gabon', annex to Clermont to Paul B. Chu, 29 April 1967, ILOA WED 3-159-2-3.

landscape both within countries and at the broader regional level, split between conservative nationalist unions closely affiliated to ruling parties, 'independent' unions with affiliations to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and some radical unions with links to the communist-led World Confederation of Trade Unions (WFTU). This was particularly concerning for the ILO in the context of workers' education because it often meant that in any given country multiple donor organizations were operating workers' education programmes -- not least because it appeared as if 'donor organizations seem sometimes to be more concerned with outbidding each other to establish clients for themselves, particularly amongst non-affiliated unions'.<sup>10</sup> Several conflicting pan-African union confederations were also in place, loosely committed to one or more of these international tendencies, and profoundly split over the linked issues of international affiliation and the relationship between trade unions and governments. The most notable of these were the All-Africa Trade Union Federation (AATUF) -- which was based initially in Accra, and after the ouster of Nkrumah's CPP in 1966 moved to Dar es Salaam -- and loosely linked to the WFTU, although typically more defined by anti-colonialism than communist ideologies; and African Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), based in Dakar, whose members were mostly affiliated to the ICFTU. A smaller grouping, the Pan-African Labour Congress, was affiliated to the Christian unionists' World Confederation of Labour. Conservative unions increasingly favoured a trade union federation operated by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) -- along the lines of the Organization for African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) eventually established in 1973. No doubt these conflicts were also closely linked to the antinomies of post-independence political economies noted at the end of Chapter 4.

In response to the growing challenge that national and international divisions in the labour movement posed for WED, and for the ILO more broadly, the ILO organized a workshop in Addis Ababa in late 1968 on the role of workers' organizations in 'economic and social development'. The Addis Ababa seminar came on the heels of a pan-African trade union conference organized by the OAU, aiming at the creation of a single pan-African trade union organization, which had been attended by workers from all three groupings and made very little progress. At least one ILO official explicitly linked the problems of the OAU conference to some challenges for the ILO's own conference -- trade union unity was unlikely, and in any event 'no far-reaching unity... should be imposed on the workers', but in its absence the conference was likely to be derailed by conflicts.<sup>11</sup> Even the appointment of delegates to the 1968 conference thus posed a rather difficult set of problems for the ILO. In fact, the workshop organizers, because

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<sup>10</sup> Paul B. Chu minute to M. de Givry, 22 September 1972, ILOA WED 1-159 (2).

<sup>11</sup> B.E.D. Komba-Kono minute to Grinevald and de Givry, 22 August 1968, p. 3, ILOA RP 159-4-1.

funding was fairly limited, had invited only eight national union centres, which had been selected so that there would be ‘an equitable representation from the various tendencies of the trade union movement from the countries included in the list’.<sup>12</sup> Representatives from the ATUC and AATUF were eventually added. Clement Lubembe, Secretary General of the Kenyan Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), and by 1968 one of the leading nationalist trade union figures in the region, wrote to the ILO to argue that ‘this Seminar should only be for all African National Centres as I am sure that bringing AATUF and ATUC in the seminar might definitely weaken the efforts being made by OAU and some of us to have one Trade Union Organization in Africa’.<sup>13</sup> The planners of the conference struggled with how to balance representativeness with the possibility of political conflict: ‘the contemporary trade union situation in Africa, including its political diversities, could surprisingly change the cordial atmosphere of any meeting to unpredictable pandemonium’.<sup>14</sup> There is a clear sense in the build-up to the conference that the ILO was quite concerned about navigating the potentially difficult and fragmentary landscape of union politics. The interlinked problems of national and regional trade union unity, relationships between political parties and trade unions, and international affiliation, perhaps not surprisingly, took up a considerable amount of time at the conference itself without any resolution (ILO 1968b: 11-14).

#### TRADE UNION UNITY?

The concern these dynamics raised among the ILO’s staff is noticeable in much of the internal correspondence of the Workers’ Education department in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One official responded positively to a resolution on trade union unity by the OAU’s Conference of African Labour Ministers (CALM) in 1969, while noting his concern that ‘it does not give any reasons why unity as such is desirable, either from the point of view of the governments or of the workers themselves’, and that as a result ‘The suspicions of some African trade union leaders will not be entirely dissipated by the resolution’.<sup>15</sup> Three years later, WED officials were asked for advice about a speech to be given by an ILO official at another CALM meeting. While noting the value of workers’ education for development, they also suggested including the caution that to date ‘all the assistance given has been in response to the unions and/or governments themselves irrespective of their various internal groupings or organizational structures. In this case, the ILO is there to help the unions to help themselves and

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Clement Lubembe to C.W. Jenks, 9 August 1968, ILOA RP 159-4-1.

<sup>14</sup> Komba-Kono minute, 22 August 1968, *op cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> H.A. Dunning to Mr. Aamir Ali, Mr. Bolin, 18 March 1969, ILOA WED 1-159 (1).

does not... seek to get involved in the internal trade union policies'.<sup>16</sup> From a practical perspective, then, the ILO saw the promotion of 'unity' as a potential antidote to the factional divisions in regional and national labour movements that had frequently threatened to derail technical assistance projects on the ground.

Yet, 'unity' posed certain problems for the ILO. Not least, it was difficult or impossible to reconcile any compulsory policy of 'unity' with the organization's commitment to freedom of association. If workers were to be free to associate as they chose, 'unity' could only come about by choice, not by legislative fiat, and moreover, it would always be a fragile achievement subject to reversals and revivals of factionalism. Another reply to the same request for inputs noted that 'Trade union unity whether at the national or continental level is a delicate topic on which to expect any form of involvement from the ILO. It would be advisable... to inform the conference that the ILO attaches great importance to the development of responsible, free, and democratic trade unionism'. It also noted that the ILO was committed to promoting workers' efforts to 'freely organize themselves into trade unions, federations, and confederations etc. without prior authorization of public authorities'.<sup>17</sup> 'Unity', then, was appealing in practice but difficult to balance with the ILO's vision of unionism.<sup>18</sup> The situation was yet more complicated at the time because a number of national trade union centres, governments, and indeed the AATUF simultaneously sought the ILO's help in setting up workers' education programmes.<sup>19</sup> With little mandate to discriminate between unions' making requests, the ILO risked (ironically) contributing to the very fragmentation of the union movement that posed such operational problems for it in the first place by supporting cross-cutting workers' education projects. The ILO, in short, was

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<sup>16</sup> Jean-Jacques Favre for Paul B.J. Chu to Mr. Abdel-Rahman, 25 February 1972, ILOA WED 1-159 (1).

<sup>17</sup> B.E.D. Komba-Kono to Mr. Dunning, 22 February 1972, ILOA WED 1-159 (1).

<sup>18</sup> Teri Caraway (2006) approaches a similar problem, in a more general sense, from a different angle when she argues that the ILO's conception of freedom of association encourages the fragmentation of unions -- 'free' unions, in short, can come at the expense of 'powerful' unions. I would argue that the situation is more complex in the cases examined here. As damaging as fragmentation can be to unions' ability to press for improvements in the conditions of work, 'unity' can easily mean the cooptation of union leaderships by ruling parties unlikely to assign much priority to workers' rights. Moreover, the ILO's practical activities have been continually bedeviled by need to strike a balance between the ambivalent poles of 'freedom' and 'unity'.

<sup>19</sup> On the AATUF, see 'Conference Internationale de Travail -- 1970, USPA: Compte rendu d'un entretien du 18 juin à 12 heures' 26 June 1970, ILOA WED 1-159 (1).



subject to multiple conflicting efforts to enrol its technologies of government into various 'national' and 'regional' struggles over the structure of the labour movement.

The ILO thus supported the formation of OATUU quite enthusiastically as a potential solution to the problems posed by fragmentation. The nature of OATUU nonetheless posed certain problems. OATUU was certainly not an 'autonomous' workers' organization. As at least one author would note in 1979, OATUU and most of its member unions had made very little effort at establishing any sort of check-off system or independent fundraising capacity -- relying instead on funding from the OAU and from governing parties (Ananaba 1979: 219-220; *cf.* Agyeman 2003: 332). This meant that OATUU was largely dependent on the OAU for its survival. The organization was thus committed from the start to the formation of single, relatively conservative or 'non-political' trade union centres, safely under the control of governing parties, in member countries. That this sat awkwardly with the ILO's commitment to 'free' unions is fairly clear.

Nonetheless, the ILO -- perhaps not surprisingly given the problems posed by conflicts among trade unions in the previous decade -- initially welcomed the project of 'trade union unity' in Africa.<sup>20</sup> Almost immediately after the formation of OATUU, the new confederation wrote to the ILO asking for an 'extensive Worker' [sic] Education Programme at national, regional, and continental levels'.<sup>21</sup> WED was quite accommodating, and started lobbying for money for assistance to OATUU under the ILO's technical assistance budget almost immediately.<sup>22</sup> OATUU, however, often sought to use the ILO's seminars themselves as a means of promoting and establishing a particular set of relationships between organized labour and the state. This led to increasingly wide disjunctures between the ILO's understandings of the appropriate role for labour and that actually being promoted in some ILO-sponsored workshops.

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<sup>20</sup> 'Réunion du Bureau Executif de l'USPA', 18 January 1972; ILOA WED 1-159-1-1.

<sup>21</sup> 'Memorandum Submitted by the OATUU Secretary General to the Acting Director General of the ILO on the Proposals for Assistance for Educational Programmes', annexed to J.D. Akumu to F. Blanchard, 24 November 1974; ILOA WED 1-159-3-1.

<sup>22</sup> 'Regular Budget Field Technical Cooperation Workers' Education Assistance to the Organization for African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) (Africa), n.d.; ILOA WED 1-159-3-1.

Starting in 1977, OATUU had sought to ensure its participation in all of the ILO's WED activities in the region.<sup>23</sup> The following year, the OAU Assembly called for the establishment of a 'joint action programme' on 'labour and related social questions' to be coordinated between the ILO, OAU, and OATUU.<sup>24</sup> The ILO's Regional Director for Africa responded positively, noting that the ILO's participation in uncoordinated projects run through the ICFTU, WFTU, and WCL or bilateral donors, which 'have their own objectives which may or may not be consistent with ILO objectives'<sup>25</sup> and that 'some sort of formal consultation machinery with OATUU' would be desirable.<sup>26</sup> In 1979, OATUU's General Council meeting passed a resolution that 'any assistance of a multilateral nature... by any extra-African organisation must necessarily pass through OATUU as the only expression of willingness for progress and for the promotion of African workers and Trade Unions'.<sup>27</sup> No such formal machinery was ever actually put in place, and projects were operated without OATUU's involvement, but projects with OATUU took up an increasing considerable proportion of WED activities.

In some instances the potential for tensions between OATUU and the OAU's vision of unions as junior partners in 'national' development and the ILO's emphasis on unions as independent representatives of workers' interests were muted by focusing primarily on 'techniques' for workers' education. The ILO and OATUU collaborated in running a project on 'methods and techniques' in the late 1970s and early 1980s -- it culminated in a string of seminars in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia in the latter half of 1980. The report on the seminars is striking in its emphasis on strengthening educational institutions and almost complete avoidance of any discussion of the *purpose* of workers' education or of the place of trade unions in national development plans (ILO 1981). In this sense, the insistence of the DG's report to the ARC in 1960 (see Chapter 4) on the need to focus on the 'technical' issues rather than 'politics' seems to have been carried over quite effectively.

While the contents of the programme skirted controversy, however, the material organization of the workshops was contested in a number of ways. The

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<sup>23</sup> J.D. Akumu to Mr. Bert Bolin, 'Re: ILO/OATUU Projects', 10 August 1977, ILOA WED 1-159-3-1.

<sup>24</sup> Paul O. Etiang to Mr. Francis Blanchard, 30 October 1978, ILOA WED 1-159 (4).

<sup>25</sup> P. Adossama memorandum to Mr. J. Whitehouse, 7 November 1978, ILOA WED 1-159 (4).

<sup>26</sup> P. Adossama memorandum to Mr. Amal Mukherjee, 7 November 1978, ILOA WED 1-159 (4).

<sup>27</sup> 'Resolution on Workers' Education', p. 2., annex to A. Salam Gaye Minute Sheet, 6 July 1979, ILOA WED 1-159-3-2.

initial proposal for the methods and techniques seminar was made in 1975.<sup>28</sup> Notably, OATUU's involvement meant that support for the mission had to come from government donors in Europe, as ICFTU member unions were unwilling to support the workshop. The project was thus delayed by three years from the originally envisioned 1977 start. Moreover, there were conflicts over the relative autonomy that national affiliates of OATUU should have in setting up programmes with the ILO, and over the extent of OATUU's involvement in national seminars. The Assistant Secretary General of OATUU wrote to the ILO in 1979 to complain that OATUU had not been invited to a pair of sub-regional seminars on techniques for workers' education in Abidjan and Tema, Ghana in 1979 until the last minute (it turned out the telegram had been lost), and that even then OATUU had only been granted observer status at the meeting: 'OATUU, the concrete expression of the will of African workers for unity can not accept observer status for an activity on its own soil, organized on a multilateral basis... especially when organized by an institution of which our member states are members on a tripartite basis'.<sup>29</sup> Similar issues over the selection of delegates and the contents of discussions were raised with respect to the national seminars on methods and techniques held in 1980.<sup>30</sup> In short, the political situation of OATUU, which put a premium on the organization's ability to control the international relations of member unions, made even the logistical arrangements of workshops themselves into objects of contention. The problems posed for the ILO in collaboration with OATUU, however, were probably clearest in efforts to provide assistance to workers in the white-ruled states in Southern Africa.

#### THE ILO, OATUU, AND NLMS

The ILO had been one of the institutions at the forefront of international opposition to apartheid at least since South Africa was forced to withdraw from the organization in 1964. The ILO hosted a 'Workers' Conference on Action Against Apartheid' in Geneva in 1973, which called for the UN system to 'initiate and intensify' aid to 'the oppressed people of South Africa' (ILO 1973b: 2). The ILO's actual engagements in efforts to provide assistance to workers' organizations or NLMS on the ground, however, were limited by problems of jurisdiction. Ironically, precisely because South Africa was no longer a member country, the ILO had no mandate to work in South Africa. There were proposals floating around the ILO in the early 1970s for some kind of technical assistance for exiled unionists.<sup>31</sup> One official noted that it might be possible to start working in South West Africa, which, although *de facto* controlled by South African, at

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<sup>28</sup> 'Regional Project -- Seminars and Evaluation Courses on Methods and Techniques in Workers' Education', June 1975, ILOA WED 1-159 (3).

<sup>29</sup> A.L. Diallo to Mr. J.R. Whitehouse, 5 February 1979, ILOA WED 1-159-3-2.

<sup>30</sup> C. Poloni minute to Mr. E. Kane, 30 January 1981, ILOA WED 1-159-3-2.

<sup>31</sup> B.E.D. Komba Kono to Mr. Dunning *et al.*, 'Assistance to African Trade Unions in Exile', 10 August 1972, ILOA WED 1-159 (2).

least in theory was under UN administration.<sup>32</sup> Another noted that if the national union organizations in Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, or Zaïre were to organize educational activities for hosted exiles, the ILO could provide assistance.<sup>33</sup> The ICFTU, less constrained by issues of jurisdiction, held a seminar for exiled workers from Angola and Mozambique in Kinshasa in 1970, and was able to establish links with workers' organizations in the white-ruled countries over the course of the decade. These developments marginalized the ILO to a certain extent. The formation of OATUU in 1973 and the OAU's formal support for NLMs thus gave the ILO an important entry point -- they started exploring means of delivering assistance to exiled unionists in conjunction with OATUU and the OAU. Of course, it remained difficult or impossible to organize workers' education activities in the countries still under white rule. Moreover, OATUU's connection with a particular vision of 'trade union unity' that sat awkwardly with the ILO's vision of autonomous labour movements created some notable frictions and patterns of contestation over the provision of workers' education for NLMs.

What took shape, in short, was a WED programme run in conjunction with OATUU and oriented towards workers or liberation movements in exile and bound up in multiple competing objectives. The first major event for NLMs was a workshop held in Lusaka in 1978 by the Zambian Confederation of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in support of trade unions affiliated to national liberation movements in Southern Africa. The conference report reproduces the contributions made to the conference by participants from the ILO, as well as the ZCTU, OATUU, unionists from Angola and South-West Africa, and from the South African Confederation of Trade Unions (SACTU), the exiled trade union movement.<sup>34</sup> The ILO officials' interventions in the conference, as in most instances discussed above, articulate a particular vision of trade unionism, centered on patterns of industrial relations in the North Atlantic. Most of the ILO officials involved delivered rather banal talks about administrative structures, 'normal' trade union functions, and different ways to facilitate trade union education -- one official included an appendix with a table giving a detailed breakdown of 18 different techniques for facilitating discussion (ILO 1978: 59-63). The archival files relating to the workshop even contain printed lyrics to a set British and American trade union songs -- e.g. 'Solidarity

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<sup>32</sup> Morris W. Mulima minute to Mr. Chu, 16 December 1971, ILOA WED 1-159 (1).

<sup>33</sup> Paul B.J. Chu to Mr. Dunning and Mr. Komba-Kono, 11 October 1972, ILOA WED 1-159 (2).

<sup>34</sup> The report, in fact, is unusually detailed for this particular workshop. This in itself should probably be taken as an indication of the political significance of the workshop for the ILO.

Forever', 'Roll the Union On', 'We Shall Not Be Moved' -- that it would seem were brought to the workshop by an ILO staffer.<sup>35</sup>

Somewhat incongruently, the OATUU and ZCTU officials present, as well as the Zambian Minister of Labour, all addressed the conference to talk mostly about the need for nationally unified labour movements to work with governments for the cause of national independence and development. The OATUU's speaker pointed out that its affiliates could not be affiliated to any outside trade union international, arguing that

'Friends of Africa will appreciate that Africa cannot itself be involved in divisive ideological struggles. Our priorities are clear. We have to ensure the unity of the African working class and, together with our governments, jointly create a good climate for rapid development.' (ILO 1978: 11)

Another OATUU official directly critiqued the idea of trade union independence, in terms that echo Nyrere's and Nkrumah's arguments from nearly two decades earlier:

'Some people think that collaboration of a trade union organization with a government is a sell-out. This may be the case in the developed countries, but not in Africa where the major problem is development... In Africa, governments and workers are allies in the struggle for development. Who is subordinate to who is not even the question' (ILO 1978: 38).

A representative of the ZCTU similarly argued that the national commitment to development and industrialization required the cooperative participation of the trade unions, 'The nation calls us together with other social institutions to remain committed to the attainment of common goals for the common good' (ILO 1978: 23). Several things were thus going on at once in this conference. OATUU and the ZCTU drew on the 'development' imperative as a means of urging trade union subordination to governments in the name of 'national' development imperatives. Meanwhile the ILO officials involved were trying to produce workers' organizations that looked like the 'standard' model derived from the experience of tripartite corporatism in Europe. Indeed, ironically the ILO put heavy emphasis on the need for 'independent' unions free from formal interference from government or political parties.

All of these political differences were compounded by the problem of jurisdiction. OATUU had close links to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) -- which had been forced into exile in Lusaka in the 1960s and it could safely be said by the late 1970s no longer had any significant presence

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<sup>35</sup> 'Trade Union Songs', n.d., RP 159-4-C-10-1. The archival file simply includes a handwritten note that these songs had been 'sung at the workshop'.

within South Africa itself.<sup>36</sup> SACTU had made overtures to the ILO about participating in workers' education programmes as early as the ILC in 1975.<sup>37</sup> After the Lusaka seminar, WED started to put together a project proposal for SACTU and liberation movements in South West Africa and Zimbabwe -- aimed at 'develop[ing] and strengthen[ing] effective and independent workers' organizations capable of discharging complex responsibilities not only in the field of industrial relations but, more particularly, in the task of nation-building'.<sup>38</sup>

Complicating matters further was the fact that, while SACTU had a very limited foothold in South Africa itself, there had been a rapid growth of 'independent' unions in South Africa in the 1970s. This development was formalized not long after the Lusaka seminar by the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979 and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) in 1980. The independent federations organizing in South Africa scarcely had contacts with OATUU.<sup>39</sup> FOSATU in particular was, however, receiving a considerable proportion of its budget from the ICFTU -- in 1982, an internal estimate suggested that 84 percent of its operating costs were paid out of ICFTU assistance.<sup>40</sup> These developments posed significant challenges for SACTU, which suddenly found itself subject to competition for the international resources upon which it depended -- 'Hitherto the international scene had been the exclusive preserve of SACTU, and the organization reacted sharply when this monopoly was challenged' (Plaut 1984: 118-119). No similar conflicts

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<sup>36</sup> Indeed, SACTU's argument for its own significance was that -- South Africa being a 'fascist' state -- no legitimate trade union could possibly operate legally in South Africa. Thus, SACTU argued, their very insulation from the shopfloor gave them a kind of legitimacy in representing South African workers. This argument was more easily defensible in the 1970s, when the apartheid regime did in fact seek to establish puppet unions, than when applied to the independent unions discussed below. For retrospective and contemporary examinations of this debate, see Freidman (2012); Plaut (1984).

<sup>37</sup> 'International Labour Conference -- 1975: South Africa -- Summary of Discussion held in June 1975', 3 July 1975, ILOA WED 1-159 (3).

<sup>38</sup> 'Workers' Education for Development -- Southern Africa', annex to J.R.W. Whitehouse minute to Mr. Sacika, 18 December 1978, ILOA WED 0-159-1978/79.

<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the lone discussion of any interaction with OATUU which I was able to locate in FOSATU's papers on international relations was a mention of attending 'OATUU reception [at which] we met many African trade unionists' in a report on a trip to Geneva in 1979. 'Report of General Secretary's Trip to Sweden and Europe 2<sup>nd</sup> June to 18<sup>th</sup> June 1979', Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (WHP), AH1999 C5.1.

<sup>40</sup> 'Budget Proposals', n.d., WHP AH1999 C5.2.

took place in Zimbabwe or South West Africa; in both cases there was far less in the way of independent trade union organization.

For the unions organizing in South Africa, meanwhile, SACTU's efforts to enrol the assistance of the ILO and OATUU, and increasingly other national and international confederations, raised considerable concerns. A report on a mission to Canada by FOSATU in 1982, for instance, noted that: 'The political position overseas has become complicated in the SACTU has mounted a strong campaign and there is great danger that the more conservative union circles *and* the far left will try to use FOSATU in their attack on SACTU'.<sup>41</sup> The worry for the unions operating in South Africa, then, was that competition with SACTU would mean getting entangled in conflicts between different political tendencies in the north, to the detriment of either the struggle against apartheid or efforts to improve workers' rights in South Africa. The ICFTU, meanwhile, linked to the unions in the country, was concerned to limit SACTU's access to international assistance. A discussion paper of the ICFTU's Co-ordinating Committee on South Africa from 1984, for instance, suggests that 'It is disquieting to note that SACTU is increasingly trying to take credit for developments inside South Africa as this could seriously prejudice the progress of the independent trade union movement', and goes on to note that SACTU publications implied that SACTU was involved in efforts to unify the non-racial union movement in South Africa and that the ICFTU, AALC, and the like were 'agents of imperialism'.<sup>42</sup>

OATUU, for its part, responded to the growth of the independent unions by deepening and institutionalizing its relationship with SACTU. The Secretary General wrote to the DG in 1982 requesting that the ILO help set up a seminar for South African trade unions. OATUU fell back on familiar arguments about 'unity' in order to justify the request:

There are many organisations (some trade unions, others are semi-political) who are very active in South Africa, under the pretext that they are helping the workers in South Africa and those who are in the neighbouring states... These organisations have caused confusion inside South Africa, where they are now having five national centres, but they are also beginning to cause confusion even in the independent states in Southern Africa.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 'Report by A. Zulu and A. Erwin on Overseas Trip from 21<sup>st</sup> May to 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1982', WHP AH1999 C5.1.

<sup>42</sup> '23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on South Africa, Geneva, 1984', p. 6, annex to letter to All Members of the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on South Africa, 22 May 1984, WHP AH1999 C5.2.

<sup>43</sup> J.D. Akumu to The Director General, 're: Workers' Education Programme for the Trade Unionists in Southern Africa', 7 February 1982, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3.

The question of which South African federations should be invited to the said seminar caused considerable conflict within the ILO. Officials from the ÉGALITÉ department's met with OATUU shortly after the request, suggesting that the meeting should be limited to the independent federations in South Africa, and leave out representatives of SACTU and the liberation movements.<sup>44</sup> However, officials in WED had informed SACTU almost immediately about the meeting, and also suggested that if the NLMs were not to be invited then OATUU should probably be responsible for organizing the seminar.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, officials from the workers' relations department noted that OATUU and the OAU were confined to recognizing only one official liberation movement and one 'national' trade union centre (the ANC and SACTU respectively), and thus excluding these from an ILO meeting would likely provoke conflicts.<sup>46</sup> The idea for the seminar with the independent federations stalled as a result of these disagreements. WED did partially meet OATUU's request by helping to organize a seminar for workers in Southern Africa in Gaborone in March of 1983. The meeting led to the formation of the Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC) as an arm of OATUU. SACTU was invited -- and indeed used the meeting as an opportunity to condemn the activities of the ICFTU and International Trade Secretariats in South Africa.<sup>47</sup> Officials from OATUU met with WED officials in December of 1983 at a seminar in Mogadishu, reiterating the argument that the ITS were 'constantly interfering in the internal affairs of the trade unions [in South Africa] and not respecting the OATUU policy that no African trade unions should remain affiliated to any international organization other than OATUU'.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, the ILO was simultaneously pursuing or supporting projects with the independent federations through donor agencies in the global north or with the ICFTU. WED managed to secure funding from the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian International Development Agency for a workers' education project for unions in South Africa and excluding SACTU in 1983 -- FOSATU was generally receptive, although the ICFTU apparently saw the project as an

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<sup>44</sup> B. Rateree, 'Trade Union Activities in Southern Africa', 11 March 1982, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3. The minute suggests that OATUU agreed to the suggestion that SACTU should be excluded. Based on the subsequent development of the project, this was most likely a misunderstanding (either on the part of ÉGALITÉ or of OATUU).

<sup>45</sup> C. Poloni minute to E. Kane, 10 May 1982, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3.

<sup>46</sup> A. Salam Gaye, 'Assistance to Independent Black Trade Unions in South Africa', 28, November 1982, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3.

<sup>47</sup> K. Nordahl, 'Mission Report: Gaborone, Botswana, 11-18 March 1983', 13 April 1983, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3.

<sup>48</sup> 'Summary of Discussion Between the ILO and OATUU Delegations Held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1983, at Jubba Hotel, Mogadiscio, Somalia', 7 March 1984, ILOA WED 1-159-3-3.



infringement on their 'territory'.<sup>49</sup> The ILO also hosted meetings of the ICFTU's Coordinating Committee on South Africa, in which FOSATU and CUSA representatives participated. Nonetheless, the ILO was clearly hamstrung with respect to the independent federations both by internal debates, by the relationship between the ILO and OATUU, and by their inability to work in South Africa itself. A FOSATU official noted after meeting with the ILO in 1982 that 'it is very clear that within the ILO this whole program of support is very controversial and raises a number of problems about the ILO's relation to South Africa as a non-member and to the liberation movements'.<sup>50</sup>

Even the relations of the independent federations to the ICFTU, moreover, became increasingly fraught. FOSATU and CUSA members were relatively marginalized in COCOSA -- they were frequently invited to present or observe, but were not normally involved in making any actual decision. The official involved in the 1981 meeting reported that

In general my feeling was that we served no purpose in being at the meeting. We participated in a very undirected general discussion on the first day. The real business of the meeting took place without us being referred to, and a FOSATU contract was agreed to without me being called in to discuss it.<sup>51</sup>

FOSATU gradually developed a much more cautious approach to union internationalism. The organization took an increasingly dim view on the growing number of invitations they received to seminars, study visits, and the like:

If we are honest with ourselves we'd have to admit that we have weak unions in FOSATU. To send an official from weak unions overseas does not benefit his members. The only people who benefit is [sic] the individual who has a pleasant trip and the overseas organizations who can then claim they are assisting workers in South Africa when in fact they are doing the opposite.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> 'Report on the ICFTU World Congress Held in Oslo, Norway -- 23<sup>rd</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1983', WHP AH 1999 C5.1. ÉGALITÉ's insistence on leaving out the NLMs in response to OATUU's request the previous year stemmed in part from the fact that negotiations with CIDA and the CLC over this meeting were already ongoing.

<sup>50</sup> 'Report on Overseas Trip by A. Erwin, from: Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November to Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 1982', p.4, WHP AH2373 12.25.1.

<sup>51</sup> T. Adler, 'Report on Meeting of ICFTU South Africa Coordinating Committee As Well as Other Meetings in Europe Between 12/12/81 -- 21/12/81', 24 December 1981, WHP AH1999 C5.2.

<sup>52</sup> 'Memo on Invitations Overseas', annex to Mike Murphy, 'Report to the Fosatu Central Committee on the Work of the Fosatu International Research Officer', 4 October 1983, WHP AH1999, C5.3.

To a considerable extent, this approach was carried over after the merger of independent unions that led to the creation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU refused to affiliate to the ICFTU, preferring to attempt to establish bilateral relationships with individual trade unions.

For the ILO, these tensions were eventually partially resolved because both OATUU and SACTU went into crisis in the mid 1980s. OATUU's 4<sup>th</sup> Congress in early 1985 collapsed. A group of unions led by the representative of the *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal* (CNTS) raised a number of allegations (which were probably well founded) about the OATUU secretariat misusing funds, manipulating votes at the Congress, and more broadly failing to 'take seriously the preoccupations of the African working class'.<sup>53</sup> The same representative also later alleged to the press in Senegal that Akumu was an 'agent of Libya' (which was probably less well founded).<sup>54</sup> The Secretary General refused to resign, but a Provisional Coordinating Committee was established. One of the immediate consequences of the ambiguous situation was that WED cancelled a regional workers' education project funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).<sup>55</sup> Akumu responded by writing to WED to insinuate that 'people or organizations who are inimical to OATUU' had influenced the decision to cancel the project and that 'due to your consistent bias against us', 'our confidence in your impartiality and fair judgement has been greatly shaken, but we hope the Director General may find a formula to... restore some good working relations'.<sup>56</sup> The specifics of the crisis in OATUU are perhaps less significant for present purposes than the fact that the entire basis for OATUU's existence was under threat. OATUU's model of 'pan-African' unity was rooted in a particular model of state that was profoundly in crisis by the mid-1980s (see Chapter 6). The organization persisted largely because of its ability to leverage international resources, which greatly amplified the threat posed by the cancellation of the DANIDA project -- this, perhaps more than the personalities involved, explains the hyperbolic character of Akumu's response. SACTU was also increasingly marginalized from the mid-1980s, especially after the merger of independent unions in South Africa 1985.

The ILO started pursuing avenues of cooperation with COSATU in 1986. WED officials met with COSATU leadership in Lusaka in March of 1986 to discuss establishing a workers' education programme for COSATU, but the

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<sup>53</sup> Assane Diop, 'Circulaire à Toutes les Organisations Affiliées a OUSA', 22 February 1985, ILOA WED 3-159-3-4.

<sup>54</sup> Directeur du Bureau de l'OIT, Dakar memorandum to B. Bolin, 31 January 1985, and attached press clippings, ILOA WED 3-159-3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Cesare Poloni to Mr. Aguiriano and Mr. Bolin, 27 May 1985, ILOA WED 3-159-3-4.

<sup>56</sup> J.D. Akumu to Mr. Cesare Poloni, 13 March 1985, ILOA WED 3-159-3-4.

inability of the ILO to work in South Africa remained a stumbling block in this respect.<sup>57</sup> Ironically, after the leadership situation in OATUU was resolved in favour of the provisional committee group, and after the collapse of SACTU, COSATU officials started to seriously explore the possibility of establishing links to OATUU -- although in practice this did not amount to much. Here ILO meetings were nonetheless important insofar as they provided opportunities for COSATU and OATUU officials to meet.<sup>58</sup>

The ILO's assistance to NLMs was fragmented and bound up in multiple struggles. On one hand, FOSATU and CUSA in particular drew heavily (if cautiously) on their ability to enrol international resources in order to fill basic material needs and as sources of political support in the face of a hostile apartheid government. SACTU at the same time drew on different trade union networks as a means of compensating for its near-total lack of an organizational base in South Africa. The ICFTU and OATUU, meanwhile, developed essentially parallel networks of connections with the shopfloor unions on the one hand and SACTU on the other up until the crisis in OATUU and the collapse of SACTU after about 1985. From about 1986 onward OATUU played a much more limited role and the ILO was able to pursue more substantive engagements with COSATU. The ILO's WED programming involved delicately -- and, it must be said, often ineffectively -- navigating this complex, multiscalar landscape. The situation was largely resolved for the ILO by the collapse of OATUU and SACTU -- a point which highlights the importance of the entanglements between the ILO's initiatives and the particular relations of force within the different contexts where the ILO operates. The particular practices and resources circulated by the ILO in this context remained strikingly consistent -- lesson plans and pedagogical techniques that articulated a particular vision of appropriate unionism were cycled into very different contexts. The ILO's workshops and funding for workers' education, meanwhile, provided bases on which unionists could try to construct very different modes of solidarity.

#### *After Apartheid*

These troubled engagements continue to pose difficulties for the ILO's activities in South Africa. South Africa is increasingly a key terrain for the ILO in Africa. This is particularly because COSATU's role in post-apartheid South Africa. The country's post-apartheid industrial relations institutions were initially

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<sup>57</sup> 'Report on the Trip Undertaken by COSATU's Executive Committee Members Abroad Between A Period of 5<sup>th</sup> March to 12<sup>th</sup> March 1986, WHP AH2373 12.25.1. The ILO also provided COSATU with a document detailing the different kinds of support they could offer, see 'Annexure B, CTUC/ILO Workshop - Maseru, April 14-22', same file.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. 'Report on the International Trade Union Situation', n.d., p. 7, WHP AH2373 12.25.1.

very much modeled on the kind of tripartite corporatism favoured by the ILO. Trade union involvement in economic policy-making through the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) came much closer to the ILO's ideal of workers' participation in tripartite institutions by 'unified' national confederations than any other workers' organization in the region. Indeed, the significance of the South African system for the ILO in Africa thus extends well beyond South Africa itself -- for instance, ILO has even arranged study visits to NEDLAC for trade unions in Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

However, in practice, ongoing struggles over tripartism and over the relationship between COSATU and the ANC have often derailed the ILO's objectives. South Africa's corporatist institutions have been challenged by employers seeking greater flexibility, and democratization did not deliver 'on expectations of more and better jobs and employers were bypassing the new labour laws' (Webster 2013: 210). The point is that in spite of the ANC's frequent appeals to rhetoric about 'decent work' and the existence of tripartite institutions for economic policy-making, the actual practice of industrial relations in South Africa has been disappointing for labour. Moreover, in line with the reassertion of 'independent' unionism by the ILO in Africa more broadly, the close political links of COSATU's leadership to the ANC -- of great importance in securing the establishment of tripartite institutions post-transition -- were being viewed with increasing unease at the ILO in late 2014:

Some people are saying for instance that COSATU, which has very close links to the ANC... Some of the members are starting to fight that kind of bureaucracy, because they're finding that the leaders are not looking after the main members of the organization. And you can see in the situation in Marikana that the workers are lost and they don't know who is there to help them and they try to sort out their problems by themselves. Then it becomes a [problem] because a number of people have been killed... The ILO is just preaching autonomy and freedom because that is the only way to keep the boat in the right place.<sup>59</sup>

COSATU's dilemma with respect to its relationship to the ANC is well documented. Not least, as a number of authors have compellingly argued, it is less and less clear that the alliance of COSATU's leadership and the leading factions of the ANC is in the interests of rank and file workers (Bassett and Clarke 2008; Beresford 2012). It is worth noting here, however, that for the ILO the issue of the political independence of COSATU sits awkwardly with the desire to promote 'unity' and institutions like NEDLAC. Indeed, the growth of conflict over poverty and unemployment in South Africa is seen in part as a result of the breakdown of NEDLAC:

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<sup>59</sup> Interview, ILO Official, Pretoria, October 2014.

In SA, they've almost moved away from [tripartism], and that's been their downfall I believe in the Marikana, and all sorts of the challenges they're having around social dialogue... And countries that do take it up -- and you just need to look at the Swedish and Scandinavian models, even though they're developed economies -- you'll see how entrenched social dialogue is in their societies, which helps them get through difficult times.<sup>60</sup>

To complicate matters even further, at least from the perspective of the ILO, COSATU has remained fairly hesitant to participate in Workers' Education activities with the ILO. While the ILO is keen to promote the unity of South African trade unions, this has opened up opportunities for the two much smaller 'national' confederations (NACTU and FEDUSA) to draw on ILO support, and for COSATU affiliates to develop some of their own programming independent of the central federation. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, indeed, was providing a financial education course for retrenched members, with ILO assistance, at the time of its expulsion from COSATU. For the ILO, then, the desire to promote 'unity' continues to run up against the need to find willing participants for its programming.

The ILO thus faces an awkward dilemma. On one hand, NEDLAC is (literally) a model institution for the kinds of 'social dialogue' the ILO seeks to promote elsewhere in the region. On the other hand, the very close political relationship between the ANC and COSATU, which in no small part facilitated the establishment of NEDLAC, is increasingly seen as a troubling departure from 'free' trade unionism. Moreover, COSATU -- until very recently a model of trade union 'unity' for the ILO -- is facing increasingly serious political difficulties. The ILO struggles to maintain active relationships with South African workers' organizations without contributing to the further fragmentation of the federation by propping up weaker rival or breakaway unions. It is worth noting that the ILO's approach to the situation in South Africa is coloured very distinctly by the historical trajectory outlined above. This is especially true in the sense that the ILO remains committed to an understanding of the 'appropriate' role for unions in the process of development largely derived from northern European experience -- to wit, the reference to Scandinavian systems in the previous quote. This set of assumptions is often deeply moralistic. Marikana, for instance, appears twice in the above quotes as a kind of specter of the possibility for disorder that might result from failures in leadership or the failure of 'social partners' to behave 'correctly'. Of course, this assessment fails to do justice to the massacre as a deeply complex sociological phenomenon with multiple causes and ambiguous consequences (Bond 2013; Alexander 2013; Chinguno 2013). The point here is simply that the deeply moralistic lens of consensual tripartism through which the ILO has tended to view the politics of labour in South Africa and elsewhere limits

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<sup>60</sup> Interview, ILO Official, Pretoria, October 2014.

its ability to interpret these events. The disjuncture between the ILO's visions of unionism and the messy political realities of unionism in contemporary South Africa, and elsewhere in the region, continues to trouble the organization. The contemporary role of the ILO in South Africa, then, is particularly indicative that the encounter between the particular subjectivities the ILO seeks to promote and the actual relations of force these visions encounter in practice can be profoundly disruptive for the organization's efforts to promote particular modes of economic governance.

#### TRADE UNIONS, FRAGMENTATION, AND THE INFORMAL AFTER STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

A related set of challenges for the ILO stems from ongoing transformations in labour markets across sub-Saharan Africa in the context of structural adjustment. Formal research and programming on union 'pluralism' has been developed in Francophone West Africa (see ILO 2010), and trade union fragmentation elsewhere continues to make the ILO's practical activities relatively difficult. There is, however, a growing apprehension of close connections between trade unions and governments:

If you take the year 1960, most of the trade unions participate to win their freedom. And the thing is that in the beginning they were so linked with their political parties, that when they get their freedom, the independence of the 1960s, it was difficult to cut the umbilical link between the politicians and themselves. Most of the leaders are political leaders, and they forget that trade unions need to be organized.<sup>61</sup>

In short, the transformations in African and global political economies highlighted at the start of the previous chapter had important consequences for the ILO's workers' activities in the region. OATUU was wedded to a model of unionism very closely linked to the postcolonial historic bloc. The virtual collapse of that bloc under the pressures of economic crisis and structural adjustment largely undermined the organization's claim to any distinctive status in the trade union politics of the region. The bans on international affiliation that had been so central to OATUU's operations were largely repealed in the early 1990s -- creating a renewed competition between OATUU and the African branch of the ICFTU. The particular vision of consensual industrial relations towards which the ILO's WED activities throughout the postcolonial period had largely been oriented was also clearly less relevant than ever to the challenges facing workers in sub-Saharan Africa. The ILO's efforts to promote renewed forms of unionism were only reinforced by the broader erosion of tripartism globally (see Chapter 6).

These shifts created two significant problems for union organizations in much of the region. First, the workers in formal enterprises and public sector

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<sup>61</sup> Interview, ILO Official, Pretoria, October 2014.

employees who had formed the base of trade union activity in the region, never more than an influential minority, face a shrinking share of the workforce almost everywhere. Unions find themselves in competition with other forms of community groups for affiliation. As a result, finding ways to incorporate non-standard workers into existing trade union organizations is increasingly seen as necessary to the survival of trade unions. Second, liberalization has often also led to a more competitive union landscape both at the national and regional levels. The fragmentation of trade unions is particularly common in Francophone West Africa (ILO 2010). Meanwhile, at the national level, the greater independence of trade unions from government control has also meant some degree of fragmentation of union movements -- the single, official trade union with links to the ruling party is increasingly difficult to maintain. Unions, then, are facing a strategic context defined by greater competition for members along with a shrinking core of formal sector workers.

The work of ILO's Workers' Activities Section's (ACTRAV) in the region is heavily shaped by this context. Its activities are oriented increasingly around related objectives: the promotion of 'trade union unity' remains important, but organizing informal workers and improving services for members have become increasingly salient. While some activities aimed at expanding trade union organization to 'non-standard' segments of the workforce date at least to efforts to organize rural workers in the 1970s, the relative intensity of contemporary efforts to organize 'informal' workers is considerably greater -- a shift in emphasis that has required the ILO to change (at least to some extent) its understanding of the place of trade unions. The ILO's activities in the region remain deeply committed to tripartite corporatism -- as in the activities in South Africa discussed above. Nonetheless, ACTRAV has encouraged some (albeit limited) innovations. One particularly important development has been a new emphasis on providing services beyond the basic functions of collective bargaining and political representation. This is explicitly seen by ACTRAV as a response to the challenges posed by informalization, casualization, and unemployment for union memberships:

The view is that we want to continue to ensure that unions are more relevant. Because in some countries trade unions are competing with civil society organizations. Other civil society organizations are advertising legal services for unions, and they are actually going into workplaces to handle grievances. So if the unions are not claiming their space and developing the capacity to do those specific things, then they can lose their memberships to some of these organizations.<sup>62</sup>

Providing tangible services is seen as a means of maintaining memberships: 'the issue of relevance of trade unions is becoming more and more topical... Members

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<sup>62</sup> Interview, ILO Official, Pretoria, October 2014.

don't pay and they're asking because they don't benefit from being members of the unions'.<sup>63</sup> The activities in Ghana and Benin aimed at providing training for rural workers or childcare for informal gold miners as means of preventing child labour, discussed in Chapter 3, are notable examples. The delivery of financial services through union organizations fits into this broader context as a means of retaining retrenched workers or organizing informal workers. It is thus useful to briefly examine these activities in greater detail.

#### WORKERS' FINANCE AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY<sup>64</sup>

The ILO's first intervention into this area was called SYNDICOOP, co-run by the Cooperatives section and ACTRAV in East Africa. SYNDICOOP aimed at using cooperative finance as a means of recruiting and organizing informal sector workers in East Africa (see Smith 2013; Smith and Ross 2006). The initiative began in 2002, initially covering Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda. Kenya was added in 2004. The programme is notable here primarily because it helped to put in place a model for the use of savings and credit mechanisms as means of organizing informal workers. A representative of the African regional section of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, speaking at a workshop on SYNDICOOP in 2004, argued that

We should bear in mind that workers -- wherever they are -- have only one home and that is the trade union. We should therefore campaign for workers in the informal economy for them to gain recognition by the authorities. Laws that protect these workers should be put in place. Services like training, credit, amenities, and so on, should be provided. In other words, measures that guarantee the smooth functioning of the informal sector should be put in place. (qtd. ILO 2004: 20).

SYNDICOOP positioned credit and financial services as one tool, among others, in the organization of informal workers: credit for informal workers should be brought under trade union control because all workers have a 'home' in the union. Even prior to the start of IFW some African union organizations were clearly positioning credit for informal workers as a responsibility of trade unions.

SYNDICOOP ended in 2006. The Cooperatives Section of the ILO did, however, set up a 'Cooperative Facility for Africa' (COOPAfrica) which ran until 2012. Several trade unions made funding requests for projects similar to SYNDICOOP through COOPAfrica. COOPAfrica began working with the Social Finance Section to provide training for unionists in these cases, especially in Ethiopia where the project went beyond cooperatives to deal with interactions with the financial sector. Originally, an extension to SYNDICOOP was planned in collaboration with ITUC-Africa and OATUU. This project was stalled by a

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> This section is derived from Bernards (2016).



struggle between the two regional confederations over control of the project. What eventually emerged instead was a training programme operated by ACTRAV and Social Finance called 'inclusive finance for workers' (IFW). There have been three regional workshops for national confederations -- in Lomé in 2011, Kisumu, Kenya in 2012, and Dakar in 2013 -- and the ILO has also provided follow-up assistance to some workshop participants on the basis of requests (including in Senegal, see below).

The entanglements of IFW with conflicts over shifting landscapes of work and union politics in the region are evident from subtle struggles over the contents of assistance provided by the ILO. An important conflict over the contents of the course has revolved around the specific role that unions should play in relation to financial services for their members. The course is intended to cover a range of options through which unions can promote access to financial services for members, running on a continuum from negotiating with private banks on behalf of members, through SACCOs, to opening and operating workers' banks. ILO officials generally try to steer workers towards arm's length administrative structures -- primarily negotiating with existing financial institutions or setting up independently operated SACCOs for union members. These are seen by ILO officials as less difficult, less risky options for unions. Many of the trade union participants in the workshops, however, have been much more keen to set up workers' banks and other independent institutions.

Shortly after the course in Kisumu, COTU affiliates asked for support in setting up a survey of their membership on their use of financial services, in part as a prelude to setting up a bank. The ILO supported the design of the survey, but it remains unclear if it has actually been carried out. The Tanzania Teachers Union also approached the ILO for advice on starting a workers' bank, after already having drawn up a business plan and conducted a feasibility study. The ILO still offered advisory services in this case by recruiting former bankers as consultants through the Belgian Raiffeisen Foundation. At the time of writing the outcomes in either Kenya or Tanzania are unclear, but they do indicate that directly administered structures hold considerable appeal for unions seeking to use financial services as a means of expanding membership or reinforcing union hierarchies. Further, regardless of the contents of the IFW course, some trade unions in the region see the ILO as a potential source of support in setting up alternative financial structures.

#### *CNTS and MECSO*

One instructive example here is CNTS. The Senegalese context is illustrative of the broader trends highlighted above (see ILO 2010: 28-34). As noted in Chapter 6, the organic crisis of the postcolonial political system in Senegal has forced a dramatic reorientation of the model of 'responsible participation'. CNTS can no longer count on its relationship to the *Parti Socialiste*

or its primacy among public employees as a secure organizational basis. At the same time, labour markets are increasingly dominated by precarious or ‘informal’ forms of work.

For CNTS, then, bringing ‘informal’ workers into the confederation is effectively a survival imperative. The *Mutuelle d’Épargne et de Crédit pour la Solidarité Ouvrière* (MECSO) was established at CNTS’ annual general assembly in 2005. MECSO officials identify two objectives underpinning the operations of the mutual. The first, quite simply, is to maintain or expand the membership of the union. Credit is dispersed to small local groups, called *cercles*, organized among people working in particular economic sectors. Organizing *cercles* is a way to keep retrenched workers in certain sectors in the union. This is notably the case in fisheries -- a considerable number of commercial fishing boats in Senegal have ceased operations in recent years. These were heavily unionized operations, and so the loss of fisheries jobs threatens to cut significantly into CNTS’ membership. Providing credit through MECSO for retrenched fishermen to operate their own boats thus provides a means for CNTS to keep them in the federation.

Similarly, the *cercles* can be used to expand the union’s membership in the informal economy. MECSO has organized *cercles* among street vendors, especially women working in informal food processing and small-scale restaurants in Dakar. The reliance on the *cercles* structure has two main uses. First, on a practical level MECSO, in line with longstanding practices among development agencies in the region, considers it less risky to lend to a group than to individuals. Second, the *cercles* are understood as an exercise in solidarity -- a kind of proto-union formation that should start organizing informal workers, and eventually enable members participate more fully in CNTS. The *cercles* structure also thus has interesting, if somewhat ambiguous, implications in terms of the gendered structure of MECSO’s lending. CNTS is historically primarily male, and many of the *cercles* targeted at retrenched workers (e.g. fishermen) are male-dominated. Meanwhile, many of the new sectors targeted by MECSO (e.g. food vendors) are primarily composed of women. MECSO, then, might lead to the incorporation of more women workers into the trade union, depending on the emphasis given to one or the other segment of informal workers. More women members could be a positive result for gender equality in Senegal to the extent that union structures are open and democratic enough for informal sector women to have a genuine voice in the running of the organization. It is also possible, however, that these new members will remain subordinate to the union hierarchy, which is still male dominated although more women have gained higher-ranking positions in recent years (including the head of MECSO).

A second major purpose of MECSO is the formalization of the informal economy. Here CNTS’s objectives are linked to the preservation and expansion of

public social security. The great bulk of Senegalese workers are in the informal sector, which means that their incomes are not tracked or recognized by the state, and they pay no tax or social security contributions. The very limited extent of contributions, and the difficulty in collecting contributions in the informal sector, thus poses significant challenges for social security in Senegal (of which unionized workers remain important beneficiaries). MECSO seeks to use credit as a means of ‘formalizing’ informal businesses. The idea is that if workers take out business loans through *cercles* affiliated to MECSO, their activities (and their revenues) are recorded and identified as a result. The thinking on MECSO’s part is that workers whose revenues are thus identified and formalized will also be able to make contributions to social security programmes. MECSO’s objectives here are somewhat in conflict with the microinsurance schemes discussed in the previous chapter. Rather than developing new forms of social security through private and community-based insurance systems, MECSO (in putting this emphasis on formalization) seeks to expand the scope of the existing public system.

MECSO, then, represents an effort to enrol the ILO’s new emphasis on the role of trade unions in promoting ‘inclusive finance’ into efforts to make CNTS viable in a changing structural and political context. This point might perhaps be made clearer by highlighting what role the ILO has actually played. It is important to note that MECSO was already in place when CNTS started working with IFW. The basic objectives of MECSO, to a certain extent, dictate that the financial viability of their lending products is a secondary concern:

For a financial institution that’s not operating in the framework of workers’ solidarity like MECSO, the problem is how to make money. They don’t worry about the members; it’s about how to make the operation profitable. So for us, as a workers’ organization, we have an obligation to create a system that aims purely to provide assistance.<sup>65</sup>

Whether this ‘assistance’ is as entirely altruistic as this presentation would suggest is less important here than the simple fact that credit dispersed primarily as a mechanism for organizing workers will not always be given to the most commercially viable projects. Financing and sustainability thus remain major problems for MECSO, as the project has no funding aside from contributions from CNTS, and its loans are (almost by default) not often profitable. The ILO does not directly provide funding under IFW, but MECSO has tried to draw on the ILO’s programming to alleviate funding shortfalls in two ways.

First, at an operational level, MECSO leans on the ILO to provide training for new functionaries. MECSO relies on the election of CNTS members to staff positions, so there has been a relatively high rate of staff turnover. The organization has to meet some legal requirements to continue operating legally

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<sup>65</sup> Interview, MECSO official, Dakar, November 2014.

which require technical skills. Maintaining minimum accounting and reporting requirements to keep their license to operate a financial institution in Senegal is particularly difficult. MECSO's staff are volunteers drawn from CNTS' membership, so officials do not often stay in any given position for long. Training is thus a non-trivial expense for the organization that they have managed to offset by participating in the ILO's workshops and by requesting follow-up assistance. Second, MECSO views participation in the ILO's workshops -- including IFW, but especially in events including workers from the global North -- as opportunities to make connections with potential donors. Involvement with the IFW and the ILO more broadly is also a way of legitimizing MECSO for potential donors.

The sustainability of MECSO over the longer-run depends quite heavily on the ability to leverage these 'external' links. Resources connected to the ILO in general and the IFW programme in particular -- as a kind of transnational, networked topography of power -- are potentially important terrains on which the of building those links can take place. Here we have a project aimed at organizing localized economic sectors under the rubric of a 'national' organization, but drawing on the resources and spaces made available by participating in the initiatives of a 'global' institution organized through a 'regional' union confederation. MECSO's efforts to organize and mobilize informal economy workers, rather like those of the Senegalese state, take place on a fluid and multi-scalar topography of power.

A more general point about IFW is worth emphasizing. As with many of the earlier workers' education activities highlighted above, IFW can usefully be read as a kind of governmentality. IFW seeks to deploy a set of pedagogical practices in efforts at shaping trade unions according to a particular model. The ways in which different unions have chosen to participate in the project, especially the ways in which they have sought to leverage or redeploy the assistance provided by the ILO, however, need to be read in terms of the shifting political economies of labour in sub-Saharan Africa. IFW, in short, is best read as a set of spaces and resources through which struggles over the articulation of solidarities, the transformation of trade union organizations, and the re-shaping of state authority are being carried out.

## CONCLUSION

In short, the history of ILO assistance to workers' organizations in sub-Saharan Africa shows a marked divergence between the depoliticizing character of the practices and resources circulated by the ILO and the continual entanglement of these interventions with various struggles across national and regional levels of activity. The ILO's activity in this respect is usefully understood as a kind of governmentality -- a set of technologies and practices aimed at producing particular kinds of subjectivity. Rarely, however, have these

technologies worked as expected in practice. The ILO's initial efforts at setting up a workers education programme in postcolonial Africa were hampered by the fragmentation of national workers' movements, overlaid with regional struggles between the AATUF, ATUC, and conservative trade unions. The formation of OATUU, as well as the growing control exercised over trade unions by governments in the 1970s, mitigated these problems to a certain extent. However, the ILO's efforts to organize workers' education programmes through OATUU were frequently hindered by the organization's relatively superficial character, as well as its ideological divergence from the ILO's preferred model of 'free' trade unionism. These conflicts were particularly acute in efforts to organize aid for workers' organizations in apartheid countries. In South Africa in particular, OATUU-linked projects for the trade unions in exile sat awkwardly with efforts to extend aid to the independent unions emerging in South Africa in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The end of apartheid and collapse of the postcolonial state in the 1980s and 1990s provoked significant shifts in patterns of work and production, as well as in trade union politics, across the region. The ILO continues to try to advance a particular vision of consensus-based tripartism, although this vision is increasingly under strain even in South Africa. The ILO's assistance to trade unions has shifted much more towards efforts at mitigating the fragmentation of trade unions and organizing previously marginal forms of labour. Here again, though, the priorities of the ILO and those of trade unions are not always a clear fit, and subtle forms of struggle and contestation frequently emerge in the practice of governance. The tensions highlighted in the IFW example, particularly the efforts of trade unions in Kenya, Tanzania, and Senegal to enrol IFW in efforts to establish autonomous financial institutions, are illustrative here.

## CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I want to draw out the key theoretical arguments presented above and reflect on their implications. I started out by contrasting the present approach to studying global governance, focused on actors and entanglements, with the concerns about ‘who governs?’ prevalent in most studies of global governance and with the questions about hegemony that have often dominated critical IPE. The next section traces out some of the particular insights gained by studying the ILO through the lens of actors and entanglements. This concluding chapter considers some of the broader implications of this argument and directions for future research. The next two sections underline these points by considering what this approach might contribute to a pair of current debates that have been raised only peripherally in the main text: the relationship between labour and development, and the relationship between labour and finance. The next section reflects on the applicability of the present approach beyond the specific empirical domain(s) covered in this dissertation. Finally, I conclude with a brief reflection on what it might mean for conceptions of structural change in IPE if we accept that the world is multiple, ambiguous, and riddled with agencies expressed through subtle rather than overt conflicts.

### ACTORS, ENTANGLEMENTS, AND IPE

There is a good deal of recent literature in IR and IPE that has grappled with linked problems of everyday agency and multiplicity. Hobson and Seabrooke’s (2007) ‘EIPE’ is perhaps the most obvious example of the former. We might also think about the spread of Actor-Network Theory and governmentality approaches (see Walters 2010; Best and Walters 2013) or, more broadly, the so-called ‘practice turn’ in IR theory (Adler and Pouliot 2011; Bueger and Gadinger 2015) as, at least in part, efforts to capture greater multiplicity and complexity in studies of global politics. This sense of struggling to cope with heterogeneity and ambiguity is also at the root of much current dissatisfaction with critical IPE -- some authors have noted that ‘critical’ IPE has become increasingly static and in need of rethinking (e.g. Belfrage and Worth 2012), while others have made critiques of Eurocentrism in critical theory (Hobson 2012; Muppidi 2004). In different ways, the present effort to rethink the place of governance responds to all of these calls. An ‘actors and entanglements’ approach, at its core, is a way of retaining the crucial historicist intuition in Cox’s IPE while enabling a greater consideration of multiplicity, ambiguity, and agency.

Three more specific points about the present approach are also worth highlighting. First, the shift in assumptions about scale and ‘globality’ offers the possibility for exploring some important kinds of entanglements that IPE studies of governance have tended to ignore. The Latourian opening highlighted in Chapter 1 -- thinking in terms of ‘nodes’ and ‘connections’ rather than ‘surfaces’ and ‘spheres’ -- is especially useful in this respect. The examples discussed in the

preceding chapters highlight the historicity -- and thus the fluidity and interpenetrability -- of scalar categories like the 'global' or 'national'. The dynamics I have highlighted in the work of the ILO demonstrate the fluid and shifting boundaries between 'local' and 'global' scales. This is visible in the workers' organizations and anti-colonial movements -- as in the loose configuration of communists and nationalists in the ITUC-NW, themselves arranged on a transnational scale -- who sought to use the ILO's emerging forced labour machinery to challenge colonial authority. Or, indeed, as with the PAC's appeal to the ILO as early as 1921 to establish some form of international oversight of colonial labour policies with an eye to eventual independence. Similarly, the (semi-successful) efforts by unions like the CGKT and SUDES to enrol the 'global' ILO into 'local' conflicts over recruitment and disciplinary practices, and the efforts of anti-slavery activists in Niger and Mauritania to use the ILO to work around recalcitrant states demonstrate the access that relatively weak actors have often had to 'global' sites of governance. The ILO was certainly much more receptive to the claims of Timidria or SOS Esclaves in the early 2000s than it was to the ITUC-NW in the 1930s, but the fact remains that both found important avenues for action through the ILO in spite of their exclusion from formal decision-making processes. The ability of the ATUC-SR and other workers' organizations in Southern Rhodesia to use the ILO to circumvent colonial hierarchies by going to the ILO -- bringing complaints to the attention of the Colonial Office in London through contacts with the ILO that would have been blocked by the government in Southern Rhodesia -- is also a relevant example. CNTS' drawing on 'international' resources to alleviate the material constraints facing its efforts to organize 'informal' workers through MECSO is also notable. Of course, weaker actors have not always used these connections in relatively progressive ways -- the ability of OATUU to maintain itself in the absence of autonomous fundraising capacity or mass support by leveraging its links to the OAU and ILO is perhaps the most salient example in this respect. In any event, the point is that scales of action are produced in the course of entanglements between different actors, and that even subordinate actors are capable of creatively re-assembling scales of action in the process of engagements with 'global' forms of governance.

In the same vein, we might also cite the efforts of states to use the ILO's conventions or 'development' missions to reinforce particular shifts in 'national' labour politics -- as in Ghana's complaint about forced labour in Portugal or the Kenyan, Zambian, and Ethiopian WEP missions, or more recently in the complex networks of IOs, private organizations, and regional regulators emerging around microinsurance in West Africa (as I traced out in Chapter 6). The routinized bureaucratic practices through which, Ferguson and Gupta (2002) usefully suggest, the spatial imaginaries associated with 'modern' statehood are performed, themselves have complex 'global' or 'international' dimensions. The shift in spatialities argued for here helps us to understand the ways in which

everyday practices of state-making and legitimation draw on international resources. 'National' terrains for action are *made*, through contested and at times tenuous practices that (somewhat paradoxically) rely on establishing and deploying connections with 'global' or 'international' spaces. The actors and entanglements approach, in short, is particularly useful in helping studies of governance in IPE to get away from the notion of the 'global' as an elite-dominated sphere or a 'container' for national spaces.

This point is perhaps especially salient because the spatial aspects of ANT have generally been given surprisingly short shrift in IR applications. This in spite of Latour's own assertion that the notion that 'scale is the actor's own achievement' represents 'the oldest and... the most decisive proposition made by ANT' (2005: 185), and the centrality of spatial categories to the very definition of IPE and IR as fields of study. Future studies of global governance, in short, would do well to explore the scalar heterogeneity of 'global' spaces in more detail. Methodologically, like the other moves proposed as part of an 'actors and entanglements' approach, this implies getting away from studying 'elite' sites of governance towards the dispersed sites at which 'global' institutions are enacted in 'local' or 'national' spaces.

Second, and relatedly, for studies of global governance, and for IPE more generally, the actors and entanglements approach offers a greater and more nuanced engagement with problems of agency and political action. Thinking about the spatially and temporally dispersed encounters between historically situated social forces and technologies of government (rather than the rules promulgated by authoritative actors) allows us to see ways in which actors not normally thought of as powerful in international politics can have a significant impact on the *practice* of governance. This is especially true of actors who rarely, if ever, substantively influence the formulation of the rules. We can see this in the disruptions or tensions in ILO standards enforcement or development programming created by conflicts between trade unions and governments or between rival trade union centres in the 1960s, especially in the discussion of the pilot programme for Workers' Education in Chapter 7. Very few of the complaints, representations, and informal appeals about 'forced labour' highlighted in Chapters 2-3 involved anything that the ILO would unambiguously have considered 'forced labour' as defined in C29 and C105. Other social movements, especially anti-colonial (Chapters 2 and 4) and anti-slavery (Chapter 3) movements also found avenues for action in engagements with the ILO that the organization did not always intend. The subtle tensions around issues of ownership, risk, and control in the ILO's efforts to promote financial inclusion for workers discussed in Chapter 7 are also relevant on this point. At some point, although the Social Finance section of the ILO would prefer that workers' organizations negotiate with existing banks, in order to keep operating they have to be able to provide some kinds of assistance to trade unions looking to set up



banks, credit unions, and so forth. Postcolonial states too deployed resources and practices produced by the ILO in dramatically different ways. We can see efforts by states to solidify their own (often tenuous and contested) authority through particular kinds of participation in ILO programming. Nkrumah's performance of pan-African solidarity in response to growing labour unrest in Ghana was enabled in part by the Ghanaian government's complaints about forced labour in Portuguese Africa (Chapter 3). Kenyan, Zambian, and Ethiopian authorities implemented few of the policies recommended by WEP/JASPA missions. They still drew on the *reports* produced by WEP missions as means of legitimizing themselves as protectors of the 'have nots' (Kenya), or even influenced the contents of the reports themselves in ways that shifted blame for previous development failures onto 'external' factors (Zambia), or that edited out policy reforms the government was unwilling to undertake (Ethiopia). Through these actions, the ILO contributed to the maintenance and the legitimation of regimes that diverged widely from the ILO's vision of tripartite institutions with robust labour rights. Similarly, recent Senegalese efforts to articulate informal workers into malleable community groups through microinsurance policies show a similar kind of 'room to move' for states among the multiple and ambiguous policy recommendations coming from the ILO, World Bank, and others on microinsurance. The possibility is present, at the very least, that these new policies might well end up undercutting the autonomy of 'community' organizations in ways that run very much counter to the ILO's intentions in encouraging the spread of microinsurance. In all of these cases, the ILO has been enrolled into these struggles by various actors in ways that diverge from the organization's original intentions.

Third, we might push the point about the agency of subordinate actors a step further. Another important aspect of the actors and entanglements approach, as the preceding chapters have also often shown -- is the presumption that actors do not exist *a priori* in global politics. If we focus on the *entanglements* between various collective agents and the practice of global governance, it is difficult to avoid the assumption that those collective actors are being continually made and remade in ways that are inevitably impacted by the encounter. An actors and entanglements approach provides a way of doing a kind of 'critical and effective' history (Dean 1994) of global governance -- that is, a history which engages with and examines the production of particular forms of subjectivity. Or, to put the argument in Gramscian terms, the relation of changes in governance to changes in the relations of political force (or consciousness) ought always to be kept in mind. This Gramscian perspective is perhaps especially useful: it should not escape notice that in most of the instances highlighted here, practices of government have failed to entirely remake particular subjectivities. 'Global' governmentalities, in the shape of the ILO's programmes, have often foundered on the ability of ostensibly 'local' actors to shape their own identities and actions in unexpected ways. This point is perhaps most clearly illustrated in failed efforts to develop a

'stabilized' working class in late-colonial Africa (Chapter 4) or in the struggles between the ILO and OATUU's very different conceptions of the appropriate role for trade unions in 'national' development that played out through the ILO's workers' education activities (Chapter 7). The broader point here is that subject formation -- the articulation of particular group identities and forms of collective agency -- is a crucial site of investigation for IPE (and one that is often taken for granted), but does not take place through the application of governmental technologies to inert bodies. Indeed, as is highlighted particularly clearly by the shift towards ongoing, micro-level engagements with 'community' organizations, rather than directly with states highlighted in Chapter 6, the ILO has often had to adapt its technologies of governance to the changing historical backdrop against which it deploys them. Subject formation, in short, is entangled in uncertain ways with the practice of governance on one hand and the broader 'relations of force', including the initiatives of subaltern actors themselves, on the other. Simply put, an actors and entanglements approach has the benefit of taking seriously Gramsci's reminder, not only that the constitution of states and subaltern forces is contested and indeterminate, but also that it always takes place against the backdrop of already-extant historical processes.

To come back, then, to the main argument in this section, there is a good deal of value in what Cox (1996a) calls a 'historical mode of thought' in IPE. However, the notion of 'history' to which most critical IPE is attached needs to be re-thought. Monological, globalizing histories are given to both Eurocentrism and to the occlusion of subaltern agency -- points that have been highlighted quite well in different ways by some postcolonial (Chakrabarty 2000) and post-Marxist/feminist (Gibson-Graham 2006) authors. These points are underlined as much by the fragmentary, multiple character of the overall narrative laid out in the preceding chapters as by any particular example. Many of the ILO's broad shifts in direction might be explained in part by shifts in the political economies of the core -- the shift to the WEP in response to the challenges faced by tripartite corporatism or to 'decent work' in the face of structural adjustment spring to mind. Indeed, the organization's very origins in the build-up to Versailles are firmly rooted in transformations in production and inter-state order in late-nineteenth century Europe -- the rise of the organized working class and the reformist left in Europe, the crisis of WWI, and the Russian Revolution. Nonetheless, the practice of ILO governance has always been carried out through various modes of entanglement with different social forces and different historical struggles -- and, as virtually all of the examples discussed in the preceding chapters have shown, the consequences of these struggles are rarely entirely evident from the broad thrust of the ILO's intentions.

## LABOUR AND DEVELOPMENT

An actors and entanglements approach can also cast some more specific debates about the ILO and in IPE in a different light. Particularly salient here are

renewed debates about labour and development, and linked discussions of the ILO's concept of 'Decent Work'. Labour and work largely fell off the map of global development in the 1980s and 1990s. Wuyts (2002) noted at the start of the last decade that the growing informalization of labour in the global south under structural adjustment had led to a shift in emphasis from 'employment' to 'poverty' in mainstream development discourse. This coincided with a broader crisis of industrial unionism and tripartite corporatism, dating at least to the 1970s, which increasingly called the place of the ILO in the global political economy into question (Cox 1977).

More recently, labour and employment have staged a comeback of sorts in global policy circles. ILO's Decent Work Agenda, announced in 1999, kicked things off by reasserting an emphasis on development issues in the organization's work. A target calling for 'full employment and decent work for all' (MDG 1B) was added to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2008, as an addendum to the goal of halving extreme poverty. Global labour organizations have also pressed for the inclusion of 'Decent Work' as a component of the post-2015 global development agenda; a target related to full employment and decent work will be included in the 'Sustainable Development Goals' framework. In short, we have witnessed a strong revival of labour concerns -- and of the role of the ILO -- in global debates about development in roughly the last fifteen years.

It is nonetheless rather hard to escape the conclusion that these initiatives have not added up to much benefit for workers in practice. There has also been a renewed attention in critical IPE debates to the importance of labour and workers' agency in the making of the transnational structures of relations of production in which contemporary development processes are deeply enmeshed (Selwyn 2014; Taylor 2007). On a narrower level, a number of important criticisms of the idea of 'decent work' have also emerged. Many of these have centered on the ambiguity of the concept. As Standing has noted, 'From the outset, the trouble with the term was its inherent vagueness' (2008: 370). Another important concern with 'decent work' is with the mechanisms by which the ILO expects improvements in work to take place. Ben Selwyn (2013) argues that the concept of 'decent work' reduces the realization of labour rights to a question of better policy-making by governments and TNCs -- obscuring both the relations of power that enable the exploitation of labour and the centrality of labour struggles in realizing improvements in labour rights (*cf.* Lerche 2012). This critique, interestingly, echoes complaints by contemporary critics of the WEP (e.g. Leys 1973; Sandbrook 1983) about the political naïveté of the ILO's prescriptions. Somewhat similarly, Robert Cox's (1977) seminal critique of the organization -- arguing that it contributed to the reproduction of a particular form of hegemony centered on American-led tripartism and anti-communism -- suggests similar limitations on the ability of the ILO to actually act in the interests of marginal workers over a much longer history.

Yet simply to suggest that the concept of 'Decent Work' is ineffective in improving workers' rights because it is ambiguous or depoliticizing leaves us with little to say about the concept's considerable appeal to workers and governments in practice. 'Decent Work' has played a considerable role in re-establishing the position of the ILO in world affairs. Authors emphasizing the ILO's contribution through the concept of 'decent work' to the promotion of wellbeing in global development frameworks, especially in contrast to the Bretton Woods institutions (Hughes and Haworth 2011; Sachs 2004), at least implicitly deliver positive evaluations of 'Decent Work'.

An actors and entanglements approach, and most of the evidence considered above, suggest that no evaluation of 'Decent Work' in the abstract is likely to be helpful. Leah Vosko (2002) has usefully argued that while Decent Work is a problematic concept, it might nonetheless create possibilities for workers to mobilize in pursuit of their own objectives by providing a language in which to make claims and a set of material resources. 'Decent Work' is, no doubt, a vague concept at best, and can certainly be put in the service of 'top down', depoliticizing agendas. But in spite of its 'top-down' formulation, it can provide means through which some workers can present claims. Demanding 'decent work', in short, can be a way of calling attention to the growing prevalence of less-than-decent forms of work in the contemporary conjuncture. An actors and entanglements approach might help in extending Vosko's argument beyond the specific debates about 'Decent Work'. Other similarly problematic concepts like the 'informal sector' or 'financial inclusion', as parts of Chapters 5-7 demonstrated, have been used in the same way. Relatedly, the key problems identified with 'Decent Work' -- especially the mismatch between the ILO's sanitized vision of consensual, tripartite labour relations and the realities of labour politics in the developing world, and the ILO's frequent recourse to ambiguous policy formulations -- are present throughout many of the trajectories considered below. The difficulties in getting African unions to fit the tripartite mould through the ILO's workers' education programmes, as discussed in Chapter 7, are equally significant here. All of this suggests the need for a historicized and contextualized approach to examining 'global' policy frameworks, like the DWA.

Put succinctly, the ILO is continually subject to multiple simultaneous configurations of relations of force. The frequent ambiguity of the ILO's standards or policy formulations is arguably a central reason why, in face of this, the organization has persisted as long as it has. This means, however, that it is hard to say with any generality whether or not the organization, or any particular one of its policies, is 'good' for workers. The ILO clearly contributed to the end of colonialism and apartheid -- albeit in no small part because colonized workers were able to use the ILO's practices and resources in ways the organization did not necessarily intend. The ILO has also at times contributed to the

marginalization of workers' political voice and even to the legitimation of some truly horrible political systems -- WEP's engagements with Mengitsu's Ethiopia (Chapter 5) seem particularly salient in this respect. The ILO, in short, *can* be good for workers if workers redeploy ILO technologies of government in particular ways. It can also be just the opposite if other actors redeploy them differently. This suggests, in short, that there is scope for research into the ILO, and more broadly the relationship between labour and development, concerned with fleshing out the strategic possibilities and limitations of engagements with any given package of practices, resources, and spaces. This approach could also contribute to overcoming some of the limits of existing critical discussions of labour and development. Selwyn (2014) and others argue convincingly for the importance of labour agency, but do not really provide much in the way of guidance for analyses concerned to elucidate the possibilities and limitations of political action in the context of global development governance.

#### WORKER AGENCY -- THE CASE OF FINANCE

Beyond the primary areas of concern to this dissertation, moreover, we might also note that an actors and entanglements approach can reveal subtle patterns of contestation underlying broader patterns of structural transformation. One particularly salient example, discussed in a preliminary fashion in the preceding chapters, might be the relation of labour to finance (*cf.* Bernards 2016). The growing power of finance in the global political economy, many authors have suggested, is correlated with a decline in power of organized labour (see e.g. Epstein and Jayadev 2005; Peters 2011; Bengtussen and Ryner 2015). Equally, the project of 'financial inclusion' -- in which, as the discussions of microinsurance and 'inclusive finance for workers' in Chapters 6 and 7 show, the ILO is involved -- has been linked to broad processes of dispossession and depoliticization of peripheral workers on a global scale. Susanne Soederberg's (2014) concept of 'debtfare' captures these dynamics well. She argues that national and transnational strategies aimed at promoting credit for low-income groups (temporarily) smooth the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism by using the extension of credit to compensate for growing unemployment and shrinking social protection, while also creating new spaces for accumulation with new crisis tendencies.

These arguments share with the Coxian historical materialism examined in Chapter 1 an understanding of 'global' history as a singular process centered on a handful of elite actors and institutions -- what Gill and Law (1989) call the 'structural power of finance' is reinforced by the growth of transnational finance, at the expense of labour and social protection. The ILO's (admittedly somewhat peripheral) involvement in the project of financial inclusion, however, suggests that the politics of these processes are more contested and complex than we might assume. Senegalese labour markets have undeniably become more precarious and informalized in the last 20 or 30 years, but CNTS has actually sought to combat

this trend by participating in the project of 'financial inclusion'. The application of microinsurance policies in Senegal, similarly, could be read superficially as a kind of financialization of social policy for the poorest. However, to read the situation in this way would obscure the extent to which the government seeks to pursue properly *political* objectives -- the articulation of 'community' groups into clearly identifiable, 'legible', regulated forms -- through its participation in the project. Indeed, this point is only underlined by the fact that global and regional private insurers have been hesitant at best to involve themselves in microinsurance. 'Finance' as such, is perhaps best understood not as an *a priori* social force, but rather as a set of practices entangled in the very constitution of the relations of political force across scales.

This argument does not, of course, obviate the general globalization of finance or the rise of 'debtfarism'. The examples introduced in Chapters 6 and 7 are, however, easier to understand -- in all their messiness, ambiguity, and (subtle) contestation -- if we understand 'financial inclusion', and indeed financial governance more broadly, through an actors and entanglements approach. 'Financial inclusion' and 'microinsurance' are usefully seen as relatively flexible assemblages of discursive, technical, and material objects. Target actors, like Senegalese workers of various kinds, are not simply subject to the dictates of 'global' capital, but are active agents able to deploy these objects in creative ways in ongoing processes of group formation. The point is that an actors and entanglements approach helps us to see how workers' agency might be constituted and exercised, even in the absence of 'grand rejection' or structural transformation, in areas and using repertoires and objects that might not be expected. Given the relationship that is often assumed between the rise of finance and the marginalization of labour, this point seems particularly salient. On a more practical level, the examples of more complex relationships between workers and financial practices also suggest that the complex relationship between workers and finance needs to be investigated in ways that go beyond the evaluation of aggregate shifts in income between clearly delineated groups.

#### BEYOND THE ILO

It is, of course, possible that an argument that is true of the ILO may not be true of other IOs. Given that all of the empirical support for the present argument about actors and entanglements has come from the study of one (admittedly somewhat anomalous) IO, it is worth briefly considering the wider applicability of the approach. One particularly useful way of doing this might be to speculate about how an actors and entanglements approach might cast an interesting light on some recent research about the Bretton Woods Institutions. If the ILO has been aptly described as a 'backwater' (Cox 1977) of the international system, the Bretton Woods institutions are doubtless more 'important' centres of power, not least because they have access to material resources and coercive powers well beyond what is available to the ILO -- expressed most obviously in

the form of conditional loans. Thus, it stands to reason that if some parallels to the activities of the IMF or World Bank can be identified, this would suggest that an actors and entanglements approach is usefully applicable well beyond studies of the ILO.

It might be helpful, then, to recall that I noted some parallels at the start of Chapter 6 between recent changes in World Bank and IMF activity and the shifts in the ILO's practices of governance. Harrison (2004) and Best (2013), among others, have traced out the growing reliance of the World Bank on local 'ownership' of its policies as structural adjustment loans have become increasingly politically unpopular in developing countries. Further, as Ngaire Woods (2006) has shown in some detail, even the coercive process of structural adjustment depended on the ability of the World Bank and IMF to find 'sympathetic interlocutors' within governments targeted by conditional loans. Indeed, some studies of the roles of the ILO and World Bank in social policy, especially pensions, show that African governments have been able to play off ILO recommendations against those of the World Bank as means of creating greater policy space for themselves (see Kpessa and Beland 2012). This finding, incidentally, is also broadly supported by the discussion of Senegalese microinsurance policy in Chapter 6.

In short, there are good examples of the kinds of complex entanglements highlighted in the previous chapters in the work of other international organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions. These latter, by virtue of their far greater financial resources and coercive capabilities, are probably as close to a 'hard case' for the present approach as might be found. It is one thing, however, to suggest that it might be *plausible* to extend an actors and entanglements approach beyond the ILO, and another to show how it might be *useful*. Two points are particularly worth emphasizing.

First, there is a tendency in most of the above-mentioned studies to suggest that these dynamics of entanglement are a recent phenomenon. Global governmentalities work often relates these entanglements to ambiguously defined epochal shifts in the global political economy (neoliberalism, globalization). Somewhat similarly, the World Bank and IMF's less coercive entanglements are largely seen as results of the recognition of the failures of structural adjustment. The actors and entanglements approach developed here suggests, however, that it might be fruitful to look for similar entanglements in a longer historical perspective. Certainly there is empirical support for this position to be found in the work of the ILO. More explicitly historical research into other IOs might be useful.

Second, and relatedly, the present approach highlights the ways in which these entanglements are a recurrent feature of the practice of governance. It gives

a more central place in a general theory of governance to messy entanglements with 'local' actors. Relatedly, this is accomplished by moving away from the emphasis on sources or types of 'authority' that continues to feature prominently in most of these studies. Rather than an anomaly to be explained by shifting conditions, then, the present approach would suggest that these entanglements are a systematic feature of global governance needing to be given a more prominent theoretical place.

#### RESISTANCE IN AN AMBIGUOUS WORLD

If we accept the utility of this approach, a broader question is what the ambiguity and multiplicity of global governance mean for the possibilities of 'resistance' and systemic transformation. The ultimate focus of Cox's critical IPE was, of course, on the attempt to highlight possible trajectories for structural change. Certainly many of the examples discussed above have highlighted the agency of 'subordinate' actors, but the ways in which they have acted have often ultimately contributed to the maintenance of existing world order rather than its transformation. I started out by arguing that 'critical' approaches to global governance suffer for only being able to recognize agency when it expresses itself as grand rejection or systemic transformation. It might be a fair retort to suggest that in highlighting the myriad other forms of agency and struggle in which the ILO is embedded I risk losing sight of the root causes of systemic transformation of the global capitalist system. Certainly the engagements of African trade unions and governments with the ILO do not obviate the 'structural power of capital' (Gill and Law 1989) or other enduring relations of power in the global political economy.

However, the emphasis placed here on ambiguity and multifunctionality does potentially leave us with a more nuanced picture of the possibilities of political action in 'global' politics. There is a parallel that might be drawn to James C. Scott's comment on theories of peasant rebellion that assumed long periods of torpor interrupted by violent episodes of revolt: 'the explosions themselves a frequently a sign that the normal and largely covert forms of class struggle are failing or have reached a crisis point' (1985: 37). In short, episodes of 'grand rejection' are made out of the kinds of fragmentary and tenuous forms of engagement I have highlighted, rather than from structural contradictions. If this is true of peasant communities, it is probably doubly so of the slow work of building 'global' solidarities.

The place of the ILO in the history of decolonization might be the best example of this kind of change at work. Decolonization was, at the very least an opening for fundamental re-ordering of both global and colonial political economies -- if ultimately it ended in the re-inscription of certain aspects of colonial governance and economies (see Mamdani 1996), this outcome nonetheless could be achieved only after quite protracted struggle (see Cooper



1996; 2014). Indeed the unsettled debates about the relation of the state to labour in the 1960s (discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 7) certainly point to the fact that it took a good deal of work to install what is often called the 'postcolonial' state (Young 2004). So decolonization was at the very least an opening to fundamental structural change, and certainly by some measures the process of decolonization led to fundamental transformations in the international system itself. The architecture of international governance was undoubtedly transformed in some ways by the pressures created by the emergence of dozens of new states, not least through the emergence of 'development' governance -- even if neo-colonial modes of exchange and production often prevailed in former colonies (see Murphy and Augelli 1993).

Decolonization came about less through a sudden collapse of colonial authority and more through a continual chipping away at the imaginary of colonial difference underpinning colonial rule by anti-colonial forces both within and beyond Africa. As I have shown in parts of Chapters 2 and 4, resources produced by the ILO in an effort to govern colonial labour relations played a part in facilitating these struggles. This is certainly not to argue that the ILO was the critical site at which the end of colonialism was negotiated, far from it. But the point is precisely that it is through myriad, often uncoordinated, subtle conflicts and redeployments of resources across scales of governance that colonial power was undercut. The ILO was one site among many where such struggles were carried out -- and, arguably, it is only through the weight of such dispersed struggles that structural change was possible. The point is that the agency of subaltern actors certainly did contribute immensely to opening up the process of decolonization, but this did not manifest itself as a sudden, coordinated mobilization of 'grand rejection'.

I have, in short, highlighted the entanglement of the ILO and the system of global governance more broadly with processes that Gramsci might describe as 'molecular' -- slow moving, incremental, and reversible shifts in the relations of force. If 'global' politics are ambivalent and open-ended, then for actors seeking systemic transformation a strategy of cautious engagement and experimentation is perhaps most useful. An actors and entanglements approach, then, offers us a more fruitful strategic starting point for thinking about how relations of domination might be overcome.

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