LABOUR/DATA JUSTICE PROJECT NOTE

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The Labour/Data Justice Project

Labour/Data Justice responds to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. SDG8 is vital to equitable development and cross-cuts many other SDGs, including the elimination of poverty (SDG1), good health and well-being (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), reduced inequalities (SDG10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG16).

To achieve these objectives, effective labour regulation is crucial. Strong labour laws are a vital component of development policies, capable of supporting inclusive growth, sustainable prosperity, and the wellbeing of workers and their families. Innovative laws are needed that can effectively achieve decent work – especially in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs).

Digital transformation is a crucial challenge for working life across the globe, as highlighted in the recent report of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work (2019).[1] The 'digitisation' of work poses many questions as to the regulatory strategies that can be used to achieve decent work. To this end, the Labour/Data Justice project will investigate novel law-centred initiatives to secure decent work with a focus on the challenges that digitisation poses for labour/data justice, legal regulation, and SDG8.

In response to this demand, the Project supports a set of linked research and policy activities towards understanding and improving labour market regulation within the context of digital transformation of working life.

Decent Work Regulation
Durham University

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E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

GCRF Global Challenges Research Fund

[1] Global Commission on the Future of Work, Work for a Brighter Future (ILO 2019). Available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_662410/lang--en/index.htm>.

Labour/Data Justice for Domestic Workers in Mexico (2019-2021)

Digital transformation has a significant impact in Latin America, a region that has high levels of informality – 140 million workers or 53 per cent of the working population, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).[2] Yet those figures are considerably higher in some sectors of the economy, with almost 80 per cent of the 18 million domestic workers in the region affected by labour informality.[3]

In Mexico, informality in domestic work is significantly above the regional average. As many as 96 per cent of the 2.3 million domestic workers in the country are not under a formal contract of employment.[4] High inequality rates and intergenerational poverty, and that 92 per cent of workers are female,[5] makes regulating the sector a crucial route to social justice and gender equality.

Although Mexican law has traditionally excluded domestic workers, the first domestic workers' union – SINACTRAHO – was recognised in 2015. On 12 December 2019, the government ratified the International Labour Organization's Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189). In addition, the Congress has approved a new federal labour law to equalise domestic workers' rights.

Within this promising, yet volatile, moment, domestic work is undergoing a rapid process of digitisation in Mexico. The last years have seen the emergence of new digital platforms, accompanied by transformed employment practices. Digital transformation in the sector poses urgent challenges for labour regulation, including wage-loss, work-intensification, hours-insecurity, surveillance/harassment, and breaches of worker-privacy.

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Research Questions

This project investigates novel, globally-significant, and law-centred initiatives to secure labour/date justice for domestic workers in Mexico.

Questions that the project will explore include:

- How is digitalisation transforming the working conditions of domestic workers in Mexico?
- What inequalities and injustices is the digital world reinforcing, challenging or multiplying?
- Do domestic workers need novel labour standards, enforcement mechanisms/ institutions, forms of collective organisation, or law-centred strategies by workers and their representatives? How relevant are conventional legal mechanisms to labour/data justice in the digital economy?
- What can countries of the Global South learn from each other on the regulatory implications of digitisation of work?
- Can digitisation of daily life be used in innovative ways to advocate for, access and implement labour/data standards?

[2] *Políticas de Formalización en América Latina: Avances y Desafíos* (ILO 2018). Available at <https://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/WCMS_645159/lang--es/index.htm>.
[3] Larraitz Lexartza, María José Chaves and Ana Carcedo, *Políticas de formalización del trabajo doméstico remunerado en América Latina y el Caribe* (ILO 2016). Available at <https://www.ilo.org/americas/temas/econom%C3%ADa-informal/WCMS_480352/lang--es/index.htm>.
[4] Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación [Conapred], 'El trabajo doméstico. Análisis y estudios cuantitativos sobre las condiciones laborales de las trabajadoras domésticas' (2015); Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], *Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo* (2018). First quarter of 2018.
[5] Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (2018). First quarter of 2018.

Decent Work Regulation Project

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