

Brazil: Country literature review (second draft):

Unprotected workers, small units and homework in Brazil. The case of the textile and clothing industries

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Introduction

This text presents a general overview of the literature from economics and sociology that examines homework in the textile and clothing industries in Brazil, as well as a relatively small set of analysis or descriptions of efforts to organize those workers to attain access to labor rights and social protection schemes.

To analyze the set of workers who have no labor rights, or are unprotected by social security institutions, the analytical framework has been that of informality. In the case of Brazil, the definition of informality includes all wage and salary workers that don't have a *carteira de trabalho* (labor card), a document that gives them access to a national pension fund and paid leave in case of illness, as well to the standard set of labor rights included in the CTL code (Consolidation of Labor Laws). Only private employees are entitled to get a labor card, but social researchers have extended the notion of informality to include all self-employed or family workers (Cacciamalli, 2002). In stark contrast to many other countries, Brazilians have free medical care in public hospitals, a right consecrated in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution.

It is very interesting to observe the fact that most analysis of the informal sector done by economists refers to workers inside registered firms that have no labor card (see, for example, Ulyseia, 2006), while most of the work done by sociologists refers to people who are self employed, are family workers or work in very small economic units (Veras et al, 2011). The different approaches imply substantial differences aside from the obvious methodological ones. On the one hand, the economic analysis of unprotected work inside firms, has been done mainly by neoclassical economists, that tend to stress the choices of workers, depending, mainly on their education, on the size of tax burdens, or on bureaucracy. When analyses are done by heterodox economists, they emphasize the lack of alternatives or the lack of law enforcement, or historical conditions of poverty traps.

On the other hand, most of the analyses done by sociologists are case studies, with methods that range from ethnography to small sample surveys. In these studies a richer context is the beginning point for research. But both approaches share a legal type of definition for informality.

After discussing some specific issues relative to the uses of the notion of informality in the Brazilian literature, we will present some data on the relevance of the textile and apparel sector in terms of employment. Next we will present some results on the relative importance of household labor and its evolution, as well on the share of the apparel sector at households. In the final section we will discuss some examples of worker's organization to become protected by labor law or to achieve some sort of social protection.

Evolution of informality as a concept

The term informality has been used as taxonomy for a set of socio-economic problems, in particular, those due to the severe impoverishment linked to a limited access to resources, skills or markets. Informality has been seen as an alternative form of survival for those in the outskirts of capitalism and has its counterpart in the formal sector in a dualistic (modern-traditional) conception. What has been present in the Brazilian discussion (see for example, Machado) is the fact that unprotected work has many forms of manifestation. So aside from the legal definition, it is extremely arduous to find a general pattern that describes this type of work, while still taking care of the different ways in which the lack of protection exist. The first thing to notice is that it may describe an individual or an enterprise, so the mere subject of the term is not completely well defined.

As it is well known, the first use of the term *informal* was in an ILO report on Kenya, in order to describe a traditional sector, with low capital/labor ratios, non-competitive markets and unqualified labor-force with no wage relations. But after its first use, the term became very popular among researchers, politicians, and even journalists, that used it to describe a wide range of phenomena. There are, though, three distinct approaches that deserve attention in the Brazilian literature.

Informality has been used in Brazil over the past twenty years as a synonym for the absence of a *Carteira de Trabalho*<sup>1</sup> (labor card) in a labor relation. Though it includes every type of work without social security, it is considered a too-narrow definition for the term, as it does not include self-employment or family workers (Ulysea, 2006). Next, there is the dualistic conception of formality and informality: the latter would include small and micro units, with low capital density, outdated techniques, low incomes or low wages and low productivity. The opposite would be the formal or modern sector, which would just include very small group of firms, where the qualifications needed to work in them are very specific (De Oliveira, ). Last and most relevant, there is the conception of informality as a result of restructuring processes in the economy. Therefore, it would emerge from the evolution of the capital accumulation, which would require many outsourcing processes to maintain the accumulation. Because of that, the concept is associated with vulnerability, low incomes and precarious working conditions (Filgueiras et al, 2004).

Many authors have used this last concept of informality, in an attempt to explain the prevalence of outsourcing and precariousness. In this view of informality, the sector is supposed to persist as it supports the capitalist sector, as to allow for the lowering of wages. Thus, it is consubstantial to the accumulation process, and its existence is closely related with the evolution of the general logic of the capitalistic accumulation. In Marxist terms, informality would allow capitalism to continue functioning with higher rates of surplus value.

Outsourcing (*terceirização*) has its origin in a production method inspired by Japanese techniques, which consists in not only the transferring of an activity or supply, but also the social security and administration costs to some other firm. Usually, this process involves a big formal company that demands services or products from many small informal companies. This is very common in Brazil and lowering costs is its primary motivator, even if the quality of what

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<sup>1</sup> As we said before, the labor card is document that guarantees labor rights, regulates working-hours and specially social security (pensions and illness leave payments).

is supplied is lower than it could be. In most cases, this set up imposes high adaptability and low incomes at the outsourcing firms. Another factor that must be highlighted is that this configuration makes it almost impossible for the outsourced workers to organize themselves or to improve their techniques, for the work must always be cheap – hence poorly qualified.

What has been observed about outsourcing is that it has extended itself to production and essential activities of the companies, not being limited to services. DIEESE (1994) has distinguished between two types of outsourcing: the restructuring one, which looks forward to efficiency and focusing on the core business; and the predatory one, which is motivated by excessive gain via sub-suppliers, usually in the outskirts of law. Faria (1999) claims that the outsourcing between developed countries and underdeveloped ones is usually a win-win choice, a restructuring outsourcing; while the outsourcing that happens internally in Brazil is a dirty outsourcing, as it looks for fast earnings, impoverishing workers. In the Brazilian cases, the workers compete with each other in terms of production and any attempt to request more rights may extinguish any demand from the big companies.

After 1990 and up to 2003, the flexible dynamic productive process brought a significant growth of informal work, in a process characterized both by heterogeneity and by a constant interaction between formal and informal sector.

In the brief published in May 2011 concerning statistical evidence on the informal sector in Brazil, WIEGO summarizes the information gathered in the PNAD of 2007 (National Domicile Sample Research). Therefore, it provides an informative picture about Brazilian informal economy in the first decade of the new millennium.

Brazil's economy has grown significantly in recent years and its population is still growing also. What is called by statisticians the "working age population" (as old as 15 years old) represents 75% of the 189 million inhabitants in the country. 64% of this group is employed officially, which means that their work is calculated in the GDP or they have a 'carteira assinada'. This document regulates working hours, rates, rights... it binds to what it is established by law. But if 64% of the people who were supposed to be working are formally employed and about 6% are unemployed and want to work, the research shows that 31% of this population works informally.

Women's condition in the labor-market is specially regarded (as the name of the organization suggests), and it reports that women are generally more inactive economically than men. This is due to women's major participation in household care, mainly their own, which implies no payment. This is shown by the record that 41% of women in their working age are inactive, whilst only 19% of men are in the same condition.

It goes on defining what it considers informal self-employment: informal self-employed workers who take part in enterprises with fewer than five employees. And by informality, as already mentioned, is taken the lack of 'carteira assinada', which comprehends unpaid and domestic work. The report explains that the latter is not only informal, but, surprisingly, 27% of it is actually formal.

Moreover, the brief describes that 17% of labor is in agriculture and that if this sector is excluded from the analyses, the informality rises from 39% to 47%, which means that informality is high in urban areas. These 47% are composed 45% of men and 48% of women, which expresses a higher level of informality among women. Once again it is necessary to attain the analyses to the different activities that men and women develop and their informality rates for both genders.

WIEGO is especially interested in 4 types of informal laborers: the domestic workers, home-based workers, informal traders and waste pickers (in Brazil recyclable waste collectors). The report classifies as poor a household that obtained R\$ 180.00 per month (total income), which is said to be the minimum wage wage. Although it considers this level for its further considerations, the actual level of the minimum wage was R\$ 380.00 per month. Nevertheless, the brief informs that 17% of the Brazilian population is considered poor, which shows little difference between men and women (respectively, 18% and 16% of poverty). Among the garbage collectors, however, poverty is expressively higher, reaching 56% of workers, especially women<sup>2</sup>. And the other informal workers in regard also report high levels of poverty, even the home-based workers, which is the best among them. It is also described that different regions of the country have poverty levels considerably different and, therefore, urban and rural areas in different regions may report significantly contrasting results.

From the recent texts on unprotected workers in Brasil, Diego Coletto (Coletto, 2010) book stands out, as he makes an exploration of informal labor in Brazil. In spite of its breadth in sectoral terms, it lacks a comprehensive explanation for the persistence of unprotected activities in Brazil. We discuss it here, as it exemplifies a common feature in many text on these issues, that is the lack of acknowledgment of a vast number of papers on unprotected workers, but that were not written in English

In a text that was composed from the experience and notes of two field-trips: the first one in Porto Alegre, in 2008<sup>3</sup>, and the second one between the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, in 2009. Following the “ethnographic method”, Coletto focuses in 3 types of informal activity: garbage collectors, informal vendors and street sellers, and textile production. In the present text the latter will be mainly outlined.

The fourth chapter of Coletto`s book is actually entitled “*Sacoleiros and Sacoleiras*”, which does not refer to the textile production itself, rather than its trade (that is also partially informal). Even though, after the description of the relations between the informal vendors of the company and the women that sell their goods<sup>4</sup> (also informally), Coletto starts to report the production of this sector. The author reports that the production has different levels of quality, in order to be sold to a wider range of clients. The company described by him is formally organized, though its vendors and even workers are partly informal. This way, Coletto suggests that, contrary to any dualistic view of the economy, the informal sector seems to be an appendix, a complementary part of the formal economy.

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<sup>2</sup> 66% of women that are waste-pickers are poor, while 51% of men in the same activity.

<sup>3</sup> Not so sure, could not find the precise year.

<sup>4</sup> Coletto describes the *lingerie* trade.

This is very evident in the production of garments described by the author. In addition to the production of the own company, the formal businesses have many sub-suppliers that complement their production constantly or whenever needed. The author describes that the informal production comes from *fundos de quinta*<sup>5</sup> (sweatshops) that are organized in the most impoverished regions of the city and that employ up to 30 workers. These workers have no security equipment and receive low incomes. The size of the sweatshops is usually limited by the risk of being found and closed down by government agents, but Coletto describes that the rule of their functioning is “present gain”. The author proposes, especially via an interview, that the workers in these sweatshops see their condition as good, because the alternatives seen by themselves seem much more penurious and risky as their own.

Coletto’s work is mainly descriptive and does not advance a clear thesis or analyses when it comes to the informal sector in Brazil, neither regarding the textile informal sector. Other articles and books have, even before Coletto’s publication, accomplished deeper examination of these and, thereupon, described key factors more precisely.

As a clear example stands the work of Neves. She examines the home based labour developed by women for ready-made article clothing in a city of medium size at Minas Gerais. The weakness of labor regulation and social rights made possible the multiplication of these precarious jobs that create flexible labour contracts, labour conditions, day’s journey and an perverse extension and interaction between private and domestic spheres and the productive and reproductive spheres. (Neves, 2007)

### The Garment industry in Brazil

Within the Brazilian industrialization process, the garment industry had a major role. According to data from ABIT (Brazilian Association of Textile and Clothing), the country ranks seven in terms of production in the, behind China, the United States, India, Pakistan and Taiwan. Also according to these data, the textile and apparel chain is the second largest generator of jobs in the country. However, Brazil still has a very timid participation in the international restructuring process (Vilasboas, 2012).

<b>Table 1- Brazilian Regions: Number of Registered Establishments and employees in the garment sector</b>		
<b>Regions</b>	<b>Number of Establishments</b>	<b>Employees</b>
North	526	4323
Northeast	7626	120308
Southeast	25833	316515
South	14824	196296
Center West	3811	32084

<sup>5</sup> Literal translation: backyard.

Total	52620	669526
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Source: Vilasboas, 2012)

If an effort is made to evaluate the textile sector historically, what strikes out is that the production of garments, in its sewing process, remains so similar to what it was a century ago. Since the Industrial Revolution, the textile industry has been a labor-intensive industry, with a low capital/labor ratio – therefore, has always been present in developing countries. And it seems intrinsic to this industry that the work associated with it is has substandard working and payment conditions.

One of the most important parts of the textile industry, the production of garments may be resumed in four stages: the design, the modeling, the manufacturing and finishing (Abreu, 1986). These stages are independent one from another and this defines the fragmentation of the whole process since it has been organized. In other words, what has been widely observed in the garment or textile industry is its intense flexibility. The impact of innovation in this sector has little effects on the most concrete chains of the production, the manufacturing and finishing.

These two last links of the production chain have had no important changes when it comes to working conditions: usually underpaid, they are closely associated with impoverishment, outsourcing, informality and house-base work. And Brazil being the seventh greatest industry in the world makes the understanding of the sector essential.

According to Abreu (1986), the textile sector was a major one when Brazil was establishing its industry, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas it has lost importance through the short century. Due to lack of investment, little access to credit and absence of administration and technological progress, this sector has lost dynamism until the 1970`s. Its structure had been very heterogeneous since its composition, with the existence of many little and micro enterprises. So in the 1970`s, called the “brazilian economic miracle”, the economy was restructured and it seemed that dynamism would be achieved overall. Yet, the stagnation in the 1980`s led to the maintenance of the heterogeneity in the sector and the incapacity to overcome the previous limiting elements.

Coutinho and Ferraz (1994) have reported that this industry is greatly concentrated in the south and south-east of Brazil and that, surprisingly, the sector has grown since the 1980`s. However, the expansion was led by a growth of the low quality/low price production and also by the pursuit to reduce costs, particularly social security costs. This means that the alternative found by the entrepreneurs of this sector to reach dynamism was what is called *flexibilização*<sup>6</sup>. And in the textile industry this means outsourcing, home-based work, extensive labor-journeys, informality... for the authors point out: it seems interesting how home-based work was extinguished by the emergence of modern industry and it returns many years after, for the same reasons it was abolished: low costs and lack of social charges. Naturally, that means also no control of the labor-journey, precarious conditions, reduction of formal job vacancies.

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<sup>6</sup> An increase of flexibility achieved by outsourcing, transfer of activities and charges...

It is necessary, then, to understand what has been discussed in recent literature about these three concepts: informality, *terceirizaçã*<sup>7</sup> and home-based work. These are not only necessary, but fundamental for deeper analyses of the garment industry and its recent expansion.

Last but not least, there is the concept of home-based work. This type of work appeared in Europe in response to unstable demands. Nonetheless, because of the bad working conditions, diseases, lack for time for household activities and the decrease of the vacancies in the factories that this type of work was associated with, syndicates fought for its extinction. Other elements that makes home-based working conditions complicated is the lack of control over the labor-journey and lack of visibility: it is very difficult to regulate. In the 1970`s, this type of work grew importantly in Brazil, because it is a very efficient way to reduce costs via outsourcing. Of course, the reason of its cheapness is the remaining of the same factors that led to its abolishment. This type of work is normally paid by the number of products (in the case of the textile industry, garments) and it is interesting to notice that the progress of technology increased the capacity of home-based working, stimulating this type of informal work.

The great majority of home-based work is done by women, who then become part of the labor-force of their houses and also the key-element for the reproduction of the labor-forces. Their condition is customarily worse than men`s, which makes a conversion between sexual division of work, domestic work and home-based work. For Karl Marx, the participation of women and children in the labor-force, as in the case of home-based work, meant the weakening of the working class, because it lowered the average incomes and impoverished the right of the whole class.

**Table –Proportion of homebased workers in occupation, by sex and total.**

	Men	Women	Total
1990	1,5%	14,9%	6,3%
1992	2,2%	13,4%	6,6%
1993	2,3%	13,2%	6,6%
1995	2,3%	12,4%	6,4%
1996	2,4%	11,5%	6,0%
1997	2,1%	10,8%	5,6%
1998	2,2%	10,5%	5,5%
1999	2,3%	10,4%	5,6%
2001	2,4%	10,1%	5,6%
2002	2,4%	9,4%	5,3%
2003	2,5%	9,4%	5,3%
2004	2,3%	9,4%	5,3%
2005	2,3%	9,3%	5,3%

Source (Martins, 2008)

**Table 2 – Sectoral share as a percentage of women`s homebased work, 1992 a 2005**

Sector	1992	1993	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Média
Apparel	29.6	30.0	31.1	31.7	31.0	30.4	28.4	29.1	32.7	31.3	30.3	31.4	<b>30.6</b>
Domestic workers	23.4	23.5	21.7	22.8	21.3	19.4	19.9	16.6	12.9	10.2	10.2	9.7	<b>17.6</b>
Services for producers	15.4	15.5	17.0	17.4	20.8	21.5	22.4	22.7	22.4	25.0	26.3	26.3	<b>21.0</b>
Commerce	10.0	10.6	11.0	9.3	8.9	9.2	10.2	11.5	12.8	15.3	14.7	14.6	<b>11.6</b>
Laundry	8.7	7.5	7.3	5.1	5.2	6.1	5.6	4.5	4.2	3.5	4.6	3.3	<b>5.5</b>
Other	12.9	13.0	11.8	13.7	12.8	13.5	13.5	15.7	15.0	14.6	14.0	14.8	<b>13.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: (Martins, 2008)

In the area of garment production, the chapter from Veras's book (Veras, 2011) is an example of a much better scholarship. Following the proposal to use the notion of social economy, Veras wrote a chapter describing and examining what has been called *Polo de Confeções do Agreste Pernambucano*, a region in the state of Pernambuco that has developed an important textile production. The state – as much as the whole north-east of Brazil – is remarkably poor and its inner lands (the ones farther from the ocean) have a great problem with the dry season. Before the 'cluster'<sup>8</sup> emerged, the region was sorrowfully poor.

The production of textile products begun in the 1950's, when locals of Santa Cruz do Capibaribe started to take fragments, debris of fabric and produce low quality clothes, sold in fairs. For their low quality, these fairs became known as "*Feira de Sulanca*"<sup>9</sup>. The initial production was all made at home, as the families had sewing machines and could do this to complement their work. But eventually every member of the family started to work within the home-based textile production, for its income was greater than others. Due to the aridity of the region, agriculture is very complicated and it had shrunk (cotton production) in the 1940's.

The beginning of the production and its low quality have been overcome by the expansion of the production inside Santa Cruz and to other cities such as Caruaru and Toritama. Veras suggests that, by empirical observation of the process and the marginality of the city where it started, its development cannot be associated with any governmental or external initiatives. The first initiative to finance the acquisition of industrial low-rotation machinery was held only in 1960, by a national bank. Rather than external, the development of the *Polo* was much more caused by the need to survive, persistence, and even stubbornness from the people. But what other choices were there for them? This process led to the possibility of people to stay in the region (not migrate south or east) and even to come back from other places.

The author describes the development of the fair, which has grown from a low-cost-low-quality one to a great amount of businesses, even shopping centers, and national suppliers. This transition, though, still include a great amount vendors in fairs, outside these centers, that are mainly informal.

Approaching the textile production, Veras describes that there are currently many types of organization. *Fábricas* are the production-units that are not in any domicile, like a sweatshop. *Fabricsos*, on the other hand, are the home-based or familiar production units; but they may

<sup>8</sup> It is not appropriate to call it a cluster, but it seems the most approximate term to what the region has turned into: a full employment, specialized production and labor region.

<sup>9</sup> Sulanca: inferior quality and low price.



have dozens of informal laborers (that may even receive salaries)! *Facções* are the most precarious form of organization and are the ones that are sub-suppliers of the *Fábricas e Fabricos*. The three forms of enterprise may be informal or hire informal work<sup>10</sup>, but the more precarious the organization, higher the probability of being so. The latter are generally informal, whilst the *Fábricas* tend to be formally organized.

Therefore, despite the great specialization that occurred in the region, its productive structure is still very heterogeneous. The majority of entrepreneurs still rely on their tacit knowledge and intuition rather than on modern techniques of administration and business. Furthermore, the productivity of the labor is low, the intensity of capital, even in the *Fábricas*, also. Hence, the normal journey of the workers is much stretched. So it becomes very evident that, although the region has developed significantly (more than the capital), many social problems persist and even at full employment.

The region has grown so significantly over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> that the cities could absorb all the labor coming from a rural exodus, which was motivated by both the hard conditions of the land and the attractive opportunities in the cities. The growth has created conditions for significant capital accumulation, and that is what is interesting about the *Polo* in the present moment: a part of its enterprises is becoming capitalist<sup>11</sup> and the other is remaining as primitive as it was 30 years ago. There has not been any movement to organize a proper cluster, for what remains intrinsic to every entrepreneur seem to be the capacity of growing and providing autonomously. Therefore, even when the government provides support, via SEBRAE (Brazilian Service of Support to the Entrepreneur), this service is not very welcomed by the owners of the enterprises.

A real interesting evolution process is currently being observed, as household work and family owned firms interact with capitalist units. Labor conditions have not, as some theories have proposed, changed so significantly with these developments, there has not been a general movement towards formality. What will come out of from the interaction between the two sectors in the region, is still unclear.

Another striking example is the town of Ibitinga in the northeast region of São Paulo State. This is a town know by the quality of its needlework. (Leite, 2009) shows the history of the diffusion of the embroidery industry in the town, and its strong growth after 2005, due to a productive arrangement named Local Productive Arrangement (APL) which brings together State agencies, SEBRAE and the San Paulo Federation of Industries. Recently, competition with Chinese products has resulted in a general slowdown in the production activities of this town. Nevertheless, as we will see in the next section, the organizing experience of a local union had important consequences for the social protection of workers in the area.

### **Organization of workers in the apparel sector**

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<sup>10</sup> It should be kept in mind that the concept of informality was initially developed for individual work, but it eventually came to include firms in which unprotected work is present as well.

<sup>11</sup> In the Marxist perspective: an enterprise that seeks only to accumulate more capital, expand its accumulation via the expansion of its activity, concentration and centralization of capital.

The specific organization of the apparel industries, already discussed, imposes a series of restrictions to worker's organization or access to social protection schemes (in particular, labor rights and pension programs) As outsourcing is a common strategy in the production chain even of large apparel firms, two issues arise. The first are the difficulties of organizing (or even detecting) household workers, the second is to devise schemes of social protection for household workers or self-employed ones.

In spite of the lack of a nation-wide inventory of efforts to organize or formalize apparel workers, the following group of examples show the diverse existing strategies.

The case of Ibitinga.

As discussed in (Leite, 2009) in 1987, a worker's organization was founded to help workers (most of them women) to improve labor conditions and to register workers at the Ministry of Labor, so they would get their labor cards. The process was successful and led to the creation of the Ibitinga Stitch workers Union. The study emphasizes the importance of worker's organization to decrease household based work, as well as to legalize the industries, a process that lies at the roots of its vigorous growth during recent years.

A very important thing stands out in the case of Ibitinga, is that the workers themselves started the organization of the union, although later on they had the support of other unions and centrals. In 2001, the union signed a convention with local employers so that even household based workers and those in outsourcing firms would be granted labor cards. Thus, the Ibitinga union is an example of how worker's organizing themselves, were able to reclaim labor rights, for those working in firms, as well for those household based workers that took part in the same production process, as outsources for those firms (Liete, 2009).

(Leite, 2004b) discusses the evolution and activities of the Sindicato das Costureiras de São Paulo e Osasco, (<http://www.costureirassp.org.br/index.asp>). This union was established 70 years ago and has since been active in the organization of seamstresses in Sao Paulo and Osasco (a neighbor city). They have been active in the organization of home based worker

#### UNISOL

The emergence of numerous cooperatives in Brazil, especially after the 1990s, is justified by the pursuit of their own workers for alternative employment and income generation against a backdrop of crisis experienced by the country as a result of liberalizing policies.

At the same time, numerous entities to support cooperatives were also established. Under the first Lula government (2003-2006) , with the perception that cooperatives constitute a positive way of generating economic and social progress instituted Senaes (National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy), under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

The UNISOL Cooperative, founded in March 2000, comes from the will of the cooperatives created with the institutional support of the United Steelworkers of Sorocaba and ABC, and ABC Chemical Workers Union, among others, now has add other cooperatives, as well as the support from other unions, in a first phase restricted to the state of São Paulo. In turn, the CUT (Unified Workers) launched in the same year, the ADS (Solidarity Development Agency), to organize and promote local development in the various regions of the country.

Taking as a guideline for the ideological and historical principles of authentic cooperatives, the UNISOL Cooperatives and unions, decided to set up a central for social enterprises and cooperatives nationwide, to carry out a project of economic and social inclusion, democratization in workplaces, of equity and income sharing. Thus UNISOL promotes the formation of cooperatives at the national level, making those cooperatives part of the Social Economy Networks supported by Senaes.

Although there is no comprehensive list of the textile and apparel cooperatives integrated under UNISOL, currently 700 cooperatives, with 50,000 cooperativists are affiliated to it, including a successful example of a group that includes all the productive chain of apparel, from the production of cotton to the final product, Justa Trama.

(<http://www.unisolbrasil.org.br/2011/09/27/trama-de-algodao/>)

#### DIEESE

The Inter union department of economic and social studies (DIEESE) is an organization established 50 years ago, as a research center for the major Labor Centrals and Unions of Brazil. In 2009, it started a major project named "Reducing Informality through Social Dialogue". The project began as an effort to bring together local actors and government agencies, in order to protect workers in informal (with no access to social protection or labor rights). Under the notion of Social Dialogue, this project seeks to articulate a system of networks of local, national actors. It's long term goal is to expand the process to include regional (Latin America) actors also.

The project started with five local projects, in order to test its intervention model, that consists of two stages. First, the mobilization of social actors, through awareness-raising visits in selected locations, followed by workshops for mapping demands and for the development of an Action Plan for social intervention and monitoring.

The initial projects were:

- Street vendors in Porto Alegre / RS;
- Construction workers in Curitiba / PR;
- Apparel in Pernambuco (Caruru);
- Agribusiness Sector in Rural Morrinhos/Goiania-;
- Family Farming in Rural Sector at Ituporanga/SC-

These pilot experiences were selected because they have a high incidence of informality, capacity for social mobilization and conflict resolution, aside from an already existence of inter-institutional cooperation experiences.

We will discuss the example of the initial workshop held in Caruru, Pernambuco in March 2010 (DIEESE, 2010). This city is part of the cluster discussed above, based on a text written by Veras.

In a DIEESE coordinated workshop, the issues identified by each group of actors: employers, government and workers, are discussed. They express the most important problems faced by them in apparel production

For the employers, the most pressing problem was the lack of trained workers, sewing machine operators and others. For the government officials, there was a need for technical support in the area of administration and management, as family owned firms need training in management. The government officials also raised the issue of how to register workers,

stressing the need for an awareness program about the need for workers and employees to be registered. The third issue raised was that of developing policies to support and extend the life of the economic units to foster their growth and sustainability. For example: public policies with subsidized credit with long term paying schedules; to provide infrastructure for the area (energy, water, etc.).

The workers stressed the need for an awareness campaign on the need to become registered workers (with a labor card). Another point discussed was the need to create partnerships between the Ministry of Labor, the National Institute of Social Security, local government and professional associations; They also demanded the training of workers in the clothing sector, a process they considered should be accompanied by the rise of the average schooling level.

The points identified by the groups indicate the possibility of convergence between the proposals and suggest the feasibility of a common agenda. Currently, all those proposals are being discussed, with the goal of producing a common project.

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