



GLOBAL DISPLACEMENTS

The Making of Uneven Development
in the Caribbean

WILEY Blackwell

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in the Caribbean*

Marion Werner

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Global Displacements

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Vinay Gidwani
University of Minnesota, USA

Sharad Chari
CISA at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Antipode Book Series Editors

List of Abbreviations

ADIIH	Association des Industries d'Haïti (Haitian Industry Association)
APEDI	Asociación para el desarrollo, Inc. (Association for Development, Inc.)
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBERA	Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act
CBI	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CBTPA	Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act
CD	Convergence Démocratique (Democratic Convergence)
CMT	Cut-make-trim
CNZFE	Consejo nacional de zonas francas de exportación (National Trade Zone Council)
CODEVI	Compagnie de Développement Industriel (Industrial Development Company)
DR-CAFTA	Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement
DSNCRP	Document de Stratégie Nationale pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté (National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction)
FEDOTRAZONAS	Federación dominicana de trabajadores de zonas francas (Dominican Federation of Trade Zone Workers)
FL	Fanmi Lavalas (Lavalas Family)
FTZ	Free trade zone
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSP	General System of Preferences
GOH	Government of Haiti

HOPE	Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	International financial institution
IHRC	Interim Haiti Recovery Commission
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Import substitution industrialization
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MFA	Multifibre Arrangement
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OAS	Organization of American States
OPT	Outward processing trade
PARDN	Plan d'Action pour le Relèvement et le Développement National d'Haiti (Action Plan for National Recovery and Development)
PNUD	Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el desarrollo (United Nations Development Programme)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SOKOWA	Sendika Ouvriye Codevi Wanament (Union of Codevi Workers, Ouanaminthe)
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1

Introduction

Power and Difference in Global Production

The violence of abstraction produces all kinds of fetishes: states, race, normative views of how people fit into and make places in the world. A geographical imperative lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice; if justice is embodied, it is then therefore always spatial, which is to say, part of a process of making a place.

– Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference,” p. 16

This is a geography, not of jobs but of power relations, of dominance and subordination, of enablement and influence, and of symbols and signification.

– Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, p. 3

Sundays in Los Almácigos, Dominican Republic

In the late afternoon on a Saturday in May, Ambrosina and I met up at the bus station in the city of Santiago, the inland industrial capital of the Dominican Republic’s northern region, called the Cibao. We were headed back to her hometown of Villa de Los Almácigos, west of the city, about an hour from the Haitian border. Ambrosina lost her job in February along with 6,000 other trade zone workers when the garment factory where she worked, IA Manufacturing, closed down. She agreed to help me interview her former co-workers in her hometown.

On the bus ride, Ambrosina told me about her current job. After two months of pounding the pavement and handing out dozens of résumés, she had gone to work for her former supervisor as a final auditor at the country's largest surviving garment firm, Dominican Textile. This would be her fourth garment company since finishing high school and moving to Santiago seven years earlier to start university. For the next two hours, as we traveled through the verdant countryside, Ambrosina explained in detail the many things she disliked about her new job: more work, less pay, submissive employees, and frantic managers.

The previous week, her manager had increased her module's quota for Old Navy shirts from 5,000 to 6,000, offering the workers 200 pesos – a little more than 7 dollars – for the new weekly production goal. Ambrosina was galled by the operators' acceptance of such a measly bonus. Despite being proud of her rural roots, she attributed her co-workers' acquiescence to the fact that many were from the *campo* (rural area) where the factory was located just outside the city. She also resented the long commute to her new job, adding an extra two hours onto her already grueling 10- to 12-hour work shifts.

When I think of the things we used to complain about at IA, she lamented, *it seems unreal*. Ambrosina would repeat her complaints about her new job to family members and former co-workers whom we would visit the following day in Los Almácigos. They would shake their heads and chime in periodically with sympathetic exclamations, “Jesús!” “Muchacha!” She would quit a few months later.

The next morning, we started on foot down the two-lane, paved road that eventually links Los Almácigos to the border with Haiti, 60 kilometers away. Ambrosina was somewhat mortified to be seen walking in town but I hoped she would just blame it on me. Our time was tight and I felt that we could ill afford to wait for her father to return with his motorbike so that we could use it for travel to the houses nearby. As on our other weekend visits, our interviews were squeezed between morning house cleaning, lunch preparation, and other domestic chores at her parents' house, intensified by the fact that Sunday was the only day with some consistent electricity supply, and thus also the best day to do laundry and ironing.

After three brief visits to the houses of former co-workers, we arrived at Leidy's family's home. Leidy had returned to Los Almácigos just two weeks prior. She had worked in three different factories in the trade zone over six years. Her longest stint was at IA Manufacturing, where she sewed front pockets onto Dockers-brand pants. After the factory closed, she worked in a five-machine workshop sewing shorts and pants for the domestic market in one of Santiago's working class neighborhoods. She learned new operations, but didn't always get paid regularly and decided she couldn't risk more of her time working for free.

Leidy's mother joined our conversation. She and her husband, Leidy's father, had gone to the trade zone in Santiago with Leidy and three of her siblings in 1992, closing up their small house in Los Almácigos, and leaving behind the mother's plot of land. Her parents worked in a garment factory for a little more than a year. *Despite the problems today*, her mother said, *conditions were worse and wages were lower back then. We returned with nothing*, she concluded bitterly. At the age of 18, nearly a decade after her parents' failed attempt, Leidy told the family she was going to the trade zone. Her parents warned her against the move, but she went anyway as she was determined to find her independence. Now, back at her parents' place with her young daughter, Leidy was making arrangements to bring her belongings from Santiago. There was a small, one-room wood house behind her parents' modest *rancho* that she would make her home. *I'm not going back*, she told us. Although seemingly resigned, Leidy said she was waiting to hear from her brother-in-law about a possible modeling opportunity in the city. Ambrosina consoled Leidy by sharing her complaints about her new job at Dominican Textile. As we were leaving, Ambrosina offered to help Leidy obtain a social security benefit from the government for her daughter who had been born while she was still an employee (and thus she was entitled to a small monthly payment). *If only there were jobs here, there'd be no reason to have to go to Santiago*, Ambrosina told her as we departed. I wasn't so sure Leidy shared Ambrosina's love for her *campo*, but for now she would have little choice but to make her life there.

Situating Global Displacements

Why did Leidy not heed her parents' warnings? What expectations of progress motivated the migrants from Los Almácigos and other precariously employed trade zone workers? And what is at stake in situating a study of contemporary globalization that takes the threshold of these workers' idled garment factory as its point of departure? These questions are the fertile soil from which the present study has sprung.

The experiences of former garment workers in Los Almácigos do not square easily with conventional accounts of the globalization of production. These accounts generally begin with the observation of a fundamental reorganization in the geography of production starting in the late 1960s. The substantial surge in manufacturing output outside of "core" capitalist countries prompted a broad swath of observers to proclaim the dawn of a new structural relationship between what was then commonly called the First and Third Worlds (Fröbel et al. 1980; Piore & Sabel 1984; Lipietz 1987; Harvey 1989). Up until the late 1970s,

Third World states forged this reorganization of industry primarily through the promotion of strategic industrial sectors and the protection of domestic markets, while multinational corporations adapted to and, in turn, shaped these geographies through foreign direct investment. The demise of this import substitution industrialization (ISI) strategy by the end of that pivotal decade dramatically transformed the configuration and organizational form of the global division of labor. As the United States sought new conditions to maintain its dominance in the face of the limits of the post-World War II economic arrangement (Arrighi 1994; Krippner 2011), much of the Third World faced insolvency brought on by high interest rates, capital scarcity, higher oil prices, declining resource prices, and a weakened industrial sector (McAfee 1991; Corbridge 1993).

By the end of the 1980s, Latin America's primarily US creditors, together with multilateral development banks, implemented a series of policies that privileged so-called export-oriented industrialization, or the production of labor-intensive manufactured goods for Northern markets. This model, already in operation in a handful of experimental zones in the region such as the United States–Mexico border and the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, would soon become dominant as states progressively re-regulated trade and investment in line with multinational corporations' priorities. This turn towards what is commonly called neoliberalism was further entrenched in new generation trade agreements, beginning with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which sought to codify the priorities of multinationals and finance capital in global trade (Cox 2008).

The “global factory” – manufacturing facilities in Latin America, Asia, and Africa making the innumerable products filling seemingly endless store shelves in North America and Europe – has since become iconic of this reorganization of transnational production, and of globalization in general. Feminist ethnographers were quick to elucidate the gender dynamics of this new model, which was not simply export-led but also female-led (Standing 1999). From Indonesia and Malaysia to Mexico and Haiti, the workers in these factories were overwhelmingly women. In East and Southeast Asia, these young “factory daughters” (Wolf 1992) faced an intensification of household duties while also experiencing newfound forms of limited independence (e.g., Lee 1998; Ngai 2005; Ong 1987). In Latin America and the Caribbean, women in export factories were often taking on the “breadwinner” role under dramatically eroded wage conditions as their male kin faced the indignities of decline in import substituting industrial sectors (e.g., Elson & Pearson 1981; Fernández-Kelly 1983; Cravey 1998; Mullings 1999; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2006; see Bair 2010 and Cravey 2005 for reviews and discussion).