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Review

Spaces of protest: gendered migration, social networks, and labor activism in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the gender geography of labor activism through a comparative investigation of two communities in West Java, Indonesia. Based on in-depth interviews and a survey of workers carried out in 1995, 1998, and 2000 in the two sites, it explores the place-specific meanings attached to migrants' social networks and gender relations, and their roles in mediating the gendered patterns of labor protest in the two villages. Previous analyses of labor protest in Indonesia have occluded scales and processes that are critical to understanding how gender dynamics are linked to the geography of protest. By contrast, attention to the gender- and place-based contexts of women's activism illustrates the complex interactions between migrants' local interpretations of gender norms, social network relations, household roles, state gender ideology, and global neo-liberal restructuring. Through examining these interactions, gender is conceptualized as ontologically inseparable from the production of specific activist spaces, rethinking the uni-directional spatial logic and deterministic views of gender and place put forth in theories of the New International Division of Labor.

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Keywords: Labor; Activism; Gender; Indonesia; Migration; Social networks

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Introduction

This article examines the gender dynamics tied to the genesis and mobilization of women's labor activism in West Java, and aims to understand the ways these processes operate in relation to the geographically specific interpretations of gendered migration and social networks. Comparative in-depth interview and survey findings in two villages in West Java in 1995, 1998, and 2000 illustrate the ways that women workers' gender roles are constructed in conjunction with their specific socio-spatial contexts and subjectivities. Women and members of their social networks attach meanings to gendered activism in distinct place-based ways that draw together gender discourses circulating across multiple scales. Examining the ways these understandings differ in the two communities helps to clarify how women workers are making themselves and their identities in particular places, and enables analysis of the complex articulations between geographies of economic restructuring, state gender ideology, spatial mobility, social networks, and gendered labor activism.

It is well established that in the context of global economic restructuring, low-wage, low-status, menial factory jobs have relocated to low-income countries where they are filled mostly by young, single women (Lim, 1990; Ong, 1991; Pearson, 1986; Wolf, 1992; Cravey, 1998; Wright, 1997). Yet contemporary patterns of women's incorporation into factory work are extremely varied at both national and regional scales (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995), and little is understood about the production of the geography of gendered labor dynamics in restructuring economies (Radcliffe, 1999).¹ Studies have found that social constructions of femininity, and the ways that these shape gendered labor relations vary by country and region, as well as across age, "race," ethnicity, class and sexual orientation (Radcliffe, 1999). In addition, women's labor experiences differ based on marital status, time employed, and type of manufacturing firm (Ong, 1991). At the national scale, observers have noted that Thai women workers are more militant as labor activists than their male counterparts (Porpora, Lim & Prommas, 1989), while women in Taiwan appear more obligated to send remittances to their families than do women in Java (Wolf, 1990).

¹ However, in the US context, Lydia Savage (1996) and Meaghan Cope (1996), among others, have analyzed the geographic dimensions of women's strike activity.

Young, single women appear to be the preferred factory labor force in some countries (Wolf, 1992; Ong, 1991), but factory employers in an export processing region in the Philippines view older, married women as the most desirable workers (Chant & McIlwaine, 1995).

By identifying some differences across nations, these recent studies pave the way for examining differences in gendered labor dynamics within countries, and the role of place in understanding gendered protest activity. In Indonesia, and in Java in particular, factory workers have participated in increasing numbers of protest actions over the course of the 1990s, and women workers have been central players in the recent groundswell of labor activism (Hadiz, 1997). Research on Indonesian labor activism has analyzed the broad social and economic forces that have underpinned the rise in labor unrest, and this work has contributed to understanding the effects on workers of state labor policy, the recent acceleration in the internationalization of industrial production, the growing urban middle class in Indonesia, the role of non-governmental organizations, and the changing politics of labor organizing there (Rigg, 1997; Hadiz, 1997; Manning, 1995; Kammen, 1997, 1999; White, 1993; Ford, 2001). Yet this body of literature tends to gloss over the differences among women workers and between the socio-spatial contexts of the various industrial places in which they work. Not only do such representations invoke an imaginary pool of homogeneous Third World women, but also they do little to explain why particular women are involved in specific forms of activism in certain places (Mohanty, 1997).

By contrast, research that is more focused on the gender dynamics of labor activism in Indonesia provides detailed descriptions of the experiences of women protesters and rich analyses of the types of activism in which they are involved (Tjandraningsih, 1999; Saptari, 1998, 1999; Athreya, 1998; Andriyani, 1996; Smyth & Grijs, 1997). Yet this work, too, similar to the more general studies of labor activism in Indonesia, has paid little attention to the *geographies* of gendered protest (but see Elmhirst, forthcoming). Specifically, scholars know little about the ways that some places become sites of widespread women's labor activism, while other places with similar industrial profiles do not. Many processes play into shaping these differences, and the goal here is not to identify and analyze all of them. Rather, taking as a starting point Agnew's (1996, 132–33) framework for conceptualizing the forces that shape geographies of political activity in particular places, I examine in detail the gender dimensions of place as context.

Agnew (1996, 132–33), in his investigation of electoral geography in Italy, lists six main characteristics that shape political activity in particular places: i) the social division of labor; ii) communications technology and the distribution of access to it; iii) the characteristics of local and central states; iv) class, gender, and ethnic divisions, and their historically specific expressions; v) the scales on which particular political movements make claims; and vi) the micro-geography of everyday life.² Here, I specifically examine one of these dimensions, and one aspect of it—gender

² While Agnew limits the immediate relevance of his framework to North America and Western Europe, the features he identifies are key to understanding political activity in Indonesia, as well.

and its specific expressions—to provide a comparative investigation of the gendered aspects of the processes shaping the recent growth in women’s labor activism in one Indonesian village, and the relative calm in another.³

The two study communities are both in West Java, one in Rancaekek, just outside of the city of Bandung, and one in Bekasi, falling within the Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi (Jabotabek) urban corridor (see Fig. 1).⁴ For both villages, I conducted in-depth interviews with migrant factory workers in 1995, and lived in Bandung and Bogor for a total of six months. During this time, I visited workplaces, homes, and dormitories to interview factory workers, and engaged in participant observation in the two study villages—Kampung Sunda and Kampung Jowo—located on the cities’ respective urban peripheries.⁵ The relationships I developed with workers and activists involved a degree of familiarity and rapport that, despite the layers of difference characterizing our relationships (Nagar, 1997), permitted more in-depth understand-

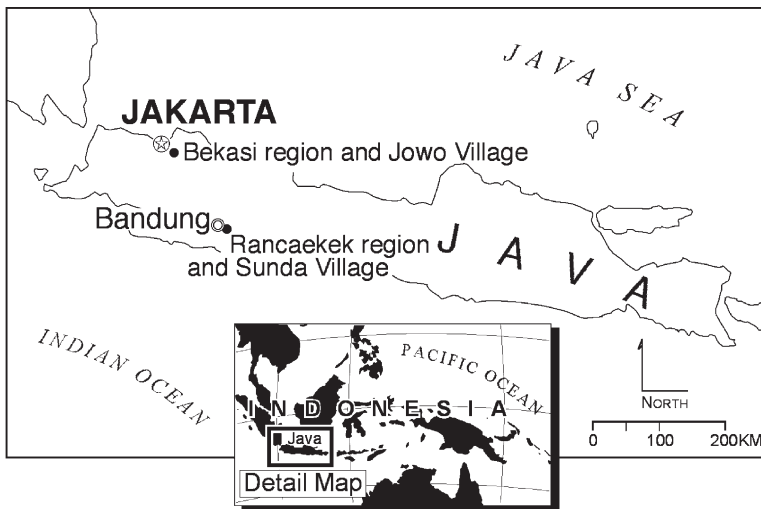


Fig. 1. Indonesia and Java.

³ Everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1986) have received a great deal of attention over the last decades, following critiques of the “organizational bias” attributed to studies of formal social organizations. In contrast to both organizational studies (e.g., Hadiz, 1997) and studies of everyday forms of resistance, such as shop-floor spirit possession (Ong, 1987), this study focuses on the ways that the geography of women’s participation in public, organized labor protest is forged in two places.

⁴ The villages, termed *desa* in Indonesian, include approximately 1200 households each. The findings for each of these villages should not be considered representative of the larger regions (i.e., Rancaekek or Bekasi), as neighboring villages often differ substantially in their composition and activities.

⁵ These village names are pseudonymous in order to protect anonymity and confidentiality agreements with respondents. Especially because this research deals with labor strike activity, which continues to be violently repressed in some cases even in post-Suharto Indonesia, it is important that the locations of respondents are not disclosed (Hadiz, 1998). During the final six months of fieldwork, I lived in the dormitories in South Sulawesi. The fieldwork in Sulawesi forms the basis for much of my other research (see Silvey, 2000a,b, 2001).

ing of gender dynamics and migrants' interpretive agency than would have been possible if only survey methodology had been employed (Lawson, 2000). The interviews in 1995 focused on questions about social identity, gender and inter-generational relations, and migrants' views of development processes and their jobs. In 1998, I returned to re-interview workers, community members, employers, and labor organizers, this time with a focus on views of women's involvement in strike activity. To then further contextualize this in-depth work, in 2000, I carried out a randomly sampled survey (total $n = 185$ for the two villages) of household demographics that included retrospective questions about network exchanges (of cash and rice, in particular) and migration histories.⁶ Taken together, the in-depth interview findings and the analysis of the survey data contribute to understanding how the contexts shaping women's activism differ in the two sites, and how women's interpretations of their contexts shaped their decisions about whether or not to strike.

The article is organized into five sections following this introduction. The first section outlines the changing international division of labor in Indonesia, and reviews the growing numbers of strike actions, noting women's central role in them in Indonesia during the 1990s. Second, previous explanations for the rise in strike activity are examined for their relevance to the present study. Third, the industrial profiles and contextual backgrounds of the two case study villages are introduced. Following this, the different levels of female in-migration and types of social networks in the two villages are described, and these different demographic profiles are analyzed in relation to the ways they were perceived by villagers and tied to gender identities that mediated women's participation in strikes. Then, a brief overview is provided of changes in labor protest activity in the context of the aftermath of the economic crisis that began in late 1997. Finally, the conclusion discusses the study's contributions to theorizations of gender and place in the changing international division of labor.

Gender and industrial protest in Indonesia

Theories of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL) begin from the observation that global processes of industrial informalization and flexibilization have increasingly shifted manufacturing production away from high-income countries and relocated it in low-income, peripheral, and semi-peripheral countries (Frobel, Heinrichs, & Kreye, 1980; Cohen, 1987; Barff, 1995; Donaghu & Barff, 1990). Notably, this transition has coincided with a growing proportion of women employees in the light-manufacturing sector, which is primarily composed of low-wage, low-status, insecure jobs (Beneria & Roldan, 1987; Sassen-Koob, 1984; Stichter & Parpart, 1990). Scholars seeking to explain the gendering of the NIDL have argued that the feminization of this labor force stems from gender norms—among employer and employee populations in the West and the Third World—that construct women as

⁶ During this fieldwork period, I also interviewed return migrants in South Sulawesi.

uniquely suited to performing light manufacturing work, as secondary earners not in need of a family wage, and as willing employees who will create less labor strife than male workers (e.g., Elson & Pearson, 1981; Fuentes & Ehrenreich, 1983; Heyzer, 1986; Lycklama à Nijeholt, 1994; Sassen, 1998). Early work on gender and industrialization in Indonesia viewed women workers as relatively compliant laborers (Mather, 1983; Wolf, 1992), in agreement with the view of gender forwarded by the research on gender and the NIDL.

The broad outlines of economic change in Indonesia prior to the economic retrenchment that began in late 1997 (Cameron, 1999) at first appear to make it a textbook case illustrating the basic NIDL ideas: it is a peripheral country receiving an increasing proportion of the global, low-wage positions in light manufacturing. The Indonesian state implemented a policy turn in the 1980s away from import substitution industrialization and towards export promotion (Utrecht & Sayogyo, 1994, 48; Rudiono, 1992). This policy shift was in part a reaction to a sharp drop in petroleum earnings, the country's primary export (Booth, 1992), and a response to international pressure to liberalize the economy (Hadiz, 1997). Deregulation and structural adjustment packages were aimed at reducing restrictions on investment and trade activities in a broad range of sectors (Hill, 1994), which in turn encouraged substantial growth in foreign direct investment between 1985 and 1998 (Rigg, 1997, 205; Soesastro & Basri, 1998). Businesses centered in more industrialized countries—primarily in Japan, but also in South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, the US, and Taiwan—were quick to invest in corporations that could take advantage of Indonesia's low-wage labor force (Hill, 1994, 104–105), and the numbers of manufacturing jobs in the country grew rapidly (see Fig. 2).

Women workers have made up the majority of the employees in the new manufacturing jobs in Indonesia. As White (1993, 132) puts it, "Large scale, factory-based export production has, in general, meant a distinct feminisation of the industrial work force. Thus, for example, garment factories actually released male sewing-machine operators and took on new female workers as they shifted to export production." As in the gender and NIDL work more generally, research on Indonesia has found that employers prefer women workers to men because of local and imported assumptions about women's manual dexterity, acceptance of low wages, and relative docility

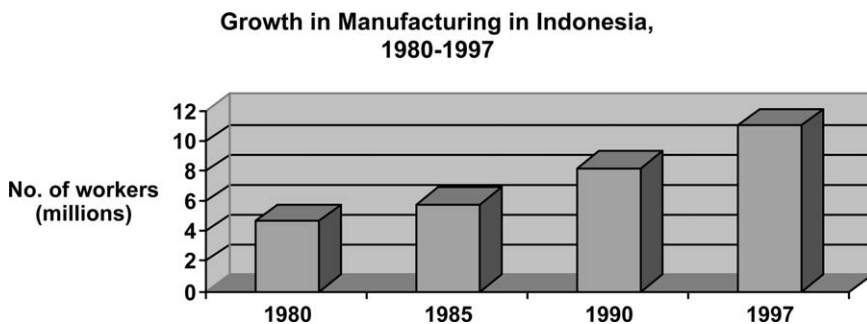


Fig. 2. Growth in manufacturing in Indonesia, 1980–1997. Source: Manning, 1993.

(Mather, 1983; Lok, 1993; Wolf, 1992). In West Java, Mather (1983) found that local norms constructed women as “*takut*” (fearful) and “*malu*” (shy).⁷ For Central Java, Wolf (1992, 117) reported that management viewed men as less desirable workers because they were too “*berani*” (aggressive, brave). Early research on women factory workers in Indonesia suggested that women’s supposed docility was produced within the context of an “Islamic patriarchy,” (Mather, 1983) perpetuated by the semi-proletarian status of young women workers (Wolf, 1992).⁸

More recently, however, criticism of gender research linked to theories of the NIDL has focused on its inability to account for geographic differences in labor patterns within newly industrializing nations (Radcliffe, 1999). Researchers’ (cf. Elson & Pearson, 1981; Heyzer, 1986) early generalizations about the operation of stereotypes regarding women’s manual dexterity, compliance with authority, and patience for menial work have been challenged by those who argue that views of these characteristics vary across places and within groups of women in places (Wolf, 1990; Porpora, Lim & Prommas, 1989). For Indonesia, these critiques are lent weight by the rapidly increasing numbers of strikes that workers held in the 1990s (see Fig. 3), and women’s growing role in the labor movement.⁹ The conservative estimates of the Indonesian government’s Manpower Department indicate that the number of strikes grew from 61 in 1990 to 287 in 1997 (DEPNAKER, 2001). While the ratio

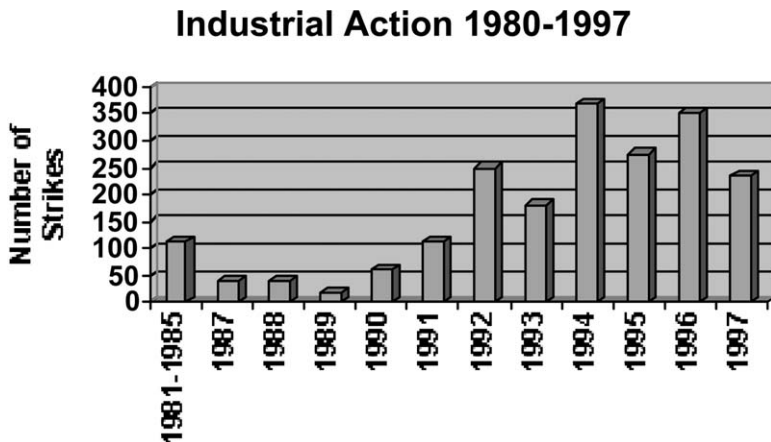


Fig. 3. Industrial action 1980–1997. Sources: Manning, 1993; Rigg, 1997; Hadiz, 1997.

⁷ The ethnocentrism of Mather’s Western feminist characterization of Islamic gender norms, a tendency of much literature written during the period, has since been roundly criticized for both its inaccuracy and the politics of its position.

⁸ The state (Sunindyo, 1996) and the print media (Brenner, 1999) have also been analyzed in terms of their gender effects in Indonesia, though not in terms of Indonesia’s role in the NIDL.

⁹ While there is heated debate about the numbers of strike that occur each year, with NGOs citing numbers three times as high as those cited by the government, there is consensus that there was a steep increase in strike activity during the 1990s (Hadiz, 1997, 208).

of strikes per manufacturing laborer does not appear to have increased, the data indicate that as industrialization has intensified, workers' activism has kept pace. According to the Indonesian Manpower Department, in the 1980s and 1990s, not only did the number of strikes increase, but also the numbers of workers involved in these strikes, and the duration of the strikes have increased. In 1981, the Manpower Department estimated that 54,875 workers were involved in strikes, and they stopped work for a total of 495,144 hours that year (see Table 1). By 1996, the numbers had risen to 221,537 workers taking part in strikes, and a total work stoppage of 2,497,973 hours (DEPNAKER, 2001). To reiterate, over the 15-year period of 1981–1996, the trend was of growing numbers of workers involved in manufacturing labor, increasing numbers of workers involved in protest actions, and increasing numbers of hours lost to strike activity. The growth in unrest has been concentrated in large, multinationally owned industries geared towards export production (Rigg, 1997, 228), particularly in garment, textile, and footwear establishments (Hadiz, 1997, 113), and mostly located in the Jakarta area (Kammen, 1997). In 1991, 70% of all strikes were in the Jakarta area—"with its largely in-migrant, often female work force" (White, 1993, 136)—and over half of all strikes were in factories with more than 500 workers (Rigg, 1997, 230). According to observers, it is not only women, but migrant women who have played central roles in strike activity (Hadiz, 1997; Athreya, 1998; Kammen, 1997). Further, women have been observed—again, particularly in the Jakarta area, including Bekasi—to be not only well represented at these strike actions, but also often more outspoken than their male counterparts (Hadiz, 1997, 122).

Table 1
Number of strikes, workers involved, and work hours spent striking in Indonesia, 1981–1996

Year	Strikes	Workers	Hours
1981	200	54,875	495,144
1982	241	49,525	501,236
1983	96	23,318	295,749
1984	63	10,836	62,906
1985	78	21,148	55,001
1986	75	16,831	117,643
1987	35	8,281	35,664
1988	39	7,544	607,265
1989	19	1,168	29,257
1990	61	27,839	229,959
1991	130	64,474	534,610
1992	251	176,005	1,019,654
1993	185	103,490	966,931
1994	278	136,699	1,226,940
1995	276	128,855	1,300,001
1996	350	221,537	2,497,973

Thus, docile women workers are far from the norm in contemporary Indonesia, and selectively hiring women can no longer be assumed to protect firms from strike activity (Hadiz, 1997; Smyth & Grijns, 1997; Sunaryanto, 1998). In further contrast to the expectations of the stereotypes analyzed in gender-focused research on the NIDL, it appears that the most militant activists are women (Hadiz, 1997, 122), and that their activism is concentrated in the very locations where the highest proportion of workers are laboring in factories that produce for export to international markets (Rigg, 1997, 228).¹⁰ In order to provide the background for a more nuanced analysis, the following section reviews existing explanations of the growth in labor activism in Indonesia and evaluates the contributions and limitations of these perspectives for understanding the gender differences in activism between the two sites.

Explanations of protest and their limitations

Explanations of the general increase in labor unrest within Indonesia focus on several main factors, each of which has contributed to the growth in women's activism, yet none of which fully explains the gender geography of activism.¹¹ A review of these explanations follows in order to locate the present study, and the need for it, within this body of scholarship. First, despite their similar contemporary industrial profiles, the regions of the two study villages have divergent industrial histories. The first village, Jowo, is located in Jabotabek, which is a region that is home to "some of the largest, oldest, and most advanced concentrations of manufacturing production" (Hadiz, 1997, 9). Jowo's industrial history as such has produced conditions under which strike activity is particularly likely, and which could help explain why many more strikes took place in Jowo than in the second study village, Sunda. However, several other areas (East Java and North Sumatra) with shorter histories of industrialization than Jabotabek, have also recently become hotbeds of unrest (Hadiz, 1997, 9). This suggests that the geography of strike activity cannot be explained with sole reference to a region's historical concentration of industrial development (also see Deyo, 1989; Southall, 1988).

Second, workers have been slightly freer in the 1990s to express themselves than they had been previously (Rigg, 1997, 229). Historically, the Indonesian "New Order" state (1965–1998) permitted the existence of only one official labor union, the SPSI (*Sarekat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia*, or the All Indonesia Workers' Union). Its formal state status seriously limited its effectiveness (Rigg, 1997), and workers

¹⁰ It is beyond the scope of this article to examine whether or not labor activism has contributed to measurable improvements in working conditions, but research that has examined outcomes suggests that workers are not better off in the regions of frequent strike activity (Tjandraningsih, 2000). Because its outcomes are uncertain, women's labor protest and the places in which occurs ought not be interpreted as necessarily progressive.

¹¹ While a discussion of models of accommodation between state, capital, and labor is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clearly relevant to the topic at hand. For a review of these models, see Hadiz, 1997, 12–37.

lacked confidence in its formal dispute mechanisms (Hadiz, 1997). Whereas historically the New Order's responses to labor unrest were extremely heavy-handed, in the context of the state's "opening up" (*keterbukaan*) efforts in the 1990s, more unions began organizing, and the military may have seemed less intimidating to workers than it had in the past (Hadiz, 1994). However, this national scale transition in itself is an insufficient explanation for gender differences in activism at the village scale.

Third, analysts may argue that the changing political climate affected the two villages differently because their geo-political positions vis-à-vis the state are distinct from one another's (e.g., Agnew, 1996). But in the study cases, the state-village linkages do not represent a pattern that would allow such an argument as the sole explanation for the differences between the two sites. On the one hand, it is possible that Sunda, because it is located further from "the gaze of the central government" was a site more politically conducive to organizing (Hadiz, 1997, 8). On the other hand, some have argued that direct conflict with police and military personnel can in fact generate strike activity (Athreya, 1998), and indeed since 1998, according to Ford (2001, 110), military repression of workers seeking to organize has been more pronounced in Sunda's region than in Jowo's region. This perspective thus fails to completely explain why Jowo rather than Sunda would become more of a hotbed of protest during this period of time.

Researchers tend to agree that in addition to the changing political climate, beginning in 1993 one highly publicized murder case served as a galvanizing force for labor organization (cf. Bouchier, 1994; Hadiz, 1997; Smyth & Grijns, 1997). The Indonesian military's involvement in the brutal rape and murder of the young woman labor activist, Marsinah, generated outrage among workers and their supporters across Java and beyond. In the context of the sexual politics of the Indonesian military (Sunindyo, 1996) and the New Order state (Suryakusuma, 1996), Marsinah's murder was intended to terrorize women workers and discourage them from participating in labor activism. The effect of the spread of the story, however, was the opposite of what the military may have hoped (Aspinall, 1999). More women workers became active following the news of the murder, even forming theater and music groups with Marsinah's story as their organizing theme. But, while Marsinah was murdered in East Java, and a good deal of protest action did take place there, the distinct majority of strikes with women as central actors, continued to take place in the Jakarta area of West Java (Kammen, 1997). Indeed, it was the activists who were located in the Jakarta area who most actively picked up Marsinah's story in part because non-governmental organizations, with a strong presence in the area, built their outreach around the symbol of Marsinah (Saptari & Utrecht, 1997). Through Marsinah, NGO activists in the Jowo region were able to capture the imaginations and the furor of the workers, furthering workers' willingness to strike (Saptari & Utrecht, 1997).

Another factor contributing to the growth in unrest was that although wages had increased in the 1990s, they remained too low to satisfy workers and had not substantially improved workers' standard of living (Lambert, 1993). As Manning (1993, 62) argues, the "steep increase in officially recorded unrest since 1990—suggests

Indonesian workers themselves have become increasingly dissatisfied with the slow progress in improving labor conditions.” Workers have termed the low wages a “*penghinaan*,” an insult, to the Indonesian people, suggesting that they are aware of international inequalities in wage rates (Rigg, 1997, 234).¹² Further, real wages were lower in Jowo than in Sunda. Despite the government’s minimum wage regulation stipulating that factories in Bekasi pay the same minimum as factories in Bandung (Sunaryanto, 1998, 204), the differences in cost of living outweighed the wage difference between the two places. Thus, workers in Jowo did indeed have some reasons to strike that workers in Sunda did not have. However, worker frustration over “bread and butter” issues is historically not considered sufficient on its own to spark protest actions (Walton & Seddon, 1994).

A further factor contributing to growing labor unrest in the 1990s was police and military provocation. Military intervention grew in frequency, at least in part because the influx of foreign direct investment meant that more money was available for those who were involved in worker discipline (Kammen, 1997). The police tend to be paid by factory management to maintain control over the labor force, and if the police repress labor problems, management pays them more than usual. This creates an incentive for the police to orchestrate situations in which they can ostensibly protect a company from a threat that the police themselves create. Thus, over the 1990s, police and military intervention increasingly took the form of strike provocation, and subsequent repression, often with the support of hired “thugs” or *preman* (Ryter, 2001), and again the Jakarta region was the center of such activity. While this focus helps us understand the geography of protest, it nevertheless leaves the gender dimension of activism unexamined.

Others argue that NGOs have also played an important role in organizing labor action, and many NGO activities and pro-democracy forces focused directly on increasing worker consciousness and organizing demonstrations (Ryter, 2001; Ford, 2001; Aspinall, 1999; Tjandraningsih, 2000; Djati, 1999; Hadiz, 2001). Many of these NGOs receive international funding, and frame labor struggles in terms of human rights discourse, a move which Ford (2001, 106) views as contributing to an expansion of the discursive space available to labor.¹³ Indeed, there are more NGOs, and more that are women-focused, in the Bekasi (Jowo) area than in the Rancaekek (Sunda) area (Saptari & Utrecht, 1997), a difference that could be argued to contribute to the different levels of strikes in the two villages. However, in order for the ideas of organizers to influence workers’ actions, workers themselves must decide that those ideas are worth adopting. To understand women’s activism, therefore, research must look not only to the actions of organizers, but also to the women

¹² Simultaneously, international pressure has mounted to improve labor relations in Indonesia (Hadiz, 1997, 171; Bouchier, 1994, 54). Also see Bouchier (1994) for further analysis of the international, particularly American, political influences on Indonesian labor in the early 1990s.

¹³ Similarly, in a study examining Mexico’s *Maquiladoras*, Cravey (1998, 139) finds that workers are beginning to “confront the new production regime...through transnational labor solidarity and linking workplace struggles with community issues.” She points out that this example “hint[s] at the potential *usefulness of space* in redefining the terms of union struggles” (*ibid.*, italics in original).

themselves, and the ways that women mediate the messages they receive from organizers in particular places.

Yet another dimension of the story is that more workers have begun to see themselves as permanent residents of the city (Rigg, 1997). According to this perspective, because industries are spatially concentrated, and workers live in close proximity to one another, the conditions are ripe for workers to grow to view themselves as a community of laborers who have rights in common. There is less viability of return to the village for most migrants than there was for earlier generations of circular migrants, and more opportunity for steady, formal employment in the city (Hugo, 1997, 92). Further, the workforce is more literate and educated than were earlier generations of low-income migrants (White, 1993, 133). Workers in the 1990s in Indonesia are both more aware of their rights and more able to communicate about them than were workers during earlier historical periods, and this is particularly true in the Jakarta area, where Jowo is located. Yet, as revealed by the case studies in the following section, social networks link migrants to origin sites, and return visits home are common, making it difficult to delineate discrete boundaries around the “urban” versus the “rural” populations, and therefore unsustainable to focus on these categories as fundamentally explanatory (see also McGee, 1991).

Each of the explanations for strike activity put forth above—including weakening state repression (*keterbukaan*), a growing “pro-democracy” activist movement, insufficient wage increases, the galvanizing force of Marsinah’s murder, and the growing urban base of the laboring population—helps to partially explain why laborers in Jowo have been involved in numerous strike actions. But the substantial geographic and historical diversity of Indonesian workers’ responses to their work experiences indicated both by the present study, as well as other observers (Andriyani, 1996; Athreya, 1998; Ingleson, 1986), underscores E.P. Thompson’s view that there is no law that can predict the emergence of working class politics (Thompson, 1968, 9), and further that “there is no single condition that is universally capable of causing a strike” (Ragin, 1987, 27). Rather, as Thompson’s oft-quoted argument about factory workers in industrializing England claims, “The working class made itself as much as it was made” (Thompson, 1968, 213). For Indonesia, while there has been a good deal of research interest focused on the conditions that have led to protest, little attention has been paid to workers’ and their communities’ own roles, and the roles of their particular place-based contexts, in making women into active labor protesters. To begin to address these lacunae, the following section introduces the two study sites and the difference in women’s activism between them.

Sunda and Jowo: comparison and context

The two study villages, Sunda and Jowo, were selected for a comparative study that would allow an interrogation across places of the ways that the social and spatial processes tied to activism interact with one another. Comparing the processes that contribute to women’s activism in the two places adds a gendered perspective to the observation that space and place are intimately intertwined with class formation

(Barnes and Sheppard, 1992, 14), and speaks to a rich geographic literature that links identity, consciousness, and social movements to social processes in place (for a review, see Miller, 2000, 34–59).

The two study sites have similar industrial profiles and recent development histories characterized by the rapid growth of multinational, export oriented industrial development. The similarity in the two villages' industrial profiles was evidenced in several ways. In both villages, employees in the manufacturing sector held positions in similar types of firms: multinationals producing textiles and garments for export. In Sunda, there were seven such factories with over 50 employees, and in Jowo there were nine factories of this type and size (see Table 2). In Jowo 65% of women respondents between 15 and 35 years old worked in manufacturing, while the figure for Sunda was 70%. Further, in the two larger regions (*kabupaten*) in which each village was located, close to the same proportion (approximately one-third) of the formal, waged workforce was employed in manufacturing positions. In Bekasi (the region where Jowo is located) there were 200,850 workers in manufacturing out of a total work force of 708,825; in Bandung (where Sunda is located) there were 194,523 workers in manufacturing out of a total of 604,450 workers (SUPAS, 1996, 205).

While such contexts have been found to encourage strike activity in general (Manning, 1993; Kammen, 1997; Smyth & Grijns, 1997; Hadiz, 1997), a close investigation of the two study sites permits analysis of the contextual factors and social processes shaping the very different patterns of labor activism in the two places. The Indonesian government does not provide village-scale data counts of strike activity, but all other sources indicate that, despite their similar industrial profiles, strike activity was substantially more commonplace in Jowo than Sunda. Interviews with workers, village leaders, and labor organizers revealed that fewer than ten strikes had taken place in the village in Sunda in the 1990s, while "hundreds" (*ratus-ratusan*) had been held in the village in Jowo over the same period. As elaborated further below, residents and the village leader in Sunda viewed their village as one where strike activity, and particularly women's strike activity, simply should not take place. By contrast, in Jowo, villagers and the village leader saw their community as one that regularly held strikes. People in Jowo reported that hardly a week had passed

Table 2
Village profiles

	Jowo (in Bekasi)	Sunda (in Rancaekek)
Factories employing 50+ workers	9	7
Percentage of women 15–35 years old employed in manufacturing	65%	70%
Total workforce of Region	Bekasi: 708,825	Rancaekek: 604,450
Workers employed in manufacturing in regions	Bekasi: 200,850	Rancaekek: 194,523

over the last decade without a strike, and women workers were front and center in the protest activity. Indeed, during fieldwork in both 1995 and 1998, strikes were an almost everyday occurrence in Jowo, whereas I observed no strikes during the fieldwork periods in Sunda.

Despite the similar contemporary industrial profiles of the two places, there were also many contextual differences that set the stage for the particular gender geographies of activism in the two places. Relative to Sunda, Jowo had a longer history of women's factory labor, particularly in small and medium-scale factories, reflecting neighboring Jakarta's deeper integration into the global economy. Jowo was also a place where women's public political activism of all types was more commonplace, whereas public displays of dissatisfaction by women in Sunda were more subdued in general. The greater reliance on agriculture, barter, and non-monetized subsistence activities in Sunda was paired with the village population's relatively regular involvement in communal ceremonies, weddings, and meetings. Further, in Sunda, not only were more extended families co-resident, but also because they had more children on average, they were connected in place through the sharing of childcare activities. Women in Sunda played active roles in both ceremonial activity and childcare provision, whereas women in Jowo, who were mostly single migrants, were relatively free of such work.

Each of these local features of the two places figured into the construction of meanings attached to gendered activism. Residents' actions grew out of their immediate face-to-face interactions, yet simultaneously linked them in different ways to the broader fields of relations influenced by labor NGOs, the state, and global political-economic pressures. As the remainder of the article demonstrates, the social relations in the two places stretched over time and space to crystallize locally in particular gendered patterns of activism. Focusing on context in this way is intended to draw attention to the inter-scalar production of the spaces and places of gendered activism.

The following section analyzes how place and ideals of femininity were constructed as compatible with labor protest in Jowo, and how these interpretations came to differ in Sunda. In particular, the analysis focuses on the gender norms expressed at the individual and communal levels, and the perspectives of villagers on the role that different rates of single, female in-migration and social networks played in developing Sunda and Jowo as contexts within which women's activism was so differently understood and expressed. The ways in which women activists and non-activists construct themselves are not the only, nor necessarily the most important processes shaping the differences between the two sites. But fieldwork observations and interviews provide insight into the ways that workers' gendered, place-based constructions of themselves—as either willing or reluctant strike participants—contribute to the differences between the two sites.

Migration, social networks, and protest

In both Sunda and Jowo, respondents in 1995 and 1998 reported that several specific local interpretations of the changes in political and economic climate were

influential in shaping women's decisions about striking. According to them, decisions about strike activity had most importantly to do with the degree to which they viewed women's protest activity as normal and acceptable behavior. In the two villages, women forged differing interpretations of appropriate behavior, and did so in the context of distinct communal gender norms, which were constructed within sites with different rates of in-migration and different socio-spatial networks. Although some women in each village acted against the prevailing gender norms, the community and network contexts, as key features of the places themselves, provided social support that made it easier for women to decide to participate in strike activity in Jowo, and to avoid it altogether in Sunda. The specific ways in which gendered norms developed in the two places reflected and reinforced distinctions between the two geographic contexts.

Several differences between the two villages' population profiles emerged as most important in the survey, and were also raised as salient issues by respondents in in-depth interviews. In Jowo, less of the population (10%) was native to the village than in Sunda (37%) (see Fig. 4), which pointed to a less settled population. Further, many more single people lived in Jowo (82%) than in Sunda (19%), and more women in-migrants lived in Jowo (62%) than in Sunda (11%), rather than with their extended families. Compared to Sunda, Jowo was a relatively more migratory population, and was composed of more single (unmarried) migrants, more of whom were women.

The differences between the two places, one local aspect of which is represented here in the villages' demographic profiles, were important to women's identities and to their interest in striking, and their protest actions were, in turn, central to the

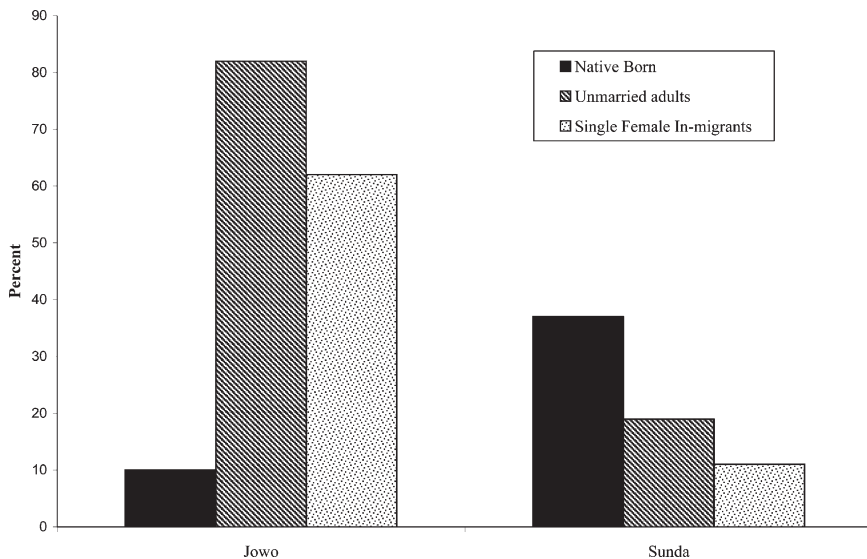


Fig. 4. Village population profiles.

gendering of the places. In-depth interviews with women in Sunda revealed that they placed a high value on the characteristics of personal reserve and refinement (*sopan santun*), and saw these traits as ones that women who were settled in a community should manifest. Women who worked in factories in Sunda saw the avoidance of strike activity as appropriate behavior for women. In their view, commitment to family and community precluded involvement in strikes, because it was important for women to work to maintain a reputation of refinement and dignity for their long-settled village. Rohina, a 32 year-old mother of two, put it this way: “What would my children do if I stopped work to strike? I’ve got to continue to fulfil my responsibilities to them. That’s the way people in Sunda have always been. Our people’s [Sunda’s people’s] mothers don’t get mixed up in strike activity.” This perspective on womanly and maternal responsibility was explicitly linked to place, and was associated with a sense of feminine propriety among Sunda villagers. For Rohina, living in Sunda militated against participation in protests, as women in Sunda, she said, “have to be well-mannered....[and] can’t be causing all kinds of disturbances the way they do in Jakarta.” Thus, ideals of femininity were linked with non-participation in strike activity and long-term settlement, thoroughly embedded in the construction of Sunda as a place where women were reluctant to participate in labor protest.¹⁴

Interviews with the village leader in Sunda indicated that the gender norms expressed by the women were ones that he too cultivated at the village scale. He argued that for the sake of village unity and stability, it was imperative that women not get “out of control.” He said that he tried to inculcate in villagers the sense that women should focus on taking care of their families, and should avoid demonstrations, as a way of supporting the dignity that people indigenous to the village had long cultivated. His message, which dovetailed neatly with the Indonesian state’s family and gender ideologies (Brenner, 1999), constructed a view of traditional gender norms and longstanding local settlement that was widely accepted and reproduced by members of the village population. In promulgating this view, the village leader participated in constructing Sunda as a place of gendered control, order, and discipline, and drew support for this vision from the discourses that circulate across scales and are aimed at naturalizing women’s docility and domesticity.

Another common refrain in the Sunda area represented local women’s politeness, refinement, and native origins in sharp contrast to descriptions of Jakarta’s migrant populations who people in Sunda often characterized as *keras* (rough, tough, rude). While this was clearly a caricature of people in both places, people used it to explain and to valorize Sunda women’s low levels of participation in strike activity in

¹⁴ Two out of 60 respondents did not mention *sopan santun*. These exceptions are noteworthy in that they highlight individual agency and diversity of perspectives within “communities”. However, as these voices of dissent were in the distinct minority, I do not elaborate on them in the context of this argument about general patterns of gender norms in the two villages.

Sunda.¹⁵ Jowo's communal gender norms were distinct from those in Sunda, though not in the stereotypical sense expressed by the villagers. The two villages' different gender cultures emerged in different demographic contexts, and these mattered to villagers. Specifically, Jowo's high levels of in-migration (90% of Jowo's population was composed of in-migrants, compared to 10% in Sunda) and high rates of unmarried people (44% of the population was not yet married, and 38% was divorced, making 82% of the respondents single) constituted the context within which labor protest was frequent. People in Jowo tended to see no conflict between women's involvement in strike activity and feminine "politeness." Indeed, some people in Jowo saw women's strike actions as particularly effective precisely because women were viewed as less disruptive and aggressive than male strikers. As one woman, Susi (27 years old) put it, "It's less dangerous for us to strike, compared to men, because we are more peaceful, and we don't usually act rough [*keras*], the way men usually do." Living in Jowo in the context of her particular social relations, she interpreted women's "peacefulness" to underlie the freedom from retribution that she thought women in particular could expect if they participated in protest activity.

Interestingly, the same New Order gender ideals of feminine propriety and maternal responsibility that were understood to dampen women's involvement in labor protest in Sunda, were deployed in support of activism in Jowo. Specifically, in Jowo, women saw their protests as political action carried out on behalf of the children they expected to have after they got married later in life. Women in Jowo took to the streets to protest, they reported, because in order to be good women, they needed higher wages to feed and clothe their actual and anticipated children. Iis, 24 years old and single, stated, "Even though I'm not yet married, we need higher wages, so that when I have children, they won't have to live like this [in the slums]." Her perspective was shared by the village leader, who argued, "These girls who work in industry join all the strikes, because they know that if they want to have their own families, they have to make more money....So now the young ones [who were mostly migrants] think that striking is normal." The village leader thus revealed his sense that labor protest was appropriate feminine behavior among the young, recent migrants to the city (see also Athreya, 1998), and simultaneously contributed to constructing Jowo as a place wherein women's protest was normalized.

In addition to the linkages between relative degrees of community mobility and distinct forms of gendered propriety in the two places, the two sites were linked to different forms of gendered socio-spatial networks (Hanson & Pratt, 1995), which observers have argued are important for understanding women's subsistence and activism in Indonesia (Saptari & Utrecht, 1997; Andriyani, 1996; Athreya, 1998; Elmhirst, 2000; Silvey, 2001). Social networks, as defined by Massey et al. (1993, 448), are "sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants and non-

¹⁵ It should be noted that men in Sunda were also discouraged from striking through similar ideologies, in this case referencing masculine protection of community order and stability. However, here the primary focus is on women's labor activism, as this has been less examined. Further, the suppression of activism through gendered norms was more effective among women than men in Sunda. Indeed, according to villagers, men were the only activists present at the few strikes that had occurred in the village.

migrants in origin and destination areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin.” The social networks that predominated in Sunda linked residents to their families, the majority of whom were local natives, and to residents in the immediately surrounding areas. By contrast, the majority (66%) of the respondents in Jowo originated in a different province of Java (i.e., Central Java), and maintained close ties to their relatives who lived some distance (i.e., 7–15 hours by bus) away from where they had settled.¹⁶

Sunda villagers’ relatively local ties, and Jowo’s deeper but more spatially extensive ties, were evident in several measures of the village survey. First, there was a comparatively low percentage of migrants in Sunda (63% versus 90% in Jowo), which suggests that local networks were of more importance in Sunda. Second, a relatively low percentage of the population in Sunda was involved in sending remittances (33% relative to Jowo’s 82%), indicating a more locally dependent economy in Sunda (see Fig. 5). Third, a comparatively small percentage of the population in Sunda (18%) brought rice from origin sites, while in Jowo the percentage was rather high (41%). These findings suggest that people in Sunda were relatively embedded in local, family-based social relations, while in Jowo, people’s migration and exchange networks were by comparison rather spatially extensive. The distinct forms of social

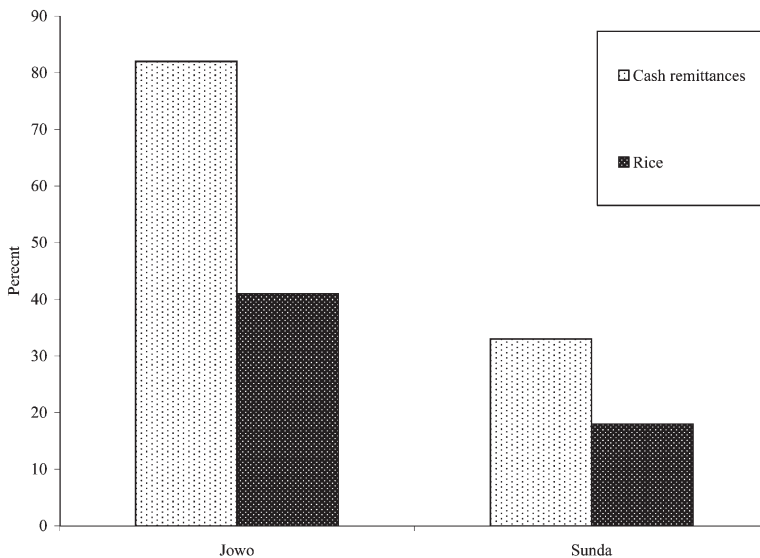


Fig. 5. Village network exchanges.

¹⁶ Other researchers have also found Bekasi, where Jowo was located, to be a region characterized by particularly high levels of in-migration by young, single women to the region (White, 1993; Lok, 1993; Hugo, 1997). I note this as corroborative evidence at the regional scale, and not as evidence of the composition of the villages per se.

networks add nuance to the linear view of a “more urbanized proletariat” and its relevance to strike activity (Hadiz, 1997) in that they highlight the importance not only of residential location, but also of cross-place social relations in shaping identities and the meanings of place as context.

Interviews with people in Sunda emphasized the importance to them of these local, family-based networks in terms of their gender ideologies and attitudes towards women’s strike activity. In response to questions in 1995 about local gender norms, women in Sunda mentioned their roles as dutiful daughters and community members. They referred again to these norms in 1998 when I asked them whether and why strike activity was happening in their village. Sri (22 years old and single, living with her parents) said, “My parents wouldn’t like it if I joined in strikes. We have to stick together and keep Sunda orderly.” Ani, a 43 year-old mother with three daughters, expressed specifically gendered expectations with respect to her children: “My daughters have to help me and must behave well. If strikes happen, my daughters won’t be permitted to join. We try to keep our village orderly and disciplined.” In these cases, respondents interpreted local family networks to discourage women’s labor protest, and the relative lack of women’s protest contributed to shaping the gendered place of Sunda as free from protest.

Sunda’s village leader reiterated these views of women’s roles within the social networks of the family and the community, again mirroring the state’s gender ideology. Specifically, he stated, “We have to cooperate here so our village can develop. We need these girls to work, not strike. They can’t disappoint their families.”¹⁷ He thus drew close connections between community cohesion, economic development, and women workers’ compliance with industrial prerogatives. Women in Sunda were themselves aware of the dominant communal view of gender, and referred to it when explaining their avoidance of strike activity. Dita (32 years old, and mother of two children), said, “I don’t know what I would do if I lived in Jakarta, but here we aren’t so rowdy [*ramai*]...It’s important to practice tolerance and self-control, never to strike, because we all live together.” Interviews in Sunda were permeated with references to shared community and familial social networks that enforced gendered discipline, and that specifically included a proscription against striking drawn from sources implicitly linking village gender norms to those promulgated by the New Order state.

By contrast, in Jowo, particularly among young women migrants, local social networks represented relative freedom from parental constraints. Indarti, who was 18 years old, said, “My parents wouldn’t want me to strike, but because I live here, I don’t have to listen to them.” Young women’s escape from their parents’ surveillance, and their residence among many other unmarried women, located them in relation to their peers in a way that encouraged them to join in strike activity. Another woman, Tines, who was 22 years old, put it even more directly when she said, “We

¹⁷ Suryakusuma (1996) argues that the metaphor of the family for both the Indonesian nation and the village in state discourse serves to reinforce women’s subordination and exclusion both symbolically and materially.

all [young women] live together and do everything together, including join strikes. We are like each other's family here." In Sunda, the sense of connection akin to family ties that young women migrants developed with one another as a peer network, and a local support network, was central to their interest as a group in striking. They had, through their involvement in strike activity in Jowo, played agentic roles in normalizing strike action, and in making Jowo a place where women's activism was encouraged. They interpreted their relative independence from their families of origin as partial freedom from the dominant ideals of female domesticity, and understood their migration and their local peer networks to have allowed them some leeway to act against the gendered strictures on public activism preferred by the state.

Overall, the survey and interview findings reveal different place-specific interpretations of gendered activism and the implications of the state's gender ideology. The two villages exhibited similar contemporary industrial profiles, different rates of labor organizing activity, divergent demographic profiles, and distinct long-term industrial histories. And, all of these elements were mutually constituted with the distinct gender norms constructed in each place, as women defined their identities in relation to their specific socio-spatial contexts. The gendered place-specific interpretation of broader scale processes has implications for theorizing gender geographies of activism, both in Indonesia and more generally, and speaks to the need to reconceptualize the uni-directionality, spatial logic, and deterministic views of gender relations put forth in previous research on labor activism in Indonesia and in theories of the New International Division of Labor. But before discussing the study's theoretical conclusions, I provide a brief note on the implications for labor activism of Indonesia's recent political transition and economic crisis.

Labor activism since 1998

Since the end of President Suharto's 32-year reign in May of 1998, the contexts shaping gender relations (Silvey, 2000b, 2001) and labor protest (Hadiz, 1998; Ford, 2001; Djati, 1999) in Indonesia have been in a state of accelerated upheaval. In the months leading up to the political turmoil that climaxed in the fall of Suharto, workers were observed to be "frustrated and bewildered by mass retrenchments, skyrocketing prices for basic commodities, and a state-imposed wage freeze," which left them "too weak and disorganized to protest effectively against their increasingly dire economic situation" (Hadiz, 1998, 109). Then, in the early days of May, 1998, during the final weeks of massive student demonstrations in Jakarta, workers joined students and took to the streets to call for Suharto's resignation (Hadiz, 1998, 109). Immediately following Suharto's fall, the numbers of labor strikes rose in the wave of euphoria that gripped the Jakarta region (Hadiz, 1998, 111).

In the face of continuing inflation through 1999 and the failure of the job market to keep pace with increases in the labor force (Ramstetter, 2000, 30), workers' interest in protest activity was dampened, and numbers of strikes fell in 1999. Yet Bandung, the region in which Sunda was located, which had been relatively calm through 1998, was noted to have grown more restive, reporting seven strikes in 1999, falling

behind only the Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi (Jabotabek, including Jowo) region (DEPNAKER, 2001). Further, an NGO in the area reported that growing numbers of young, single migrant women became active in the swelling strike activity in the Bandung area, including Sunda, since 1998, exhibiting a pattern similar to the recent history of Jowo. The conditions prompting women's strike activity, including constructions of femininity, have also been changing (Robinson & Bessell, 2002). The upheavals wrought by the crisis serve as a reminder of the temporally shifting characteristics of places and the importance of historicizing place for understanding the changing geography of women's labor protest. With this in mind, the conclusion outlines the contributions that this comparative attention to gender and geography can add to the analysis of labor protest in the international division of labor.

Conclusions: gender geographies of labor activism

Between 1980 and 1998 in Indonesia, women's political spaces were changing. Export oriented development policies spawned the spatial concentration of manufacturing industry in urban and peri-urban areas, and coincided with the emergence of a new working class, growing numbers of which were women. In addition to creating the conditions under which new labor unions grew in political organization and militancy, the export-oriented economic development agenda in Indonesia was also followed by the emergence of new, socio-spatial networks and gendered mobility patterns that coincided with the emergence of protest actions among working-class women. Comparing the contexts and forms of women's demands in Jowo and Sunda over the 1990–1998 period underscores the point that women's political demands are not exclusively structurally determined (cf. Alvarez, 1990; Radcliffe, 1999; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1993), and have to do with the ways in which interpretive agency in places links gender identities, migration histories, and social networks, as they are nested within broader scales of state policy and processes of global economic restructuring.

In order to understand the processes that have put women at the center of labor activism in Jowo, yet have left women relatively inactive in formal labor actions in Sunda prior to 1999, it has been necessary to look beyond the labor market's gender division of labor and the types of firms in the two villages. Differences in patterns of female migration, differences in the compositions of social networks in which women are embedded, and the gendered meanings people have ascribed to these differences in specific places, have played key roles in producing different opportunity spaces for, and constraints on, women's activism. In Jowo, the many young single women who have come as migrants are located in a complex position vis-à-vis the New Order state's ideologies of feminine domesticity. They are able to mobilize the dominant state and transnational corporate discourses of femininity from their liminal position as women temporarily and partially unhinged from the scripted roles of mother, daughter, and wife. They are able to make protest claims that draw legitimacy from the very gender ideologies that gender and NIDL analyses have understood as controlling discourses. Specifically, they frame their rights claims in terms

of motherhood and women's natural "peacefulness," and deploy ideologies of domesticity and docility in their protest activity against poor working conditions and low wages. Meanwhile, the *disinterest* in strike actions among women in Sunda is rationalized locally through the same discourses. The comparison thus shows that there are no direct links between state gender ideology, global economic restructuring, and local outcomes. Rather, these pressures and their implications for individual actors take on distinct meanings through individual and communal interpretive agency as it is organized in particular places.

Analyses of the New International Division of Labor that focus on gender tend to view patriarchy as the international and local structure that produces women's docility, making them a desirable workforce. This perspective not only leaves out women's interpretive agency, but also, as the recent histories of Sunda and Jowo suggest, it fails to capture the complexity of inter-scalar relations and cross-place social networks as they concentrate in particular places at specific historical moments. The places themselves, and the migration in and out of them, as well as the linkages between places are crucial for understanding how women's agentic capacities are differentiated across space. Doreen Massey (1984, 4) said it best:

Spatial distributions and geographical differentiation may be the result of social processes, but they also affect how those processes work. 'The spatial' is not just an outcome; it is also part of the explanation....It is...important...to take on board the fact that the processes [we] study are constructed, reproduced and changed in a way which necessarily involves distance, movement and spatial differentiation.

Rather than understanding gendered labor dynamics in deterministic relation to patriarchal structures and economic restructuring, analyses should conceptualize gender geographies as mutually constitutive of the specific historical forms of these very processes. Adding geography to the agenda from a feminist perspective in this way emphasizes the intersectionality of the processes across scales through which gendered activism is forged in particular places (Nagar, Lawson, Hanson & McDowell, 2001). Unmarried women migrant workers in Jowo and settled villagers living with their extended families in Sunda interpret state gender ideology in ways distinct to their places, their migrant subjectivities, and their network relations, all of which come together to produce contexts within which they build different gendered responses to similar international economic pressures.

By emphasizing the diversity of women's responses to incorporation into export-oriented production, the cases of Sunda and Jowo point to a more nuanced understanding of global-local interactions than was put forth in theories of the New International Division of Labor. The gendered processes at each scale interact in complex ways with forces at every other scale, such that place-based developments associated with economic restructuring are generated in conjunction with mutually constitutive pressures at wider ranging scales. As Agnew (1996, 132) puts it, in order to map political activity, place-based context should be conceptualized as the "'funneling' of stimuli across geographical scales or levels to produce effects on politics and political behavior." By choosing not to strike in Sunda, women themselves have

played a part in funneling the state's labor repression and gender ideologies, international neoliberal economic pressures, the organizing activities of NGOs, employers' preferences for women workers in the export processing labor force, and relational stimuli within their neighborhoods, families, and networks, all of which encourage them to avoid strike activity. By contrast, the women in Jowo who take up strike activity have responded to pressures across scales and constructed their gender norms and identities in ways that demonstrate that the manufacture of docility is never complete. Taken together, the comparison of the two villages sheds light on the articulated nature of gender and the place-specific dynamics that contribute to shaping the diverse international geographies of gender and labor.

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