Challenging the rate for the job:
Lessons from the living wage campaign

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Making bad jobs better
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Introduction

- What’s happened to London’s labour market?
- The question of citizenship
- New forms of organisation
- London Citizens’ living wage campaign
Growth at the top and the bottom

Source: Goos and Manning, 2003
...and something about London

Figure 1. Percentage point change in employment shares of the job quality categories: London, SE and GB 1991-2001

Source: Kaplanis, 2007
Growth with decline in wages and power

- In real wages:
  - 1993 and 2000: real wages all Londoners UP by 50p/hr DOWN for catering assistants by 48p; care assistants by 43p and cleaners by 12p.
  - Outside London: catering assistants UP by 13p and care assistants by 17p an hour.
  - 2001 and 2005: all Londoners UP 71p/hr DOWN for chefs and cooks by 17p; cleaners by 44p.

- London-UK differential:
  - Widened for all Londoners but shrank for catering, care and cleaners.

Source: LFS data, Kaplanis analysis in Global Cities at Work
The paradigm of subcontracted employment

- Holding down wages/conditions
- Protecting the ‘real employer’ from workers – a question of power
- The challenge of organising

And in London, devalued jobs are now migrant jobs
Migrant division of labour

Care, cleaning, hotels, (construction, food processing)
Min wage, hols, benefits
High turnover – 50% <1year
Great national/ethnic diversity
Low unionisation
Dependence on foreign-born labour supply

Analysis of the Labour Force Survey
... and a super-diverse labour supply

Source: Author’s survey.
The world in a workplace

105 staff in cleaning
29 countries of origin
European by birth (39); EU-naturalisation (33); ILR (refugees, dependents, others) (35)
5 companies since 1990s
Min levels of pay and unionisation
The question of citizenship?

- Low levels of unionisation (industrial citizenship) so where are the spaces for claim-making?
- Civil society?
  - Faith (50% active: high of 81% amongst Ghanaians to low amongst Europeans)
- Importing a model of organising across the community
  - IAF – London Citizens
Community organising and the labour market

- The market - the state – and civil society
- Organised people and organised money for power
- Common goods, common ground … sharing place, sharing values
- Faith, labour, educational, community
- Living wage (2001); Strangers into Citizens (2005); Housing; CitySafe
The living wage

- What it costs to live NOT what the market will bear - £7.85 versus £5.80 (£5.93 from October 2010)
- A non-statutory ethical wage – a new moral economy
- Rewarding the best with LW employer awards/accreditation
Progress to date

- 100 workplaces
- Thousands of workers
- Millions of pounds
- In Health, HE, City/Canary Wharf, DFCS, Westfield
- Ongoing in retail, Local Government, hospitality
UNISON and UNITE got involved
A new scale of organisation?

- The urban labour market
- Across-workplaces
- Across allies: in and beyond the coalition – church, media, politicians, students
Calling politicians to account for employment

Livingstone and the LW unit from 2005 and Johnson’s continued support from 2008
Engaging at multiple scales

- Workplace
- Sectoral labour market
- Urban
- National – the General Election (2010) and Ed Miliband’s election campaign
Changing the rate for the job

- Potential in linking economic and political power – voters and workers
- Finding common ground across difference
- Echoes of the early labour movement – living wage in 1870 – a broad coalition for change
- Setting a new moral minimum for wages in London