Globalizing the Brazilian Garment Industry:
Korean and Bolivian Sweatshops in São Paulo

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As cheap imports flood the Brazilian market indirectly or directly from Asia, clothing factories in São Paulo, Brazil have either outsourced much of their production to sweatshops or homeworkers, closed or left for cheaper regions of Brazil or the world. As global economic forces mix with national and local forces, the labor market has become more precarious. One of the outcomes has been the growth of Korean owned sweatshops using Bolivian unregistered workers. This paper will explore the relationship between these two immigrant groups in São Paulo, as well as the connection between global economic change and sweatshop production.

Simone Buechler is a faculty fellow/assistant professor in the Metropolitan Studies Program at New York University. Her research interests include: globalization and cities, labor market restructuring, women and economic restructuring, Brazil, social movements, squatter settlements, and urban planning. She has conducted extensive research on low-income women and urban labor market restructuring in São Paulo, Brazil. She received a Ph.D. in May 2002 from the Urban Planning Department at Columbia University, a Master’s degree in Regional Planning from Cornell University, and a B.A. from Brown University. She was a consultant for the National Academy of Sciences on the informal sector in São Paulo.

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