

Clinton administration discuss the creation of NAFTA and the administration's handling of the peso crisis, but not, for instance, its attempt to introduce universal healthcare? Why does it mention Clinton's balanced budget approach but not its 1993 tax reform and resulting increase in the top marginal income tax rate? Finally, the book fails to establish that transnational, finance-oriented economists actually played a major role in the development and implementation of pro-market reform by the four parties – which is a serious omission.

In sum, Mudge's analysis can be challenged on several grounds. That, however, does not obviate the fact that *Leftism Reinvented* is an impressive book that provides a fascinating overview of the development of four major leftist parties over a period of more than a century. Because of its broad and interdisciplinary approach, the book will be of interest to a wide readership that includes historians, political scientists, and sociologists.

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Global Perspectives on Workers' and Labour Organizations. Ed. by Maurizio Atzeni and Immanuel Ness. [Work, Organization, and Employment.] Springer, Singapore [etc.] 2018. xvi, 173 pp. € 125.34. (E-book: € 95.19)

*Global Perspectives on Workers' and Labour Organizations* groups nine in-depth and interesting labour studies on both the Global South and Global North, which allow us to see how widespread the precariousness of work is across the globe, as well as the almost everpresent and sometimes effective forms of resistance and self-organization of workers affected by precariousness. Although each study in the book poses different research questions and uses different units of analysis, they share the starting point of critical theoretical frameworks – with Marxism always present. All contributors adopt the perspective of the workers and take as the general context the problem of action and structure: how precariousness can be seen, on the one hand, as an impulse on the part of capital to make and unmake the working class and, on the other, how workers respond to this precariousness.<sup>1</sup>

Presenting a diversity of national and sectoral studies, the authors look at different forms of self-organization by workers and the unique problems related to each case. After reviewing the individual chapters, I will highlight some of the most interesting sociohistorical hypotheses presented in this volume.

After a theoretical discussion on precariousness and unionization opportunities, in Chapter one Ian Thomas MacDonald presents a series of “firm-centred” and “state-regulated” union strategies developed in the cultural and hospitality industries in the US and Canada. Critical of the “sectionalism” of these strategies,<sup>2</sup> the author advocates a more politicized and urban form

1. Mario Tronti, *Obreros y capital* (Madrid, 2001).

2. Stephanie Ross, “Varieties of Social Unionism: Towards a Framework for Comparison”, *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society*, 11 (2007), pp. 16–34.

of union organization, which builds its power on the mobilization of the working class, focusing on demands to correct both precarious work and precarious access to the basic means of life (housing, public services, etc.).

In Chapter two, Joyce Jiang presents the case of the migrant domestic workers of London, organized around “communities of coping”, such as the self-help group Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW), to face the informality, the precariousness, and the individualization of their jobs. Analysing the labour solidarity limitations that J4DW has managed to overcome by organizing workers, Jiang explores the performance of the organization, focusing on the empowerment of female workers at the grass-roots level. This lens shows how the organization, strongly democratic and autonomous, is a safe space and source of empowerment for the workers, changing their self-perception from being “love workers” to “workers with rights”.

In Chapter three, P. O’Hare analyses the different collective action strategies that the waste-pickers of Montevideo (Uruguay) use to seek to develop their informal work in landfills (sometimes prohibited by local authorities) and improve labour conditions within the recycling plants. Based on interviews and ethnographies, the author presents a long list of collective actions, or “weapons of the weak”,<sup>3</sup> which go beyond the grand and disruptive protests made by the city’s waste-picker union.

Jerónimo Montero Bressán studies in Chapter four the case of workers in local textile sweatshops in Buenos Aires, which supply cheap clothes to global fast-fashion branded retailers, such as Zara. In these factories, migrant workers are generally employed under what the author defines as unfree labour conditions. Based on more than one hundred interviews and in collaboration with two anti-sweatshop grass-roots organizations, the author concludes that when efforts against forced labour and human trafficking are taken up by NGOs, instead of by labour activists, the class perspective gets lost and advancing the workers’ cause becomes less of an aim in itself. Neither of the two NGOs studied here has managed to organize these workers and generate upward mobilization within the migrant economy. The author claims this is due to the “cultural” approach of the organizations: “workers will not listen to anyone calling them ‘slaves’ and aimed at ‘rescuing’ them” (p. 79). Montero concludes that sweatshop workers need to self-organize, despite the difficulties due to the broad set of strategies developed by employers that prevent almost any worker resistance (p. 81).

In Chapter five, Bridget Kenny analyses the history of general retail workers in South Africa – in particular Wal-Mart workers – in the post-apartheid period. Her objective is to define the composition, reproduction, and contradictions of the class identities of these workers under the precarious conditions in which they work and under the structures of gender and race that intersect. The points of analysis in this chapter are the everyday labour policies of many workers on the ground, which are often more contradictory and confounding than heroic. Kenny manages to capture the varied experiences of workers across Wal-Mart subsidiaries and the complexities of mobilizing and defending workers under local and national conditions.

Jenny Chan focuses in Chapter six on the collective resistance of industrial workers in China in recent years, in parallel and in opposition to the state- and party-controlled unions, in the context of a reorientation of the country’s economic policy towards the market. These

3. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985).

protests were conducted by the new cohort of rural migrants employed by private and international firms, by “internal students”, who provide cheap labour to companies while they finish their education, and by subcontracted workers through employment agencies. Based on an extensive literature review, the author reconstructs the various collective resistance actions of these workers at the local level, showing that the effect of these actions was varied. The author concludes pessimistically that the structural obstacles to the emergence of a vibrant Chinese labour movement will not be eliminated anytime soon.

In Chapter seven, Paolo Marinaro presents an ethnographic study of a cluster zone in the automobile industry in Mexico, in the border region with the United States. These workers self-organized outside the bureaucratic and corrupt unions of the sector, colluding with companies and governments that aim to control the demands of workers through the automatic affiliation to the official union, and even by physically coercing the most rebellious or outspoken workers. Faced with this, workers have organized in autonomous and clandestine movements that use wildcat strikes as their main tools to fight bureaucratic union control and for labour improvements. Focusing on this contentious form of self-organization allows the author to go beyond the government indicators that show an economic sector of stable automobile production with low levels of conflict and high unionization.

Kadambari Chheda and Anuradha Patnaik study in Chapter eight the organization of informal workers in Mumbai’s construction sector. The construction sector is the second largest in India after agriculture, while about ninety-five per cent of female workers in India are informally employed and, in general, work in a geographically dispersed manner (p. 146). Hence, organizing presents a great challenge. Giving an overview of various active organizations in India unifying informal female workers, the study highlights the city of Mumbai, where organizations such as NGOs, self-help groups, and cooperatives have usually represented the interests of these workers. Chheda and Patnaik focus on an organization of informal women workers, Maharashtra Mahila Mahasangh, which has played a unifying role for Mumbai’s female construction workers. In the eleven years of its existence, the organization has achieved solidarity among workers, representing female workers in negotiations with the authorities and employers, developing collective bargaining, promoting the social inclusion of these workers, providing female workers access to services, and offering training and awareness about their rights.

Finally, in Chapter nine, Jamie Woodcock presents a study on the technical and political composition of current digital work, both in the Global North and in the Global South. The rise of digital labour is changing how people work and provides new challenges for worker organization. Woodcock explores how the labour process is organized by capital – presenting four examples: customer service operators, software developers, outsourced moderation workers, and crowdsourcing workers – and analyses the political composition of digital work, focusing on the individual and collective forms of resistance among these workers. Contrary to what outside observers might think, some of these workers are highly precarious. Nevertheless, there are important resistance milestones: “For example, one Unix engineer, who was fired from Fannie Mae, responded with a ‘logic bomb’”. This “was designed to propagate throughout the Fannie Mae network of computers and destroy all data, including financial, securities, and mortgage information” (pp. 168–169).

The starting point of each chapter is the workers detained under heteronomous logics of exploitation and domination throughout the globe. The chapters seek to understand the structure of the antagonism present in each of the work regimes explored by trends as diverse as offshoring, feminization, automation, bureaucratization, flexibilization, and decolonization, making workers precarious. The volume shows us how, in the face of precarious work,

workers tend to resist and organize themselves, even when the nature of the tasks they perform “apparently create the ‘perfect’ conditions to undermine collective mobilization”. The levels and places of labour resistance are diverse, and the more precarious the conditions of work and employment tend to be, the more they tend to appear outside and sometimes against union structures. As a result, the contributors take the self-organized workers as the fundamental actors of each chapter, who adopt a series of different more or less formal and more or less broad organic structures.

Self-organized workers form a small part of a broader, diverse, contradictory, and global working class. In their aim to adopt the point of view of and align themselves with the working class, contributors have a strong affinity with their study objects, through notable militant commitment and research techniques such as interviews and ethnographies, giving researchers a deep inside knowledge of the cases studied. Each chapter shows interesting ways in which a researcher can be useful for the processes of workers’ self-organization, identifying the barriers that workers must face to develop solidarity at work, pointing to existing and possible ways of resistance in and beyond the workplace, and assessing the performance and results of workers’ organizations, which can be broader than only the political and economic improvements. The invitation implied in this book is to build a public sociology through strong relationships with, in this case, those who self-organize for and in work.<sup>4</sup>

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MATTOS, MARCELO BADARÓ. *Laborers and Enslaved Workers. Experiences in Common in the Making of Rio de Janeiro’s Working Class, 1850–1920*. Transl. by Renata Meirelles and Frederico Machado de Barros. [International Studies in Social History, 29.] Berghahn Books, New York [etc.] 2017. 186 pp. Ill. \$110.00; £78.00.

Very little Brazilian labour history has been published in English, and most of what has is in the form of articles. This in itself would suffice to greet the publication of Marcelo Badaró Mattos’s book as a most welcome contribution. Yet, there are many other reasons to appreciate this publication, such as the fact that the author avoids traditional political chronology to prospect aspects of continuity between the first labour periodicals and organizations of the mid-nineteenth century and later trade unions, which gained force in the first years of the following century. Furthermore, the book considers relationships between free workers and enslaved workers (Brazil having been the last nation of the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888), and especially how the free and unfree shared common experiences.

4. Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology”, *American Sociological Review*, 70:1 (2005), pp. 4–28.