

Book Reviews

Louise Waite, Gary Craig, Hannah Lewis and Klara Skrivankova (eds.) (2015), *Vulnerability, Exploitation and Migrants: Insecure Work in a Globalised Economy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, £68.00, pp. 272, hbk.
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Migration has risen to the top of the political agenda in Britain, as well as much of Europe and elsewhere in the last decade. The proposition that we need ever tighter controls on immigration drove much of the Leave campaign which brought about the Brexit vote in June 2016 and Prime Minister Theresa May has made it clear that controlling immigration will be her priority in the negotiations on Britain's exit from the EU. The very term migration is treated with suspicion, with people attempting to reach Europe regularly referred to as 'suspected migrants' in mainstream media.

In this context, a book which examines the actual experiences of migrants is to be welcomed. This volume brings together research from across the globe, focussing on the relationship of migrants to the labour market. A key concept is 'precarity' and in particular migrants' vulnerability to exploitation in employment due to insecure immigration and social status.

Three interconnected trends are seen as producing exploitation - or what is variously described as hyper, or extreme, exploitation of migrant workers. These are firstly the deepening inequality associated with the growing globalisation of production, especially through the increasing reach of transnational corporations in peripheral countries. This has brought dispossession and impoverishment to large sections of their populations. It is also associated with the breakdown of 'fordist models' of mass production and the outsourcing of key production processes, leading to the casualisation of labour markets, making workers increasingly vulnerable. This is intensified by neoliberal state policies which undermine welfare provision and the protection of workers' rights. These trends, which are present in both 'core' and 'peripheral' countries, have brought an increase and a globalisation of migration, as people seek opportunities which are no longer available domestically. These changes also exacerbate conflict and violence, creating refugee movements. Thus complex patterns of migratory movement are developing as new states are drawn in, as both exporters and importers of labour.

As migration has increased, immigration policies have become increasingly restrictive and selective in relation to skills and country of origin. Many more people are living with insecure status which may mean they are at risk of deportation (for example overstayers or refused asylum seekers) or denied the right to work. They are thus vulnerable to exploitation as they have to find a way to make a living through working illegally with no rights in relation to pay or conditions. This vulnerability may be exacerbated by dependence on traffickers, for example the Snakeheads who prey on Chinese migrants. Even those with legal status may be at risk due to lack of knowledge of the local language and of their rights which makes access to the formal labour market difficult, as the chapter on agricultural workers in Italy illustrates.

The book explores these themes through a series of case studies, often using little known examples. It illustrates the global nature of these processes, with examples ranging from the

countries of Western Europe which have long been migrant destinations, through Slovakia, one of the new EU states which have experienced a rapid increase in immigration over the last decade, to India and Argentina. The chapters shine a light on what is, by its very nature, a largely hidden issue which cannot be captured by conventional statistics. The chapters therefore depend largely on qualitative research which gives voice to people whose lives are generally unseen and unheard. They demonstrate the variety of strategies people use to survive at the margins, often for many years. A key element in this survival is the use of networks – of family, friends and often of acquaintances – which are key to finding job opportunities, as, for example, the chapter by Bloch et al. illustrates. The chapters are all fairly short and thus often provide merely a glimpse into the lives and survival strategies of their subjects.

The book's central theme is exploitation within the labour market, though different contributors use different definitions of this key concept. Some use the traditional Marxist definition in which exploitation is fundamental to capitalism in general as workers receive less than the value that they create. For others the concept is seen as relating to specific labour market situations which produce a range of problems e.g. insecurity, low wages (for example, below the legal minimum) withholding of wages, and various forms of abuse. All the chapters, however, focus almost entirely on particular groups who face extreme precarity, those at the very bottom of the labour market hierarchy. There is very little reference to their relation to other groups, for example as potential competitors, colleagues or fellow campaigners for better conditions.

The opening page of the introduction promised a rather wider remit, with three quotations emphasizing that the processes of casualisation described in the book do not apply only to migrant group, but are a general feature of contemporary labour markets. Len McCluskey of the trade union Unite, for example, is quoted as saying that one in five workers in Britain face the uncertainty of zero hours contracts while another source quoted, Richard Seymour of *The Guardian*, emphasises that precarity affects us all. Thus it is not merely workers deemed 'unskilled' who are experiencing these effects; they are increasingly felt by professionals working in hospitals, universities and other public sectors as well as in the private sector. It is disappointing, given the way this is highlighted at the beginning, that the chapters' focus on the most vulnerable migrants tends to suggest that their labour market situations are a special case.

Moreover, the introduction states that the book is concerned with the mass of migrant workers working at the 'bottom of labour markets'. Although the diversity of migration streams is acknowledged, this focus on the most vulnerable prevents an exploration of the ways migrants are inserted into labour markets at a variety of levels. Britain, for example, is dependent on a range of migrant care workers from domestic workers through to doctors. They are not necessarily part of a privileged elite and their migrant status often reduces or delays their ability to advance within the labour market. The chapter on domestic labour in Britain focuses entirely on those coming in through Overseas Domestic Workers visas who are clearly a highly vulnerable group. There has also been a huge increase in domestic work by citizens of the European Union, mainly from the countries of Eastern Europe. Indeed the book has very little to say about the rise in intra-EU migration, particularly from the new Accession countries, which has become such a major social and political issue, especially in the UK.

The chapter on the campaign around the Living Wage suggests how different groups can be brought together to fight for the rights of workers, whether or not they are migrants.

Recent political events, including the anti-immigrant rhetoric used during the Brexit campaign, the Trump victory following an overtly racist campaign, and the rise of racist and xenophobic parties across Europe, have shown the urgent importance of initiatives such as these where migrant and non migrant workers can make common cause in tackling exploitation.

The approach taken by many of the contributors in explaining precarity could also be used to examine the wider implications of migration and the labour market.

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Clément Carbonnier and Nathalie Morel (eds.) (2015), *The Political Economy of Household Services in Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, £51.99, pp. 288, hbk.
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This collection is about a set of policy instruments, recently developed in northern Europe, that have had little discussion to date. These are public subsidies, most often delivered as employment vouchers or tax concessions, to support the provision of services within private households. The services concerned include both care for children and elderly people and more general household services such as cleaning and home maintenance. The analysis shows these policies to be constructing a new sector of welfare state provision. The policy significance of its creation, and the political claims that have driven it, go beyond social needs to economic concerns with employment and post-industrial economic transformation. The editors and contributors show support for household services emerging from political arguments about fostering employment, especially among low skilled women, curbing informal labour markets, and enabling the economic assimilation of unskilled immigrants.

Focusing on France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Finland and Sweden, the book sees the subsidised development of household services as a response to the post-industrial trajectories of countries with high levels of unemployment yet high wages even for unskilled work. In the case of the northern European welfare states, familism has truncated their capacities to address work-life balance, and subsidised services are largely in care work. In the Nordic states, heavy reliance on public services has made it costly to extend the service sector to household services, and take-up of subsidised arrangements is primarily in cleaning and other domestic tasks. The authors' aim, superbly achieved, is to offer a new political economy of household services. The book is divided into sections containing chapters analysing the politics generating subsidies and tax breaks, the resulting employment, and the distribution of benefits and costs to the public purse in these countries. The introduction and eleven chapters are well written and empirically rich, and the whole is exceptionally coherent. I would have liked to see a concluding chapter from the editors with more extended discussion of the implications of their findings for future welfare state development.

The household services sector that the authors identify stands out in two dimensions, especially viewed from the liberal perspectives of English-speaking countries. First, it defines a universe of service provision that crosses the conventional divide between matters of public and private concern. As governments have responded to new social needs it has become common for states to cross this divide with support for the care of persons dependent on others, as children, in old age, or with disabilities. The wider range of services encompassed by household services, e.g. domestic cleaning, ironing, gardening, home maintenance and repairs, IT support provided without concern for social need, does not carry the same force of moral justification for the expenditure of taxpayer funds. The public subsidies encouraging households to buy such services come without considerations of social need. Taking place in private homes, household services are subject to little regulation with respect to the protection of vulnerable clients or the safety and labour standards of the workers.

Second, the construction of this household services sector is all about women yet not about gender reform. The policy objectives behind these developments revolve around women's