

constituted colonial India. This book makes important contributions to the history of colonial capitalism and studies of colonial South Asia.

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Contingent Workers' Voice in Southern Europe. Collective Experiences of Protection and Representation. Ed. by Sofía Pérez de Guzmán, Marcela Iglesias-Onofrio, and Ivana Pais. [Southern European Societies Series.] Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham [etc.] 2023. ix, 219 pp. £95.00. (E-book: £25.00.)

This book looks at a paradigmatic aspect of contemporary capitalism – contingent workers. It explores the collective dimension within which practices and initiatives emerge to develop effective strategies that empower these workers and experiment with innovative forms of protection and representation. Curated by three accomplished sociologists – Sofía Pérez de Guzmán, Marcela Iglesias-Onofrio, and Ivana Pais – this volume is the result of a collaboration with seven other scholars and researchers as part of the European SWIRL (Slash Workers and Industrial Relations) project.

The book specifically focuses on two of the six countries examined in the SWIRL project – Spain and Italy. These nations, both in Southern Europe, have economic-productive profiles and labour market characteristics that exhibit commonalities while also presenting some notable differences. In the analysis of industrial relations systems, Spain and Italy are traditionally positioned within the cluster of Southern European countries. The book sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by contingent workers in these contexts, emphasizing the need for collective efforts to address their concerns and pave the way for innovative solutions in protection and representation.

The two countries share similar labour markets and exhibit comparable trends in the realm of contingent workers. However, simultaneously, they also highlight some notable differences concerning the case studies analysed. In both countries, contingent workers are only partially encompassed within a social protection system modelled on full-time employees and, to a much lesser extent, on the self-employed. Furthermore, in both cases, this limited inclusion has become more apparent with the proliferation of platform work. In this context, workers are frequently self-employed, despite the nature of their work and the conditions under which they perform, warranting recognition as employees.

Another shared characteristic, which will be explored in greater detail later, pertains to the actions and strategies of the organizations mapped and studied. Over the years, these entities have demonstrated, albeit with limitations and shortcomings, their ability to innovate the concept of representation, highlighting and attempting to

address the needs of contingent workers. These actions have often involved legal recourse, particularly in platform work, where clear instances of misclassification have emerged. The diverse range of cases examined, and the multitude of strategies implemented, lead the editors of this book to underscore that the field of collective representation and protection for contingent workers is marked by variable geometries of resistance. This echoes a well-known and inspiring concept coined by Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick.¹

Delving into the contents of the book, the introduction provides a comprehensive summary of the academic debate on non-standard work. It also traces the origins of the term “contingent work arrangements” back to 1985, when labour economist Audrey Freeman first coined it during a conference on job security. Freeman used the term to describe working arrangements designed to meet employers’ needs for flexibility. Over time, the term “contingent work arrangements” has encompassed occasional, time-limited forms of work lacking the protections afforded to full-time employees. It includes various contractual conditions such as involuntary part-time work, temporary employment by companies or agencies acting on behalf of companies, self-employment with distinct employee characteristics, project work, piecework, and gig work. This diverse range of contractual arrangements experienced by workers has emerged as an increasingly significant feature of employment in the Global North. Even within an overall wage-labour-dominant context, scholars observe a growth in the number of contingent workers. Hence, the book addresses a topic of extreme relevance, given the notable shift in employment patterns and the growing role of contingent workers in the Global North.

The book is structured into four parts, collectively forming a valuable yet partial (limited to two countries) map of contemporary contingent work in Europe. The first part considers the emerging needs and evolving identities characterizing this diverse group of workers. Notably, the chapter by Anna Soru provides a detailed quantitative analysis of contingent workers, revealing an overall growth within this group (with a percentage increase surpassing the European average) over the ten years from 2011 to 2020. Particularly noteworthy is the rise of independent professionals, compensating for the decline in traditional self-employed workers.

In contrast to the European average, Spain and Italy exhibit an overall growth in the number of contingent workers, highlighting a deterioration in working conditions offered by their respective national markets. While these markets provide more job opportunities for high-skilled workers, they do not necessarily offer improved economic conditions. These challenges manifest as significant issues, influencing the construction of a collective identity, as discussed in Chapter Three by Sofía Pérez de Guzmán. This awareness of the growing distance from an adequate social protection system underscores the need to bolster the collective voice of contingent workers. This collective-identity formation takes shape on the one hand through the establishment of new organizations, playing a valuable and complementary role alongside traditional ones, and, in some cases, through innovative experiments by the latter. Consequently, there is a growing necessity to envisage collaboration

¹R. Hyman and R. Gumbrell-McCormick, “Resisting Labour Market Insecurity: Old and New Actors, Rivals or Allies?”, *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 59:4 (2017), pp. 538–561.

between new and traditional actors in collective representation. This collaboration should aim to innovate practices and form alliances, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness.

The second part, on the other hand, explores three case studies that have proven to be significant and innovative in establishing social protection measures and labour inclusion for intermittent workers. Specifically, the cooperative model emerges as an effective organizational structure in both Spain, represented by Smart Ibérica, and Italy, exemplified by Doc Servizi. This model provides workers with access to the social protection measures afforded to employees by enrolling as members of the cooperative. This is especially beneficial for professional individuals who might otherwise be compelled to adopt the status of self-employed workers, assuming all the associated risks in labour markets that are not particularly generous in terms of remuneration and devoid of the protections reserved for employees. The third case study in focus pertains to Humus, a start-up operating in Italy within the agricultural labour sector, characterized by extreme forms of exploitation and precariousness. Humus advocates an ethical approach to organizing the work of farm labourers by promoting network contracts (*contratti di rete*). These contracts facilitate the sharing of labour costs and resources among participating companies. As a result, this arrangement makes labour costs less burdensome for entrepreneurs, while simultaneously affording intermittent workers the opportunity to transition to another company when their work with the previous one temporarily concludes. This approach contributes to reducing the precariousness associated with intermittent work by promoting the circularity of employment between companies that coordinate and share costs and resources.

The third part of the book presents three case studies that emerged within the realm of platform work, aiming to imagine and implement forms of collective solidarity and organization. This challenges the prevailing individualist ideology characterizing these contexts. The case of “Tu respuesta sindical YA” in the Spanish context stands as a pertinent example of experimental collective representation practices seeking to harness the full potential of digital tools. This app was specifically designed to facilitate communication with largely unorganized and dispersed workers for whom it was difficult for unions to reach. Despite being in its early stages, it introduces innovation into trade union strategies addressing the complex and dynamic landscape of platform work. The case of “Riders x Derechos” in Spain sheds light on the emerging category of new collective actors who, in some instances preceding traditional trade unions, have taken the initiative to denounce the systematic exploitation by food delivery platforms. Since 2017, RxD has supported riders in organizing protests, backing legal action against platforms, and progressively developing action strategies in coordination with traditional trade unions. It also promotes the establishment of socially responsible food delivery cooperatives. The last case study in this section focuses on “Consegne Etiche”, a socially responsible food delivery cooperative created in Bologna during the initial COVID-19 lockdown. Its inception followed a bottom-up approach involving the municipality of Bologna, providing expertise and resources. Despite facing setbacks due to decisions such as not relying on the infrastructure promoted by Coopcycle, the leading cooperative in Europe advocating alternative, autonomous, and ethical

forms of food delivery, *Consegne Etiche* persists in its efforts to develop and establish roots in the community.

The fourth and final section is dedicated to a comprehensive reflection on the evolving landscape of contingent workers' representation, taking into account recent developments in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, the case studies analysed are positioned within a conceptual space defined by two primary axes: from collective voice to entry into the market with alternative work arrangements, and from bottom-up to top-down approaches to representation. This effectively visualizes a typology of new forms of collective action, serving as an analytical tool for numerous case studies that scholars can explore, both within the countries covered in this book and in other European countries and beyond. Acknowledging the potential and limitations of emerging forms of workers' collective organization and their diverse strategies of resistance, as previously outlined by the editors, has intrinsic value for both research and the actors involved. This is undoubtedly a strategic approach, even when the effectiveness of case studies is confined within specific spatial and temporal constraints. Portraying the complexity of attempts and the "chiaroscuro" that characterizes both success and failure is an integral part of a valuable knowledge endeavour.

In conclusion, this book provides a necessarily partial and provisional, yet valuable, cross section of what is transpiring on the periphery of the traditional industrial relations system in Spain and Italy. It frames peculiar and symbolic traits of the current phase of capitalism, which may potentially assume a central role in the near future. It is a recommended read for both researchers wishing to explore these issues and for those approaching them for the first time.

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ADAMS, THOMAS McSTAY. *Europe's Welfare Traditions since 1500*. 2 Vols. Bloomsbury Academic, London [etc.] 2023. Vol 1: 1500–1700, 278 pp. Ill. Vol. 2: 1700–2000, 451 pp. Ill. £200.00.

Thomas Adams's *Europe's Welfare Traditions since 1500: Reform Without End* is the product of many years of research and writing on the topic, which began with the author's work on ancien régime France, and has focused most recently on the comparative history of the European welfare state in the modern period. The current, two-volume study draws on both of these lines of research.

As indicated in the title of this study, Adams sees the long-term history of European charitable and welfare institutions as a series of episodes of "reform without end". He seeks to illuminate successive examples of policy innovation through a "mosaic