

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Realities and Futures of Work*, by David Peetz. ANU Press Acton ACT 2601, Australia, 2019, 405 pp., ISBN (print): 978 1 76046 310 6, Available to download for free at [press.anu.edu.au](http://press.anu.edu.au), paperback.

In *the Realities and Futures of Work* (2019), David Peetz paints an engaging picture for a wide range of academics and critical scholars. I had already read previously his excellent book entitled *Women, Labor, Segmentation and Regulation* (2017), where he provided an insightful analysis into areas such as the gender pay gap — this new text provides further food for thought. From the preface and acknowledgements, the reader eagerly anticipates what is to follow.

The book aims to address our curiosity for the workplaces of the future. As Peetz states ‘how we understand those realities to enable informed views on the future to be made’ (p. 1x). This is especially important for me as my own university has a strong strategic mission and focus on the future of work. This book provides a very thorough outlook on the likely future of work. An early focus on management and the concerns around ‘flexibility’ illustrate how managerial control impacts upon many employees. ‘One person’s flexibility is another person’s insecurity’ (p. 10) is a pertinent theme and the realities are clear ‘we’ve seen companies turn permanent jobs into casual jobs’ (p. 10). The matter of casualization in the UK University is a key issue at the present time and we are reminded of the realities by the detail of ‘adjunct (sessional) academic staff living in relative’s basements or homeless shelters’ (p. 11)

It is important also to be aware of areas such as the gender pay gap, discrimination and exclusion for women, migrants and people with disabilities. The clarity of description of the causes are especially helpful in this book. The author discusses the impact of globalization and says ‘globalisation is one of the mega-drivers of change’ as identified by the ILO. This he says will change the future of work along with ‘technology, demographics and climate change’. It is not just about technology and digitalization which many would have us think. It is much more than this. This is a unique attraction of this book. It is requiring us to think much more broadly and critically about the realities and futures of work. This is to be applauded.

Delving into the aspects and impacts of globalization and issues in the workplace/government use and misuse of power, we can reflect upon current situations. Let us consider the current mass strikes about pensions in France. There has been minimal coverage by the British media. The many days of strike action by French workers to reject attempts to reduce their pensions and retirement age. It seems that workplaces are encouraged to initiate partnerships, yet we probably need to take a pluralist perspective here. Peetz helps us do this. Resistance can achieve results and there remains evidence that active trade unions will recruit and attract and be able to resist the onslaught of globalization.

This book addresses the question — how do we envision the future of work? Surely, we should be looking at new technology to provide some liberation and reduce our working hours? A nice idea but not the case unfortunately. To help us in considering this, Peetz (p. 64) provides an interesting analogy of modern literature to get us thinking and this is one of the most engaging and original parts of the text. We have the opportunity to reflect upon Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' and Egger's 'The Circle'. By drawing upon the key themes in these classic sources (e.g. the powerful in all three books used hegemony to maintain control. In the first two books, the use of force is employed whereas in 'The Circle' hegemonic control is exerted without apparent force. This allows us to think of how 'social choices and social forces interact with technology and markets to produce possible futures of work' (p. 81).

I was particularly interested in Chapter 8 on 'Women and segmentation' where he starts with a description of the matchstick women's dispute and strike in 1888. He rightly identifies that a century later 'much has changed but some things remain the same' (p. 211). We can see this clearly particularly today in UK universities where staff are still fighting over equality and anti-casualization. These areas are all acknowledged as is the contemporary topic of 'intersectionality'. Reading this, I was reminded of the recent exciting text *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* (Arruzza *et al.* 2019) where there is a critical reflection of the impacts and effects of neo-liberalism. The authors in this short book cover topics such as working class women, race, emotional labour, migrant rights and climate change which require us to consider broader issues and how they intersect. 'Feminism must be anti-capitalist, eco-socialist and anti-racist' (Arruzza *et al.* 2019). In *The Realities and Futures of Work* (2019), we can see how important it is to be clear about the relationship and links between various factors. I liked the author's conclusions about women fighting globally 'marches to boost carers wages' in New Zealand, to protest (against) President Trump in the USA or to support a living wage in a number of countries' (p. 243).

Right now, we are seeing women standing up and fighting against the oppression that impacts upon them. As Peetz says, 'Discrimination and harassment are not restricted to male-dominated work' and that 'in any workplace women might be subjected to harassment and discrimination and that is invariably due to the 'male dominated culture of the workplace especially if sanctioned by management' (p. 244). It is good to note the conclusion of this chapter, that is, there is clearly a future for women, but it is still likely to be men making the key decisions about what work looks like. I would like to hope this might be open for future work change but we must not forget that the system we operate in requires those who are disadvantaged by it must be prepared to challenge it.

This book could be usefully used in a variety of teaching courses. It could even provide a basis for a module on 'the Realities and Futures of Work'. It is very readable and quickly engages the reader. Don't miss out!

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*Self-Employment as Precarious Work: A European Perspective*, Edited by Wieteke Conen and Joop Schippers, 273 pp., ISBN: 978178811 502 5, Price £95

The aim of the book is to examine the extent and ways in which self-employment in Europe is associated with precariousness, particularly in relation to incomes, social benefits, regulatory protections and continuity of work. The editors, Wieteke Conen and Joop Schippers, emphasize that although it is widely acknowledged that self-employed workers typically face greater social risks than employees, there is a relative lack of up-to-date evidence about how these risks vary between different groups of self-employed workers and different contexts. They also emphasize that the number of self-employed workers and the share of self-employment in total employment have grown in a number of European economies in recent years, a tendency that was intensified by the financial crisis of 2007 and its aftermath. Much of the 'new' self-employment is composed of own-account (or solo) self-employment and, as the editors note, questions have been asked about the extent to which self-employment is voluntarily entered into, how much of the new self-employment comprises dependent or false self-employment and the extent to which self-employment can be characterized as precarious employment. These are questions that, to different extents, are addressed throughout the book. The collection sets out to address two significant knowledge gaps. The first concerns the nature and quality of the work undertaken by self-employed workers while the second concerns connections between precarious self-employment, social security systems and labour market institutions.

The book comprises 13 chapters organized in three parts. The first part explores theoretical and contextual issues related to precariousness, social protection and poverty risks for self-employed persons once they reach old age. The second part comprises seven chapters. Five of these investigate self-employment and precarious work in a single European economy (the UK, Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden), another compares self-employment in Germany and the Netherlands while the remaining chapter examines precariousness among older self-employed workers in 11 western European economies. All of the chapters are well written and present new and interesting research findings. A number of the chapters include statistical analyses of survey data and the methods and findings are clearly explained and presented. There is an emphasis on quantitative data throughout the book and with the exception of Conen and Debets' chapter on solo self-employment in Germany and the Netherlands, which includes references to interview data, the voices of self-employed workers are largely absent. Nevertheless, the contributors draw attention to a number of important issues. They highlight that self-employed workers are typically denied access to the social protections normally extended to employees and that access to pensions is a particular problem, with the result that self-employed workers may face a greater risk than employees of having a low income or experiencing poverty after they retire. The contributors also demonstrate that self-employed workers often face relatively high uncertainty about the continuity of their work. However, one of the most important contributions of the book is to draw attention to the diverse characteristics and circumstances of the self-employed. The heterogeneity of the self-employed is a recurring theme throughout the book and a number of chapters compare self-employed workers with particular characteristics, for example Berwing, Isaak and Leicht's analysis of migrant and native self-employed workers in Germany and Jansen and Sluiter's investigation of self-employed workers in 'traditional' and 'professional' occupations.

Although a number of chapters refer to dependent self-employment as an important risk faced by self-employed workers, this issue receives relatively little attention, although it does provide the focus for Anxo and Ericson's investigation of self-employment in Sweden. Perhaps surprisingly, work in the platform economy also receives very little attention. It should also be noted that the 'European perspective' mentioned in the book's title is, in practice, restricted to western Europe, with Germany and the Netherlands arguably receiving a disproportionate amount of attention. Although this probably reflects the book's roots in a research project funded by the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, given the book's stated aim of investigating 'the scale, nature and implications of self-employment as precarious work in Europe' (page 2), it is a pity that southern European economies receive relatively little attention (although one chapter, by Borghi and Murgia, focuses on independent professionals in Italy) whilst central and eastern European economies are barely mentioned.

These remarks notwithstanding, the book represents a very valuable contribution to the literature. In addition to expanding our knowledge of the circumstances faced by self-employed workers, it contains detailed information that will be of interest to researchers working on topics such as migration, poverty, pensions and the welfare state. The book's contributors provide important new insights into the challenges that self-employment poses for social protection, labour law, labour market inclusion and the representation of workers and a number of chapters (e.g. Buschoff's chapter on new self-employment and hybrid forms of employment) provide suggestions for how policy makers might address these challenges.

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*Precarious Work: The Challenges for Labour Law in Europe*, edited by Jeff Kenner, Izabella Florczak Marta and Otto. Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA, 2019, 264 pp., ISBN: 9781788973250, Price: £90.00, hardback

What constitutes precarious work? (p.xi) Ongoing academic and public policy debates focus on investigating and assessing precarious work, yet rarely is it clearly defined. The purpose of this book is to offer a comparative perspective of the legal and social policy challenges posed by precarious work. As such, the book proposes to investigate how precarious work is manifested in different national and European contexts and, most importantly, to highlight the challenges encountered by legislators when addressing the topic through EU labour regulation.

The concept of precarious work is fluid, attracting vivid interest in the recent years. While some scholars synonymize it to non-standard employment (NSER), emphasising the temporal element such contracts entail, others associate it with insecurity. Although certain that NSER and atypical contracts include contingent work conditions, precarious work has been recently permeating the arena of full-time standard employment, thus, requiring re-conceptualization and further definition. Reflecting on this need, the book is divided into three main parts. The first part provides the theoretical foundations that frame precarious work and discusses the need for concrete definitions. The second part provides empirical evidence from different national contexts and EU labour regulations on precarious work forms, as well as how

these have been regulated more or less effectively. The final part is a distinctive section, concentrating on the gig economy, which is growing significantly and associated with precarious working conditions.

One of the strengths of the book is its impressive discussion about different definitions and key concepts. For example, Florczak and Otto (p.6) argue that legislation in the field is limited predominantly due to the lack of a legal definition of precarious work. One step earlier the authors emphasize the need to initially define atypical and non-standard employment and identify their problematic nature, thus, posing the question of what is atypical employment? Is it anything other than typical or standard? The authors then conclude that the essence of precarious work lies on the underpinned unbalanced relationship and subsequent asymmetrical power dynamics between employees and employers. With this asymmetry in mind, the authors distinguish between insiders (employees with secure working conditions) and outsiders, who constitute the precariat, that is employees lacking social protection and security, characterized by high vulnerability. Illegal work as a clear manifestation of precarious work does exist and is prevalent in different national contexts, even though legislators may have neglected it, or treated it as non-existent. Finally, solo self-employment but also bogus and false self-employment cover a large part of the book, and are further re-visited in the final part referring to gig economy, with the authors scrutinizing the extent to which these concepts (bogus/false self-employment and gig work) are in fact the same thing.

A number of implied individual and social costs related to precarious work are then presented. Social pollution (the generation of a surplus of precarious employees) produced by specific employers, deepening precarity, as part of a process weakening a number of employees' rights such as freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of access to tribunals through imposed fees, are hindrances of decent employment. Finally, the authors emphasize the limitations and challenges these new precarious work forms pose to unionization and collective bargaining. Setting as an example gig workers or 'independent contractors', as consistently and intentionally being labelled, and the solo self-employed, the authors shed light on the obstacles associated with collective action and mobilization due to the isolation such work patterns pertain.

The final part sets a very successful overview of the growing gig economy. This part stands out by providing a concrete definition of the gig economy, exhibiting its difference to the platform economy. One step further, this part distinguishes between platform work via apps and via online platforms/crowdwork, giving a holistic overview of a very contemporary topic. Manifestation of how these forms contribute to precarious work conditions and examples of deteriorating working conditions of gig workers in Italy that triggered worker mobilization are presented. In the last chapter, Kennell emphasizes the need for a clear work identification of gig workers, intentionally labelled 'independent contractors' by platforms in an attempt to mitigate employment costs to workers and signify disengagement regarding employment responsibilities with the platform. These are very important debates, vital to be discussed in a book that addresses the concept of and legal framework on the gig economy.

Despite its merits, the book includes a number of weaknesses. The first is concerned with the terminology used. The authors, although insightfully acknowledging in the introductory chapter the complexity of the definition of precarious work (p.xi), use a range of terms without previously having clarified differences. Therefore, terms such as precarity, precariousness, precarisation, which refer to a wider notion, are

used interchangeably to terms such as precarious work and working conditions and precarious employment, which are more specific (Alberti *et al.* 2018). As an example, precarisation is the process that leads to precarity, whereas precarity, the state of being precarious, as a wider concept is not only limited to precarious work but entails non-work aspects (Kalleberg and Vallas 2018). This is further suggested by Mangan (chapter 4, p.57), who associates deepening precarity to non-work aspects, yet not consistently used as such throughout the edited collection. Similarly, although authors in the introduction very insightfully argue that precarious work is beyond atypical employment and non-standard contractual agreements, a large part of the chapters on national contexts still concentrates on fixed-term contracts, agency work and part-time work providing some mundane evidence.

Another underdeveloped theme relates to methods of investigating precarious work and solutions suggested managing it. I Fabrellas (chapter 5) on Spain could potentially provide some quantitative evidence, however, the chapter has pertinent weaknesses. The main one has to do with the allocation of reforms to precarious and non-precarious typologies, generating questions on the assumptions and criteria utilized for such allocation, as well as the extent to which such assumptions and criteria are unanimously accepted. Regarding solutions, Cammalleri (chapter 3) suggests an intriguing alternative, the imposition of a Pigouvian tax (SSFT) to employers who contribute to and generate precarious workers. The authors though offer limited implementation prospect as well as feasibility of such tax.

Written in an accessible language this book is well-structured, addressed to readers who wish to gain a good understanding of precarious work and associated legal challenges in different national contexts. As such it is very useful for policy makers both from a comparative and a national perspective. The book is also suitable for industrial relations, sociology of work and employment law scholars, who already have some prior understanding of precarity as a broader term and precarious work in particular. Most importantly, the book initiates a dynamic dialogue on the emergence of new working patterns that lead to precarity such as the gig economy. Its contribution lies to the generation of a dynamic discussion between readers, legislators, policy makers and scholars on new working patterns that can be introduced in the future, the changing concept of employer and challenges that will be encountered in the future of work.

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*From Migrant to Worker: Global Unions and Temporary Labor Migration in Asia*, by M. Ford. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (ILR Press), 2019.

In the study of labour migration, Michelle Ford holds a central position, having contributed enormously to the study of migrant workers' exploitation as well as their

agency and struggles throughout human supply chains. Her new book is the evolution of years-long scholarship, assembling the data and analysis of labour migration in a specific, under-investigated region of the global labour market — East Asia. Focusing on six destination countries for migrant workers, the book analyses the structural, institutional and socio-political conditions affecting local trends of agency, mobilization and their implications for migrant workers' rights.

The rich data presented in the book reveal the engagement of specific actors in the regulation of labour — various organs of the international labour movement — thus adding an important supplement to labour's bookshelf. The immense work it is based on, some of it previously presented in the author's academic papers (e.g. Ford 2015; Ford and Gillan 2016), makes the book an essential accompaniment to labour regulation scholarship, but even more so for labour movement and labour migration research. In contexts where unions are considered to be marginal actors, Ford's book plays an important role in 'bringing unions back in', claiming that 'even where they are less active or less effective than other civil-society organizations — unions have a unique role to play in the protection of foreign workers' labour rights' (p. 3). Against the background of weak labour movements, the book's main purpose is to demonstrate the significance of 'international labour movement actors . . . in changing the attitudes and behaviour of [local, national] unions toward migrant workers' (p. 13). It is argued that this influence has grown during the last decade, achieving significant success in changing East Asian labour migration regimes and advancing migrant workers' access to rights.

The first chapter of the book sets the background by presenting the institutional context, which serves as the foundation for the 'marginalization of temporary labour migrants' (p. 11). Though it occupies a relatively modest place in the chapter, the introduction of an employment relations perspective to the analysis of migrant workers' position is of crucial importance. The book further underscores the important roles of different 'new' actors (in the words of Bellemare 2000) such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various civil-society organizations, as part of its analysis of the socio-political 'structure of opportunities' that is open to migrant workers' voice and 'social citizenship' (Lillie 2016). This presentation lays the ground for 'the dominance of NGOs and faith-based organizations [which is] explained by the region's labour migration and employment relations regimes . . . based on [harsh] government restrictions . . . and [fairly low] union presence . . .' (p. 41).

Chapter 2 therefore examines what seems to be the most important (local) actor in East Asian labour relations — NGOs and faith-based groups — which 'have no doubt been the champion of migrant labour rights . . .' (p. 42). Besides these local actors, it also takes a look at one of the main groups of workers this book (not always explicitly) focuses on — foreign domestic workers. The position of domestic work, which is excluded from normative employment protections in most cases in the book, seems to be a major hurdle for labour regulation and workers' access to rights. Nor does a very different picture emerge beyond the domestic sector, where despite different regulations, NGOs are still the main actors advocating for migrant workers, placing local unions in a dubious light.

Chapter 3 plunges deeper into the book's main focus, Global Union Federations (GUFs) and their contributions to migrant workers' inclusion. It identifies the numerous international actors active in East Asian countries, and how they go about promoting their agenda to "'globalize" industrial relations within their sectoral mandate' (p. 71). These actors serve as a channel not only of resources but also of a political agenda that flow from the global West/North (mainly north-western Europe)

to East Asia, as they provide financial support and training for local actors. It is noted that 'while the repertoires of action favoured in a particular country or region are influenced from above [the GUFs and their funding origins; A.S.B], they are also constrained from below by the opportunities and limitations imposed by local contexts' (p. 91).

Upon deeper analysis, the interaction between international and local actors is presented in Chapter 4 as taking the form of unidirectional and somewhat harmonious links between global and local agents. Collaborations demonstrate a variety of initiatives and innovative projects, and despite their focus on advocacy and servicing, they seem to be having an increasing impact on local migrant workers as they work to change state policies and regulations regarding labour migration and local unions' approach to migrant workers. The structure of economic interests of global actors reveals a scene of labour activism which is highly dependent on foreign resources, as the labour movements function more like networks of non-profit organizations than member-based organizations. As GUFs increasingly support local programs and initiatives for migrant workers, cooperation to varying degree between foreign and domestic actors seems to be the common pattern, while conflict arises only in the face of state-imposed limitations. Given traditions of colonial rule, ethnic tensions and global inequality, the cooperative reality this chapter describes is somewhat suspicious, pointing to a possible absence of critical perspective.

In Chapter 5, which concludes, the author delivers a qualitative assessment of GUFs' implications for local actors' orientation towards migrant workers and respective policies. The chapter demonstrates the intertwining of local structures with international actors' efforts to promote regulative change for migrant workers, dividing the different cases into three 'clusters' according to the measure of influence: from minimal engagement, where labour migration is severely limited by state regulations and unions' exclusive traditions, to substantial progress where (comparatively) open migration regimes and receptive unions have allowed for the influential inclusion of migrant workers into the local economy and society. Despite the importance of qualitative assessment, quantitative analysis is largely missing, hinting at what the author only briefly mentions in the conclusion, that '[regarding the direct] influence [on] the lived experience of migrant workers — the impact of international labour movement actors remains modest' (p. 157).

As the book provides some novel data and analysis, some concluding remarks are due, emphasizing its many strengths (and few weaknesses). The book does a great service to labour migration scholarship by emphasizing the role of migration regimes — official as well as unofficial — in the integration of migrant workers and their socioeconomic inclusion. As previously noted by Piore (1979), it stresses the place of immigration policy as actual labour market policy by underscoring the roles of limitations on migration upon migrant workers' rights, positioning the state at the centre of struggles for rights. This provides an additional explanation for the centrality of advocacy and services (not organizing); but as these are the most relevant strategies for migrant workers, they also seem susceptible to erosion without the sustainable structure to back them up.

The comparative account of GUFs as central actors in regulating the human supply chain is another major contribution of the book. It sheds light on significant changes that have occurred, improving migrant workers' protections, coverage by collective agreements and basic human rights; despite their limited scope, these are systemic changes that signal a general trend and the sustained effects of GUFs. In this respect, it is crucial to further analyse the different channels for GUFs' agency in East Asia. While

international financial support is most needed and effective in low-income countries (e.g. Thailand, Malaysia), social support and legitimation have proved to play an important role in policy change and in reinforcing local progressive orientation in high-income countries (S. Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong).

Finally, in the literature of industrial and employment relations' actors lie the book's minor weaknesses, as it does little to analyse the relations between actors in the field. Demonstrating the universally relevant yet locally compatible fabric of complementarities among the different actors could shed more light on the formation of different relations among them. Despite the book's extensive description of the phenomenon and multiple examples, the reader is left with some unanswered questions: How does this book contribute to the understanding of the relations among different actors and institutions in the regulation of labour migration? What can be learned about the relations between the global centre and peripheries in the regulation of work and migration? And finally, since most of the international actors are deeply rooted in the 'Global North' — what does analysing their action teach us about global inequality or (post-colonial) control?

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