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BOOK REVIEW

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Migrant Labour in the Gig Economy: The Intersection of Migrant Labour, Platform Capitalism, and Resistance

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Since the late 2010s, platform capitalism has reshaped global labour by accelerating precarity and replacing traditional employment models with algorithmic management (Srnicek, 2017; Antunes, 2020). This shift relies heavily on the fragmentation of labour relations and pervasive surveillance, disproportionately impacting BAME[1] and migrant workers (Woodcock & Graham, 2020; Van Doorn, Ferrari, Graham, 2023). This volume synthesizes political economy, sociology, and migration studies to expose the intersectional vulnerabilities within digital labour. Through multi-sited fieldwork spanning Europe (Italy, Portugal, Greece, England) and the Global South (India, China), the authors reveal that platform exploitation is a systemic, global phenomenon. From Europe's post-austerity deregulation to India's rapid urbanisation and China's state-led restructuring, the book identifies a paradoxical homogenization of labour precarity, where the internet age treats precariousness as a fundamental precondition for future employment.

Migrant status acts as a pivotal axis of stratification within the platform economy. Because of migrant's precarious legal status, lack of social networks, and increasingly limited recognition of their qualifications Platform work is the only available option. The low entry barrier masks a high degree of structural vulnerability. Roque highlights how labour in sectors like call centers and delivery is pursued by those seeking an escape from economic or political crisis. Subsequently, these people end up finding themselves under precarious contracts, psychological distress, racism, and high psychosocial risks. The

[1] Black, American & Migrant Ethnic

precariousness and vulnerability are structurally aggravated by the lack of local support systems and institutional protection. In India domestic migrants within country experience similar vulnerability due to language barriers and lack of access to local support networks. In this sense in India people are often treated as immigrants in their own country.

An important theoretical framework mapping migrant identity, precarity and solidarity is developed in Chapter 8 by combining Labour Process Theory (LPT) with Stephen Castle's notion of Modes of Differentiation. It links the micro-level of algorithmic control (LPT) with the macro-level of structural inequality (Modes of Differentiation). Peterlongo's detailed analysis of illicit labour intermediation, encapsulated by the concept of Digital Caporalato (digital gangmastering) is another important theoretical development. Peterlongo meticulously details how app based intermediation for exploitation occurs within contexts such as Italian app-based food delivery and Argentinian Uber fleets. It focuses on the fusion of archaic, illegal forms of labour brokerage (*caporalato* or gangmastering) with cutting-edge digital infrastructure. The article points directly toward the fundamental *hybridisation of work* and the underlying *informal revolution* of platform capitalism (Borghi & Peterlongo, 2023). This integration of the illegal into the formal operation of platform services provides potent empirical support for the contested thesis of the *refeudalisation of labour*. This framework suggests that rather than representing a purely progressive technological shift, platform capital strategically reintroduces pre-modern mechanisms of control and extraction under a thin veneer of technological sophistication. The following table (table 1) represents a summary of conceptual tools vis-à-vis empirical issues of different chapters.

Table 1: Key Theoretical Intersections in the Volume

Key Concept & Literature	**Theoretical Relevance to Migrant Labour**
Digital Caporalato (Borghi & Peterlongo, 2023)	Tech-enabled illicit intermediation exploiting migrant legal precarity.
Predatory Inclusion (McMillan Cottom, 2020)	Market entry structured specifically for extraction and marginalization.
Algochronos (Chen & Sun, 2020)	Algorithmic time-discipline masquerading as worker "flexibility."
Transversal Unionism (McBride & Greenwood, 2009)	Cross-sectoral solidarity leveraging shared migrant/communal identities.

There is interplay between algorithmic control and worker vulnerability. It is further explored by Pirina's analysis of platform-mediated food delivery in Venice which introduces the concept of Binding-Flexibility to describe the limited scope of autonomy which is disciplined by the rigid temporality of Algochronos. The algorithmic time discipline enforces constant readiness and maximises platform coverage during peak demand, known as diamond hours. This discipline leverages the migrant worker's dependence on visa validity and supplementary income. The argument goes closely with McMillan Cottom's (2020) concept of Predatory Inclusion.

The book unearths the dynamics of the celebrated neutrality of algorithmic management systems obscuring human managerial decision making under the veil of technology. It shows that they function as sophisticated instruments of racialised exploitation (Gebrial, 2024). By automating workforce direction, evaluation, and punishment, platforms create highly stratified labour markets that systematically confine migrants to the most vulnerable tiers of employment. Zhou's research on rural-to-urban migrants working in China's food delivery and ride-hailing sectors show precarity is significantly amplified by institutional and socio-cultural mechanisms of differentiation, such as the *hukou* (household registration) system and deeply embedded patriarchal gender norms. These factors subject workers to immense financial pressure, often compelling them toward self-exploitative work patterns that tragically result in overwork to death.

The book critiques the neoliberal lexicon—terms like "sharing economy" and "partners"—as ideological constructs masking structural subordination. By reframing precarity as autonomy, platforms transform waged labourers into isolated entities bearing all operational risks. Kretsos and Charitsis illustrate this in Greece, where platforms initially offered better conditions to lure migrant workers, only to slash fees and intensify algorithmic control once market hegemony was achieved. These findings position the gig economy as the extreme manifestation of the "fissured workplace" (Weil, 2014). From the transient turnover in Greece to the capital investments forced upon couriers in London (Borghi & Murgia) for companies like Ocado, platforms systematically externalize liability. Ultimately, this represents a digitally mediated commodification of migrant labour. Existing policy failures in immigration and social welfare are being technologically optimized, effectively locking a vulnerable global workforce into disposable, extractive roles where their labour is exploited through sophisticated digital infrastructure.

The book's second part, aptly titled "Strategies of Resistance," is significant and forward-looking contribution. By empirically studying resistance, this section offers necessary counter-narratives to the often deterministic accounts of platform control and migrant victimhood. It validates the perspective that migrant workers are active agents of social and political mobilization. It shows that their collective struggles possess the power to change these conditions (Woodcock and Graham 2020). The chapters in this section detail how, despite immense pressure, digital platform workers are forging new pathways for collective action and solidarity adapted to the fragmented reality of platform work.

Dhar, Bhattacharya, and Thuppilikkat document "Transversal Unionism" in Bangalore, an innovative strategy linking disparate groups like IT professionals and waste pickers. By prioritizing shared linguistic and migrant identities over traditional workplace commonalities, this model addresses the exclusion of the "surplus population" (Castel, 1997) and their collective struggle for the "Right to the City." Similarly, Borghi and Murgia analyze London's IWGB[2], which organizes precarious BAME and migrant platform workers. By exposing the racialized nature of gig work and focusing on the intersection of class and ethnicity, the IWGB exemplifies "union revitalization" (Alberti & Però, 2018). These independent unions succeed by moving beyond the shop floor to tackle issues of social citizenship. Ultimately, both cases demonstrate that community and ethnic affinities serve as essential micro-foundations for building macro-level solidarity within a fragmented platform economy.

While the editors are to be appreciated for achieving remarkable comparative breadth, the methodological challenge of synthesising radically divergent political economies under one theoretical roof must be noted. The volume compares China's State-led Economic Restructuring (STER) and its institutionalized *hukou* system with the deregulated, post-austerity European contexts of Greece and Portugal. Attempting to capture these vast differences solely within a generalized framework of "platform capitalism" risks flattening the distinct legal and institutional vectors that shape how precarity is specifically experienced and resisted. The existing theoretical framework for understanding platform capitalism urgently requires rich, ground-level ethnographic data to be fully tested and refined. Future work needs to focus on the Ethnography of Algorithmic Place-Making and Space. Scholars can move beyond the general concept of algorithmic control to document its nuanced interactions with social reality. This can involve long-term fieldwork to observe "Algochronos"—the platform's imposed time and

[2] Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain

its interface with local customs like religious fasting and so on. Researchers need to ethnographically study the off-app infrastructures and informal gathering spots that sustain these workers, revealing the hidden cultural norms and power dynamics that govern their survival outside the platform's direct digital gaze. A critical area for exploration lies in the Cultural Politics of Solidarity and Informal Networks. It would provide the necessary nuance to concepts like Transversal Unionism. This demands deep analysis of how trust and distrust are negotiated within transnational co-ethnic networks, particularly when members act as Digital Caporalato or organise collective resistance. Understanding the cultural idioms and rituals that bind these groups is crucial. It is equally important to have a dedicated focus on the gendered experience of resistance. Finally, ethnography is crucial for deciphering Subjectivity, Identity, and the Moral Economy of Work. This would address the psychological and emotional impact of precarious labour. Ethnographic inquiry must examine the self as a gig worker. How an identity gets constantly shaped by algorithmic ratings and discipline. In what ways individuals maintain dignity and self-worth despite low social recognition. An ethnographic exploration on the moral judgments workers apply to the platform, customers, and themselves would be imperative. Complementing this can be the study of materiality of Gig Work. A study of everyday artifacts like helmets, uniforms, and delivery bags can be analyzed as tools for expressing resistance, identity, or group belonging. By immersing in these micro-level realities, future research can effectively bridge the gap between the macro-structural forces of platform capitalism and the intimate lived experiences of migrant workers.

The book however is an essential text synthesizing the complex links between migration, platform capitalism, and resistance. Through global, multi-sited research, it introduces vital concepts like "Digital Caporalato" and "Transversal Unionism." These frameworks offer a novel vocabulary for understanding the intersectional exploitation and collective struggles defining contemporary labour. Table 2 is a summary of the Comparative Thematic Mapping of Migrant Platform Labour Regimes

Source Chapter	Geographical Focus	Key Precarity Mechanism	Dominant Resistance Strategy Highlighted
Peterlongo	Italy/Argentina	Digital Caporalato; Refeudalisation	Legal Challenges; Grassroots Organizing
Kretsos & Charitsis	Greece	Deregulation; High Turnover Precarity	Digital Activism; Limited Union Mobilisation (e-food)
Deb Roy	India (Urban)	Uneven Development; Denial of Right to the City	Inter-union Reciprocal Relations; Transversal Unionism
Zhou	China (Urban)	Hukou and Gender Differentiation; Overwork	Cultures of Solidarity; Mutual Aid Networks
Borghi & Murgia	London, UK (IWGB)	Racialized Exploitation; Precarious Legal Status	Community Organizing; BAME/Transnational Alliances

The volume's most enduring contribution is its articulation of the critical policy deficit. It demands a necessary paradigmatic shift in regulatory discourse away from the narrow legal definition of "misclassification" and toward a holistic, structural revision of policies that directly address the structural and racialised commodification of migrant labour worldwide. By meticulously documenting how digital technologies optimise exploitation across global labour regimes, Della Puppa, Dhar, and Montagna have delivered an indispensable foundation for future critical research, ensuring that the struggles for decent work among the "digitalized service workers of the world" remain central to the critique of contemporary global capitalism.

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