

moving contradictions they are supposed to negotiate, as is made evident in Zhang's analysis of labour-force dualism.

Lu Zhang's book provides a comprehensive overview of the development of labour relations in the assembly sector of China's automotive industry, which she supports by rich empirical material gathered from her fieldwork and by referencing a broad body of English and Chinese research literature. More importantly, however, her work truly distinguishes itself by her thorough, theoretically informed analysis of the subject matter, being at all times keenly aware of the dynamic and contradictory character of the relationship between workers and management in capitalism in general, and the important role played by the party-state in the Chinese automotive industry in particular.

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HUWS, URSULA. *Labor in the Global Digital Economy. The Cybertariat Comes of Age*. Monthly Review Press, New York (NY) 2014. 208 pp. \$19.00.
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With the seven brief but powerful essays reprinted in *Labor in the Global Digital Economy*, Ursula Huws has provided a clear and compelling summary of the evolution of networked capitalism over the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century, raising important questions about the prospects for both waged and unwaged workers all across the global division of labor. The book is a sequel of sorts to her earlier collection of essays, *The Making of a Cybertariat: Virtual Work in a Real World* (New York, 2003). Two chapters focus in detail on what might be called "creative labor", "virtual production", or "knowledge work"; however, the strength of this book is that it situates such supposed "new economy" actors and organizations within a longer line of political-economic analysis and empirical data-gathering on these fields. As Huws makes clear, already some ten to fifteen years ago several research projects tried to come to terms with these changes in the world of work, especially the "Estimation and Mapping of Employment Relocation in a Global Economy in the New Communications Environment" project ("EMERGENCE", launched in 2000) and the "Work Organization Restructuring in the Knowledge Society" project ("WORKS", launched in 2005).

Rather than focusing attention solely on the networked, algorithmic tools that both augment and replace human labor in this story, Huws challenges us to think about the areas of human experience to which those tools and those laborers are now being mobilized, in the service of the accumulation of private capital rather than the stewardship of the public interest: the circulation of arts and culture, the provision of public services, and even the performance of the daily social practices that bind families, friends, and communities. In each of these arenas, incorporation into capitalist profit-making strategies and institutions means that a crucial space for critical challenge to those same strategies and institutions may be diluted, damaged, or even lost altogether, with "consumers" being created out of what

had been citizens or colleagues. And while the individuals whose work underpins these new markets might share certain particulars of “information labor” that starkly distinguish them from the plight of their fellow workers in extractive, manufacturing, or service industries worldwide, Huws argues that the “cybertariat” tends to set trends and patterns for the rest of us. As she writes, “I do not wish to suggest here that *all* work has changed. Far from it. My argument is, rather, that a range of features of work that were regarded in previous periods as exceptional or unusual are now taken for granted by a growing proportion of the population and, in the process, expectations of what ‘normal’ working behavior should be have also transformed” (p. 17).

Like any collection of previously published work, different readers will find value in different essays. For example, the last ten pages of the introduction are perhaps the most concise and well-written explanation and summary that I have ever read of the “series of mutually reinforcing economic, political, and technological factors” which have changed work throughout the twentieth century. (p. 17). Chapters 1, 2, and 4 provide a solid background on three critical arguments about the social relations of labor: the production of occupational identity under conditions of labor casualization, the constraints on labor mobility under conditions of urban and global restructuring, and the trade-offs between understanding the movement of capital, commodities, and workers as part of “value chains”, “flows”, or “networks” within and among organizations and nations. Chapters 5 and 7 work especially well together to paint a picture of labor conditions within the information and media industries, and the changing circumstances of information workers where “there is the urge by individual workers to do something meaningful in life, make a mark on the world, be recognized and appreciated and respected, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need for a subsistence income, the ability to plan ahead, and some spare time to spend with loved ones”, resulting in “a contradiction between a drive for autonomy and a search for security” (p. 125). And chapter 6 masterfully exposes the key contradiction of the neo-liberal political project to privatize state functions, which is not so much intended to “shrink” the size of government, as it is to actually enlarge the public service sector as new terrain for capital accumulation “in which services are standardized and capable of being delivered by a compliant and interchangeable workforce, embedded in a global division of labor, and subjected to the discipline of that global labor market” (p. 128).

As Huws mentions in the conclusion to her final essay, “[t]edious though it may be to unravel the complexities of global value chains and position our labor processes in relation to them, this seems to be an absolutely necessary task if we are to learn how this system might be changed, act collectively to change it, and start to imagine what alternatives might be possible” (p. 181). The essays in this book are those of a scholar in her prime, writing critical, clear, and focused prose meant to light a path toward further research and action. Such work deserves a wide audience.

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