

of migrants that we oftentimes treat as a singular whole are, upon closer inspection, replete with hierarchies and differences themselves. Matsukawa impressively makes that point while simultaneously helping readers see the integral cohesion discernible in these durable subnational communities of migrants.

The three excursions that conclude the book are brief but invaluable. Rahman's yields some basic detail about the Bangladeshi component of the foreign workforce in Arabia and their experiences in this transnational migration system. More specifically, the excursus helps readers grapple with how the visa bureaucracies and forms appear to potential Bangladeshi migrants: his descriptions of work visas, flying visas, and free visas barely slaked our thirst for more detail and discussion. Janardhan's excursus – really more of a personal essay (or, nowadays, an “auto-ethnography” perhaps) – was both multifaceted and intellectually titillating. Indeed, it is the sorts of experiences and sentiments expressed here – ambivalent, nuanced, equivocal, uncertain, considerate – that, through a process of omission, selective listening, and elision, frequently get whittled down and marshaled into the dominant academic narratives that occupy the academic limelight. To encounter those experiences and sentiments in their holistic form was absolutely welcome. Finally, Matsukawa and Hosada's concluding excursus briefly portrays the panoply of educational opportunities that migrants' children face in the Arab Gulf States, and how their careers and aspirations are mapped on those opportunities.

In summary, this collection is a welcome addition to the growing canon of work concerned with migrants and migration to the Arab Gulf States. Any book that trains its focus on the superdiverse demographic concoctions typical of the region might be criticized for its omissions, but this is to be expected: the coagulation of research concerning migrants from the Philippines present in this collection, for example, only illuminates the absence of attention to other national communities of migrants. And English is obviously not the first language for most of these authors – there are typos and grammatical slippages that pepper the book. But this “criticism” points to what I suggest is the most valuable aspect of this book: in drawing together a group of contributors whose academic footprints were largely crafted outside the citadel of Western academia, this edited collection visits numerous topics, ideas, and perspectives that would otherwise never breach the surface in our growingly cosmopolitan academic network. Amidst the centripetal pressures and homogeneity of global academia, the ideological diversity manifest in this collection has a clear value to us all.

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Workers' Inquiry and Global Class Struggle. Strategies, Tactics, Objectives.
Ed. by Robert Ovetz. Pluto Press, London 2020, 288 pp. £75.00 (Paper:
£19.99; E-book: £19.99)

The rise of neoliberalism has dealt a blow to labour movements worldwide. In response, a new generation of scholars has started to document and examine the strategies, tactics, and

objectives of workers' struggles. With traditional trade unions on the retreat, some advocate mainly broadening the scope to all forms of workers' self-organization. This book aims to boost another recent, and still modest, upsurge. It proposes the analysis of class composition as a way of informing new tactics, strategies, objectives, and forms of organization. To achieve this ambition, all the contributions in the volume attempt to carry out, either in part or in whole, what is called a "workers' inquiry". The workers' inquiry is a methodology for investigating the working class and can trace its origins to Marx in 1880.¹ Generally, the new inquiries into class composition collected in this book aim to unleash a new global class struggle and they are, as Robert Ovetz argues, "not an academic exercise" (p. 8). Is this volume only of interest to Marxist labour activists then, or does it also contribute to the new research agenda on workers' struggles?

Ovetz's rich and detailed discussion of the methodology of the workers' inquiry, which covers most of the book's introduction, reveals some of the most important differences from approaches in social history and labour studies. On the one hand, the inquiry should primarily inform workers about their own class power in a particular struggle. It is therefore also conducted by workers themselves. On the other hand, to be able to unleash a new cycle of global class struggle, it aims to provide a model for workers elsewhere. These two goals define the steps taken in each inquiry. For example, in the first layer of analysis, which looks at the current organization of work and capital's power in the workplace (called the technical composition), the objective is strategic. It should lead to identifying choke points, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses where workers can strike most effectively.

Despite these differences in approaches and goals, academia is never far from sight. Ovetz himself, after all, is a Lecturer in Political Science at San José State University, and several of the contributing authors are academics. This scholarly involvement is perhaps

somewhat unexpected given that the inquiry is conducted by workers themselves, but the inquiry is characterized also by collaboration with co-researchers, either academics or independent scholars. In the first case, it is called a workers' inquiry from below; in the second case, it is one from above. Moreover, it is not just the contributing scholars themselves who are interested in this work: they have found academic platforms for their co-research before. The book began as a series of curated articles for *The Journal of Labor and Society*, of which Ovetz is book review editor. Alpan Birelma's chapter on the victories of the Turkish TÜMTİS union against global corporations such as DHL and UPS is a revised and updated version of an earlier article published in the *Global Labour Journal*.

In addition, the book incorporates some of the most important recent academic insights on workers' struggles. First, it endorses the need to shift the analysis from strikes and trade unions to various new organizational forms, strategies, and tactics that can be found inside, outside, or in conflict with unions, including individual or invisible forms of resistance, such as work to rule, going slow, and small-scale sabotage. From all the chapters it emerges that, during the past decades, struggles have never ceased or gone underground. Instead, workers have been experimenting with new forms of resistance. Secondly, the book does not ignore today's often emphasized relevance of key influencers and leaders, or the potential of the workplace struggle as a community struggle. Moreover, as the title implies, globalization is a major theme, for the reason that because "capital is clearly global, the working class, too, needs a global workers' inquiry" (p. 9). In the end, this collection of

1. Karl Marx, "Workers' Questionnaire", in *Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. Marx & Engels Collected Works Vol 24: Marx and Engels: 1874-1883* (London, 1989), pp. 328-334.

inquiries is mostly global in the sense that it brings together cases from nine Global North and Global South countries. While Ovetz's introduction stresses the importance of spacing out workers' action in a strategic sequence across single or multiple workplaces, industries, and countries along the global supply chain – thereby pointing to the potentially momentous role of workers' struggles in the global logistics industry – only Birelma's chapter contains a significant empirical part on global connections and cooperation between workers.

Moreover, *Workers' Inquiry and Global Class Struggle* stands in a long academic tradition. In this field of study, activists and scholars have been collaborating for a long time, while some of the best researchers have also participated in workers' actions. After all, the last century's icon Harry Braverman based his famous *Labor and Monopoly Capital*² in part on his own experiences as a worker and activist. The same goes for the more recent insights just mentioned. Often, they, too, originate partly from on-the-ground experiences at workplaces, in actions, and in activist circles, including trade unions. This book thus reminds us that cooperation between researchers and workers is not only something from the almost forgotten 1960s and 1970s, thereby forcing us to continue debating the relationship between research on, and activism in, labour.

These close and long-standing ties do not stop Ovetz from criticizing contemporary academia. Most importantly, he argues that establishment social sciences utilize methods and obtain findings that inform capital's strategy. Their approaches would freeze the subject in time and context in order to gather information about workers as an object to be acted upon, controlled, and managed. At the same time, his class composition theory proposes a perspective on the relationship between labour and capital that is not entirely new, but still hardly discussed among scholars. Building upon previous work by Tronti, Panzieri, Kolinko, and Cleaver, Ovetz states that class struggles drive capitalist development because workers' struggles force capital to innovate. This, he argues, results in, for example, a reconsideration of the shift to platform-based metric-driven production using contingent labour as capital's strategic response to efforts to recompose working-class power.

Because of the new data presented, this collection of studies will be of interest to sociologists and social historians. This applies both to the raw material it is based on – including quite a few interviews – and to the contributions in their published form – the chapters being comprehensive analyses. In general, to be able to further the success of the workers' struggle, each inquiry is ideally characterized by three key objectives: it is conducted from the perspective of workers, and assesses the power of both capital and workers. Hence, these inquiries become a new source on tactics, strategies, organizational forms, and on the objectives of both capital and workers from the – often still missing – perspective of workers. Moreover, the workers' daily experiences at work are in most cases connected to a contextual analysis of the labour process and labour relations. As a result, these inquiries include information on workers' demographic characteristics (the diversity of workers; their commonalities and differences), associations, connections (both inside and outside the workplace), resources, networks of cooperation, and past and present forms of collective organization and action (both successful and unsuccessful). The assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of capital and workers thus make each inquiry a unique source on power relations at a specific time and place.

2. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1974).

The chapters cover a wide range of countries and sectors. National case studies on Argentina, Turkey, Italy, the United States, Mexico, the United Kingdom, China, South Africa, and India are organized in three thematic parts: transport and logistics; education, call centres, cleaners, platform work, and gamers; manufacturing and mining. The contributions on Argentina, by Dario Bursztyn, and on China, by Jenny Chan, have a strong historical character, covering respectively two centuries and four decades. Anna Curcio's chapter on Italian logistics workers offers very relevant insights into the dynamics of gender, migration, status, and race. Those interested in conducting a workers' inquiry themselves will be particularly attracted to the contributions on the United States, by Robert Ovetz, and on the United Kingdom, by the Notes From Below Project, for tested-on-the-ground models to replicate. Meanwhile, the chapter on India, by Lorenza Monaco, offers the most exhaustive reflections on experiences of conducting militant co-research.

Overall, the book is a welcome contribution for labour activists and for global labour historians, social historians, and sociologists of labour, either Marxists or non-Marxists. Although trade union power has been declining for years already, with traditional class thinking being relegated ever since, scholars worldwide are still far from agreeing on how to conceptually and theoretically approach the wide variety of recent workers' struggles. This book helps in this search by challenging dominant academic approaches and assumptions, offering critique that calls for a response from scholars. There is no doubt, however, that for the book to successfully help to map the next terrain of class struggle at the global level, two more steps are required. First, it is paramount that workers' inquiries become more common, and this depends on whether this research call is heeded. Second, an overarching analysis of the insights from the case studies is required, something that is not included in the present volume. For now, this edited volume contains a rich collection of new research on an urgent topic, from the perspective of workers worldwide.

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JAY, MARK and PHILIP CONKLIN. *A People's History of Detroit*. Duke University Press, Durham (NC) [etc.] 2020. xii, 306 pp. Ill. Maps. \$99.95. (Paper: \$26.95.)

Detroit's urban story never ceases to fascinate. In recent years, it has been the subject of books penned for a broad audience, including Mark Binelli's *The Last Days of Detroit* (2013) and Scott Martelle's *Detroit: A Biography* (2014), both authors being journalists; Herb Boyd's *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination* was published in 2017, the same year in which Kathryn Bigelow's controversial *Detroit* was released in cinemas. *A People's History of Detroit* by Mark Jay and Philip Conklin is a useful addition.

I attribute this interest in the former "Motor City" to at least two factors: Detroit's story is an epic one, with stark contrasts, of success and reversal, despair and hope – a story both unique and symbolic of a wider socio-political process in the US; secondly, Detroit has