Work in the Global Economy: Editorial Introduction

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The 2021 launch of Work in the Global Economy (WGE) has three underlying aims: first, to open-up a new space to analyse and debate the changing conditions of work and labour in an era of globalised, unleashed capitalism; second to interrogate, theoretically and empirically, the labour process as a distinct moment in the circuits of capital; third, to re-connect the politics of production with the wider contradictory processes of capital accumulation. To achieve these aims, WGE welcomes the submission of new studies that deepen our knowledge of work patterns and organisations in different regions, nation states, local and international chains of production, distribution, and exchange. Looking ahead the challenge is to expose the institutional means of labour subordination, patterns of resistance, conflict and accommodations while revealing analytically how social relations at work are framed by wider class relations within a global context conditioned by crisis tendencies, regional inequalities, and uneven development.

The Journal will build upon a tradition of shared scholarship and a commitment to theory building and rigorous empirical enquiry that has been exemplified by the annual International Labour Process Conference (ILPC). The latter has sought over many years to analyse and understand the interplay of labour process relations, wage-labour markets, social reproduction, and state regulatory and disciplinary powers. The Journal will therefore strive to sustain and extend this tradition by publishing findings from researchers working in and across labour and employment studies, work sociology, political economy, labour geography, and development. What follows is a brief outline of the intellectual trajectory of labour process theory and analysis and a forward-looking research agenda for the Journal.

As is well known, interest in the labour process gathered pace and, initially at least, owed much to the renewal of scholarship in Marxist political economy following the 1974 publication of Braverman's Labour and Monopoly Capital (LMC). Braverman's project was to build upon the classical Marxian account of the capital - wage labour relationship, and uncover the historical stages in the quest by capital to overcome the obstacles to valorisation and accumulation posed by `the subjective state of the workers, by their previous history, by the general social conditions under which they work as well as the particular conditions of the enterprise and by the technical settings of their labor' (Braverman, 1974: 57). Inspired by his own work experiences (he was a coppersmith for many years) and taking as his wider canvas the consolidation of US monopoly

capitalism in the twentieth century, Braverman's LMC provides a compelling account of the transformation and degradation of work and the progressive erosion of workers' conception and control of work and the division of labour. His key arguments, embracing the evolution of occupations, technology, Scientific Management and the Modern Corporation, are developed at a relatively high level of theoretical abstraction to expose the essentially exploitative character of the wage-labour relationship.

If, as some writers have claimed (Thompson and Newsome, 2004), Braverman's LMC and the early critical reactions to it should be viewed retrospectively as the first wave of LPT scholarship, what followed can be characterised as a research agenda that sought to explore a variety of forms of management control and corresponding patterns of worker resistance at the point of production. A key reference point was the classic Marxian distinction between labour power (capacity to work) and labour (actual work), and the consequential indeterminate nature of productivity outcomes. Multiple studies thus detailed with ever increasing granularity the different means of management control deployed to subordinate labour, eliminate pores in the working day, and maximise value per unit of labour time. More traditional Marxist accounts referred to the real subsumption of labour in pursuit of maximum surplus value, while an assortment of non-Marxist radicals preferred to drop all `value' connotations while retaining the notion of `surplus' generating labour processes. The terrain of analysis shifted subsequently following the widespread application of Burawoy's argument that labour process relations were conditioned not only by a dynamic of control and resistance but also by a capitalist imperative to achieve workers' consent (Burawoy, 1979). The payment of wages for labour power (rather than the product of labour) secures the employer's formal right of disposition over the utilisation of labour time, but the task of getting work out of the worker remains. Burawoy stressed that capital would strive to conceal the exploitative nature of wage labour by encouraging workers to consent to their own exploitation.

Burawoy's notion of 'manufacturing consent' was not without its critics (Thompson 1990). But more generally by the early 1980s LPT was subject to sustained criticism that it lacked an explicit focus on gender. Feminist sociologists produced pathbreaking ethnographic studies exploring the experiences and informal practices of female wage labour. Through explorations of the social construction of notions of craft and skill, these accounts uncovered the hidden dynamics of gender relations and how male workers-maintained control over work hierarchies to reproduce gendered divisions of labour. These contributions necessarily challenged the gender-blind narratives of much labour process analysis, questioning the efficacy of an analysis of the workplace which failed to embed at the outset wider social divisions within the capitalist economy (Pollert, 1981*;* Cavendish, 1982) Exceptionally, Cockburn (1983) problematised men's relationship to technology

focussing upon the renegotiation of gender divisions of labour during periods of technological change and the concomitant disruption of gender relations. In Brothers, her seminal work, on compositors in the newspaper industry she interrogates Braverman's notion of the relationship between the labour process and skill proposing a more differentiated and social and political (re)construction that is gendered and incorporates value. She documents the defeat of organised labour and patriarchal structures in the face of technological change and evokes a historical context with key periods of disruption: Her analysis of the social and ideological construction of the labour process is informative in raising questions not just about the material basis of reconfigured gender divisions of labour, but also the cultural and ideological dimensions, including the relationship of gender to organised labour.

Subsequent research programmes have continued to draw upon the traditions and foundations of LPT, with a central focus on the mechanism of extraction of labour from labour power, to explore contemporary developments in work and employment. The reach and coverage of these research programmes (too expansive to mention here) are catalogued in numerous edited texts and specials issues often emanating from the ILPC. In early debates, scholars in the labour process tradition critically evaluated and exposed through intricate qualitative case-studies an array of new management practices embracing flexibility, teamworking, and total quality management. The social construction of skill and skill utilisation remained an important theme with researchers interrogating skill formation systems across a variety of sectors, workplaces and occupational groups (Grugulis and Bozkurt 2011). Attention has also been focussed upon the growth of 'new' forms of labour power extending the terrain of analysis to explore how emotions, bodies, and sexuality are incorporated into the labour process (Hochschild, 1983, Wolkowitz 2006, Wolkowitz et 2013).

The direction and content of research on the labour process took a new turn after the global economic crisis of 2007-8. Manifest first as a crisis of banking and finance, the contradictions of capital accumulation were soon felt in production systems around the world. Mass unemployment on a scale not seen since the Great Depression of 1920/30s returned to the economies of the global north as bankruptcies soared. State (taxation-funded) bails-outs of private capital were commonplace and presaged in many Westerns economies the introduction of more-or-less severe austerity programmes to shift resources from public to private spheres. Against this backdrop research priorities moved to re-establishing a framework capable of embracing the now all too evident connectedness of production systems of the global economy. Labour process analysts thus took on the challenge of understanding work in a broader international setting, increasingly connected by global value chains, distributed technologies, and integrated system of production.

The Journal aims to expand the scope and scale of LPT and deepen its explanatory power by intersecting with complementary theoretical, historical, and empirical traditions. Our double launch issue reflects some of the most pressing theoretical and empirical questions.

First among these points of intersection is the dynamic relationship between productive and reproductive spheres and between domestic and waged labour, rooted in the gender division of labour. LPT historically has underplayed the importance of social reproduction, but more recently there has been a focus on reproductive labour undertaken by paid workers inside and outside the household and the transformation of reproductive work into productive work in the market. The latter has been spurred by the disinvestment of the state in reproduction with workers forced to take on the costs of their own reproduction (Federici 2004). With reference to the sweatshop regime in India, Mezzadri has demonstrated how social reproduction involves the reproduction of both labourers' and labour power. She notes that 'the exclusion of informal and informalised labour from debates on the relation between social reproduction and value creation will inevitably lead to problematic – in fact, dualist – understandings of capitalist development' and one that excludes the experiences of those in the 'majority world' (2019). She asserts that inclusion is necessary to build solidarities between productive and reproductive struggle.

Relatedly, the conceptualisation of race and ethnicity and the labour process has also been a neglected area, particularly in the global north, although in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement recent scholarship is returning to the concept of Cedric Robinson's theory of racial capitalism (Virdee, 2019). Increasing attention is focused upon the construction of research agendas and theoretical resources which necessarily engage with fundamental issues of race and racialisation**.** Exploring dimensions of labour precarity (familiar territory to labour process scholars), Strauss (2020) for example, argues that increasing attention needs to be paid to the social and material structures through which security and insecurity are mediated and distributed necessarily embracing an understanding of the dynamics of racialized capitalism. Lee and Tapia (2021) propose that both Critical Race Theory and intersectionality entail 'a theoretical commitment to social justice in knowledge production' and that 'the time is beyond ripe for industrial relations (sic) to join other social sciences in confronting systemic bias in our scholarship' (2021). We hope that WGE will be well positioned to take up this challenge.

In our launch issue we are pleased to publish three articles which explore the dynamics of racialised capitalism. We are delighted to be able to publish and acknowledge the work of Edward Webster, described by Michael Burawoy as a 'a perpetual motion machine – a windmill' propelled by political will and sociological imagination - necessarily a *political* imagination. Webster's work has

conceptualised the centrality of race to the labour process in the context of apartheid and subsequently neoliberalism, in particular linking labour process to the labour movement, central to WGE territory. In this issue Bridget Kenny and Edward Webster review the history of and the recent return to labour process theory in South Africa and how the race-class-gender dynamic is central to labour process theory during apartheid and in the postcolonial context. They focus on the racialized reinscription of post-apartheid workplace orders, in the context of new dynamics of of the 'precarianisation' and informalisation of labour. They propose that South African labour studies can widen labour process debates through the lens of racial capitalism since 'work reorganization and control have been and continue to be integrated with issues of collective identity and politics in ways that foreground an analysis of the changing dynamics of capitalist relations in space and time'. Kenny and Webster, propose that political economic conditions necessarily compel an analysis which connects the workplace to class and community. This connection allows a new focus on reproductive labour in the context of the shift towards precarious work.

Alimahomed-Wilson and Reese also draw on the theory of racial capitalism in the context of work in Amazon warehouses in the US during the pandemic, utilising the work of both Pulido (2016) and Melamed (2012) to explore the devaluation of the labour power of racialised (and gendered) workers as the process underpinning the production of differential (and excess) surplus value and capital accumulation (Strauss, 2020). In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and Covid-19, warehouse workers of colour viewed the lack of regard for their health and safety by largely white executives in racialised terms. The contradiction between Amazon's corporate public relations statements affirming "Black Lives Matter" with its exploitive treatment of workers of colour during the pandemic was not lost, this motivated 'non-traditional' organising that identified capitalism and structural racism as denying self-determination.

Devi Sacchetto and Valeria Piro's powerful exposition of meat slaughterhouses in northern Italy explores the racialisation of the labour process through sub-contracting including via 'cooperatives of convenience', comprising migrant workers. Here racialisation is a process that is contextual and fluid and reproduced through the everyday practice of work' with contractual hierarchies reflecting race, nationality and migrant status as well as gender. 'Dirty jobs' become racially inscribed, intrinsically defining and defined by their place in these hierarchies, but which may also be deracialised. For Sacchetto and Piro processes of racialisation are re-signified by migrants, who organise autonomously and assume a conflictual attitude towards both the meat processing companies and the traditional unions. While all three articles focus on race, they also emphasise the intersection with wider social divisions such as gender and class. We hope that the utility of

intersectional approaches and tension with macro-theories of class, race and gender will be the basis of further exploration in WGE.

Relatedly, the material development of global production networks have far-reaching implications for labour and the labour process (Newsome et al 2015). Attempts, to uncover the heterogeneous position of labour within global production and service networks have revealed that forms of exploitation are diverse and often overlapping. Of particular interest are forms of work such as forced or unfree labour (Andrijasevic 2021, Fudge 2019, McGrath and Strauss 2015) and multiple modes of informal work (Mezzadri 2019). On some estimates, the latter accounts for 60 per cent of the world's employed population. Forced labour has featured prominently in research studies focused on the international division of labour between the global north and global south an example is Ngai et al (2020) recent study that builds on Glucksman's concept, `total social organisation of labour', to situate China's garment workers within the multi-layered structure of global garment production networks (Glucksman 2005). While such concepts have not been central hitherto to labour process analysis, there is a compelling case for new research that explores the nexus of connections between forced labour, informal work, and 'regular' exploitation within global value chains. Also deserving of greater attention is the concept of `labour regime' that has been deployed in some studies to articulate relations between different forms of labour across spatially distinct production sites within an integrated supply chain (Campling and Colas 2021, Baglioni and Mezzadri 2020). A labour regime is constituted by the linkages between multiple production modes, sites of exploitation, and forms of capitalist and state regulation. WGE aims to broaden debate and deepen understanding of these diverse patterns of spatially differentiated, formal and informal labour practices.

Extending the analysis to explore the opportunity for worker organising and worker agency within the global apparel supply chain, Tartanoglu Bennett, Hammer and Jenkins report the findings of a longitudinal case study of Turkish garment workers, seeking remedy for lost earnings (wage theft) and severance payments following factory closure. The article examines the emergence of a global `governance gap' after the brands, the state, and employers reneged on promises to safeguard labour rights. It develops a political economy perspective and focuses on the intersecting and competing roles of different forms of capital and the state in curtailing workers' paths to remedy in the global apparel value chain.

The efficacy of worker organising is similarly explored by Samaluk and Greer who examine 'young' workers' transitions from education to work in neo-corporatist Slovenia. Based on field research, the authors examine 'next-generation welfare professionals', attempting to enter state-regulated,

relatively well unionised education and social protection professions. Institutional forces are invoked since austerity measures removed government-funded internships reducing entry level jobs and leading to the precarisation of next generation professionals excluded from the labour market. The study illuminates the importance of education-to-work transitions, and the key role of self- organised communities (or quasi-independent trade unions) in the creation of a collective sense of injustices. Although their relations with established trade unions are not close, they do receive organizational support from the Trade Union Youth Plus that organises students, the unemployed and precarious graduates stuck in a transitional stage of 'waithood', a north African concept used by Honwana to signify delay in attaining 'adulthood' due to hindered ability to integrate into the labour market and establish families. The findings show the need for unions to become more present within transitional spaces that are shaped by state policies.

For at least a half a century, certainly since Braverman (1974) produced LMC, there has been a parallel discourse around the subject of the future of work. Recent manifestations have tended to give priority to the twin forces of technological change and globalisation as the determining dynamics in shaping work organisations. These contributions are heavily imbued with a futurology that is rarely evidence-based and deterministic in its projections. While often dystopian, one utopia, 'Liberation through technology', is becoming a feature of contemporary discourse, whether realised through 'post-capitalism' or 'fully automated luxury communism' (Bastani, 2018; Mason, 2016). The labour process tradition has attempted to counter such narratives with historically grounded, empirical research that uncovers the contested, uneven, and typically incremental application of science and technology at work. For example, Howcroft and Rubery provide a reminder that, 'technological change cannot be relied upon to disrupt existing gendered divisions as previous 'revolutions' have reproduced the gendered division of labour, albeit in different guises' (2019:214). Looking ahead it seems likely that projections of widespread automation, pervasive 'robotisation', and the supplication of labour by artificial intelligence, apparently exemplified by the fast-expanding digital economy, will continue to drive analysis and debates on work transformation in the global north and the global south. In this launch issue of WGE, we are pleased to present three papers that initiate the debate.

Wood takes as his starting point the concept of workplace regimes, associated with Burawoy (1985) and understood as the existence of identifiable systematic patterns of managerial control. He develops a framework that can explain both patterns of control and the dynamics of workplace politics through an engagement with Science and Technology Studies and Economic Sociology. Wood argues that his framework can explain commonalities and regularities across seemingly divergent contexts as well as variations within regimes. The potential explanatory power of

`workplace regime' is then illustrated with reference to recent qualitative research in the retail sectors of the UK and the US.

Thompson and Laaser argue that the technological determinism that is a common feature of debates on the future of work and has resurfaced sharply in the discourse around the 'fourth industrial revolution' that can be checked by a revitalised foundational labour process analysis. They combine first and second wave LPT, to retain a focus on agency, but address the 'workplace-centricity' characteristic of the second wave to reassert the wider structural context embedding the 'materiality' of technology in specific business models and control regimes. The article refines and reframes this analysis by giving greater weight to sources of contestation and levels of strategic choices. Evidence to support their claims are adduced from case studies of call centres and digital labour platforms. The latter also provide the focus of the article by Krzywdzinski and Gerber. Putting forward a typology of labour control in online crowdwork platforms, they go beyond the concept of algorithmic management and differentiate between direct technical control in the form of automated output control, akin to digital Taylorism, and indirect control and responsible autonomy through ranking and reputation systems or 'gamification' to induce work performance. Perceptions of working conditions, they argue, are influenced by constellations of labour control and the degree workers' dependency on platform work. They conclude that a critical labour process perspective must incorporate positive perceptions of earnings opportunities and work and an acceptance of algorithmic forms of labour control among the platform workforce and thus go beyond a simple control – resistance model, albeit differentiated by dependency on platform work.

A focus on the political economy of crisis broadly defined and articulated provides a theoretical basis for examining work and employment processes, consequences and outcomes. Sylvia Walby's comprehensive analysis of the 2007-08 financial crash and subsequent period of austerity reasserts finance in the arena of sociology and proposes that such crises may lead to a number of outcomes; system breakdown, a return to the pre-crisis conditions, renewal of the system or change in the system. The analysis can be extended to also apply to the climate emergency and its impact on work and prevailing inequalities and social divisions. Women's budget groups internationally have called for gender equal economies to address both the Covid-19 recovery and climate emergency. As with Covid-19 a just transition to a low carbon economy may offer possibilities for the revaluation of care and gendered and racialised frontline work and of a lasting shift in the location of work with implications for the labour process and attendant potential for redistribution of domestic work. The forthcoming industrial revolution, based on the need to address climate change, will inevitably entail a renegotiated gender division of labour that is materially and politically mediated, how can our labour process theory capture and inform a just transition?

Disruptions and subsequent renegotiations of the social order are integral to a number of articles in the first issues, including the global health crisis engendered by Covid-19, which has led to a reassertion of the relationship between the labour process and worker health and safety. In this issue Taylor examines the interaction of SARS-CoV-2 with the contact centre labour process, integrating the mass production contact centre's socially-constructed built environment with the social organisation of work. He provides a synthesis of epidemiological science with LPT to analyse the risk of infection from a deadly zoonotic pathogen in a concrete work setting and where, as in Amazon, intimate knowledge of the organisation of work was ignored. Taylor proposes a 'wide-angle lens' to capture the external economic drivers that underlie the labour process – in this case the value-generating activities of contact centres in aggressively competitive markets. For Taylor serious potential to disrupt the labour process, prompted default to an insistence on business as usual.

Finally, we are also pleased to introduce 'Theory into Practice' as a feature of the journal. Articles published in this section of the journal will be shorter, but will play a key role in generating debates and insights as to how academic ideas are translated in outcomes. This initiative aims to acknowledges the positionality of researchers in line with the emancipatory paradigm and traditions in public sociology (Hyman, 1989; Brook and Darlington, 2013) and to encourage academics and practitioners to reflect on the myriad issues that emerge when translating conceptual or theoretical ideas into outcomes beyond the 'academy'. In this issue Dave Smith discusses mobilisation theory from the perspective of firstly a trade union activist playing a leading role in the exposure of the UK's largest contractors in blacklisting construction workers, and secondly as a TUC tutor. Smith highlights the role of employer counter-mobilisation in pre-empting union organisation, challenging any notion of mobilisation theory as a sequential process. He also emphasises the role of rank-and-file leaders in leading sporadic unofficial industrial action a sector characterised by 'self-employment' and transitory working relationships. Theory into Practice will undoubtedly evolve with the development of the journal and will, we hope, reflect different global contexts, movements, social groups, and agents.

To close, foregrounding the diverse interests that compose labour and capital in the Global South and North, the journal will promote interdisciplinary and international agendas that will have broad appeal. We hope that it is clear from this issue that WGE adopts a pluralist approach to theory, method, and discipline. Theoretical pieces and empirical analyses are equally welcomed, and we encourage contributions from both emerging and existing scholars. The core criteria for acceptance for publication in WGE are academic rigour and critical conceptualisation. Eligible articles should bring new empirical insights that advance analysis in theoretical or empirical

directions. The journal has an independent editorial structure that reflects geographic, disciplinary, and social diversity. We are committed to delivering an intellectually rigorous, supportive, and fair reviewing process that will strengthen the vitality of the journal and engagement of academic communities.

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