

LABOUR REGIMES AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION

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LABOUR REGIMES AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION

Edited by

ELENA BAGLIONI, LIAM CAMPLING, NEIL M. COE
AND ADRIAN SMITH

agenda
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: LABOUR REGIMES AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION

Elena Baglioni, Liam Campling, Neil M. Coe and Adrian Smith

LABOUR REGIMES AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION: INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

Huge strides have been made in recent decades in our understanding of the networked and dynamic forms of capital accumulation in the world economy. Ranging across foundational work on the new international division of labour (NIDL) to more recent global production network (GPN) and global value chain (GVC) analyses, such work has enabled an enhanced understanding of the ways in which more globally integrated economies have developed and become consolidated. Until recently, however, this work has been more silent in terms of understanding both the employment and the labour consequences of these changes, and also the role that labour plays in the structuring and formulation of landscapes of accumulation. Although it is possible to diagnose a growing “awareness of the different forms of labour” enrolled into global production structures (Taylor *et al.* 2015: 9), alongside growing attention to social upgrading, the rights and voice of labour, and labour agency (Ramamurthy 2000; Barrientos, Gereffi & Rossi 2011; Coe 2015), we still see a tendency towards a capital-centric narrative focused on firms as the key agents and actors in global production systems.

Our approach in this collection is to recentre the analysis of global capitalism on the *labour regime* as the core of networked, scalar systems of economic integration and production. At its core, a labour regime signals the combination of social relations and institutions that bind capital and labour in a form of antagonistic relative stability in particular times and places. This recentring is important both analytically and politically. Analytically, it refuses to privilege any single site in a global production system but, rather, sees the labour regime as the societal framework through which capitalist accumulation at a world scale becomes possible. Politically, it positions labour at the heart of questions about how we understand and approach the global economy. By understanding and locating different forms and modes

of work, labour regime analysis seeks to defetishize exploitation as a first step for building relationships of commonality between workers who are, seemingly, often disparate, including those whose labour is frequently “hidden” in informal or household economies. Labour regimes analysis exposes the multiple threads linking different workers both within systems of global production and also across workplaces, regions and countries, thereby indicating avenues for building new solidarities.

The literature on the *impacts* of global production on labour is several decades old and spans many disciplines, notably development studies, economic anthropology, human geography, labour studies/industrial relations, political science and sociology. This literature is replete with time- and place-specific case studies of the differentiated outcomes of enrolling in global production for workers of different types. More recently it has emphasized the potential for workers to improve their conditions of existence through exerting different forms of individual and collective agency, as well as advancing deep historical accounts studying processes of change in capitalist production, such as in the field of global labour history. In parallel, since the mid-1990s, analysis of the underlying production structures in terms of new international divisions of labour has given way to work on global value chains/production networks that captures the spatially and organizationally fragmented nature of much contemporary commodity production. Connections started to be forged between these two strands in the 2000s (e.g. Smith *et al.* 2002; Bair & Ramsay 2003; Palpacuer & Parisotto 2003; Selwyn 2007; Cumbers, Nativel & Routledge 2008), and the conversation has broadened and deepened subsequently (e.g. Pickles & Smith 2016; Mezzadri 2017; Werner 2016). This work has revealed the interdependences between worker positionality in global production networks and the particular social and institutional milieu in which they live and work. Newsome *et al.* (2015), in turn, use labour process theory as a window onto these interactions in and through the coordinated but geographically distributed functions of global production networks.

What these works lack, however, is a systematic theorization of the intersections between the workplace and wider social institutions and processes, and they have not tapped the potential of labour regime analysis for advancing this agenda. In our diagnosis, such analysis has the potential to make a unique contribution through effectively bridging the dynamics of territorialized labour systems and global production structures. This impulse builds upon a significant resurgence of interest in the theorization of labour regimes in a range of interdisciplinary areas, including critical development studies, economic geography and employment relations, among others. This has partly taken the form of a concern to understand the role that labour regimes play in the structuring, organization and dynamics of global systems

of production and reproduction. Labour regimes are seen as historically formed, multi-scalar phenomena resulting from the articulation of struggles over local social relations, and their direct or indirect intersections with the commercial demands of lead firms in global production networks and with the gendered and racialized politics of social reproduction. As the following section elaborates, however, the notion of a labour regime has a long heritage that can be traced to debates in the 1970s and 1980s in development studies, feminist political economy, industrial relations and political sociology, and in labour geography in the 1990s. This book, therefore, seeks to develop this emerging field of intellectual enquiry by examining the nature, role, constitution and dynamics of labour regimes in globalizing capitalism.

But why labour regimes? In taking seriously Thompson and Smith's (2009) call for labour process theory to incorporate but simultaneously move beyond distinct workplaces, a labour regimes approach introduces the variegated scales of political-economic and socio-cultural relations, processes and contexts that produce and reproduce networks of workers dispersed across spaces and places from the local to the global (Bernstein 2007; Taylor & Rioux 2018). As Pattenden (2016) argues, in a development of Banaji (2010), the labour regime is a useful mediating category between the day-to-day labour processes of a particular workplace with its diverse "forms of exploitation" and the more abstract "general forms of domination" under capitalism. It also offers the potential for significant analytical purchase on how labour control and governance mechanisms, promulgated "vertically" through inter-firm interactions within global production networks, interact with more territorial or "horizontal" systems of labour regulation to ultimately shape labour conditions and potentialities (e.g. Locke 2013).

But, if a labour regime can only ever be understood through its particular historical-geographical configurations and, as such, has to be analysed empirically, to what extent can we theorize the category further than what is currently in place? Is it the case that the thorny methodological issue of any particular labour regime's analytical bordering (where it stops and starts) can be defined only in relation to the types of questions being asked? This book engages with a range of questions at the heart of labour regime analysis, which include: how can we theorize labour regimes in the context of long-run historical processes of colonization and the spatially uneven deepening of global capitalist relations of production; to what extent do labour regime concepts enable the development of comparative analysis of different but interconnected political-economic formations; how do labour regimes develop in distinct and similar ways in relation to contrasting global production systems; how do we make sense of the reproduction and control of specific labour processes in discrete places and industries; and to what extent does labour regime analysis provide a synthetic framework for understanding

the political economy of contemporary capitalism? In short, the book contributes politically to putting workers – their organizations, regulation and (re)production – at the centre of global production.

LABOUR REGIMES: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF A CONCEPT

The notion of the “labour regime” – alongside associated terms such as “workplace regimes” and “production regimes” – crops up repeatedly in contemporary social science. In many cases, however, it is used in somewhat broad and descriptive terms, to simply capture the varied experiences of labouring in the global economy, or as a synonym for national-level systems of industrial relations and employment regulation. The result of this multiplication of uses of the concept is that it can lead to quite general and often elusive definitions of labour regimes. Bair (2019: 488), for instance, defines a labour regime as “the dominant way in which labour is recruited, compensated, and disciplined”, while Li (2017: 247) describes how the term refers to “the assemblage of elements that set the conditions under which people work”. In this section, we introduce a series of studies that have sought to use, or “put into practice”, the labour regime in more conceptually precise terms. To do so, we delimit three phases of work dating back to the 1980s, using the varied geographical scales through which the concept is deployed as a loose organizing device. It is important to recognize that all labour regime analysis is multi-scalar to a certain extent, so here we are primarily focused on identifying different emphases and analytical priorities. Many of the themes we sketch out in this introduction are more fully developed through the richness and conceptual development of the chapters that follow.

Phase 1: the workplace in national context

The work of Michael Burawoy (1979, 1983, 1985) is foundational to the labour regimes approach. As such, his ideas are engaged with frequently in the chapters that follow (see especially Peck in Chapter 4), meaning that only a brief introduction is required here. In his critiques of Braverman’s (1974) germinal work on deskilling and capitalist labour processes, Burawoy (1985) sought to extend consideration of labour control beyond the workplace to include the wider “politics of production”. What he termed “factory regimes” were therefore forged at the intersection of the politics associated with the labour process – i.e. the workplace struggles between employers and workers – and the wider “political apparatus” of the state in terms of its labour market interventions and regulations. Of particular importance here

were the efforts of the state to provide basic welfare and social safety nets, and to mitigate the effects of harsh labour control strategies through establishing and upholding employment regulations and collective bargaining rights. At the heart of Burawoy's (1979) concern was the question of how forms of consent in the labour process were "manufactured" via the development and deployment of different regimes.

Burawoy thus conceptualized differences in factory regimes as being shaped by four intersecting dynamics, namely the labour process, the nature of market competition, the reproduction of labour power and state intervention – with the latter two being of particular importance (McKay 2006). Drawing on detailed empirical work at the factory level, he distilled five different types of factory regimes. In addition to *company-state regimes*, in which workers are entirely reliant on the employer for their social reproduction, and the regimes of *bureaucratic despotism*, associated with state socialism, Burawoy famously distinguished between *despotic regimes*, in which there is little or no state support to workers beyond that provided by employers; *hegemonic regimes*, in which welfare states provide assistance in the domain of social reproduction, and workers also benefit from a strong union movement; and the early contours of a regime of *hegemonic despotism* – which we would now associate with neoliberal globalization – in which labour becomes subordinated to the interests of expansive capital accumulation in a process of competitive undermining of labour standards and salaries (see, in particular, Chang, Hürtgen and Anner in Chapters 8, 9 and 11, respectively).

Burawoy's work has been especially influential because of the way it allows analysis to bridge the scale of the workplace – the traditional locus of labour process approaches – and the national political-economic contexts in which they are embedded. Put another way, the factory regime connects "the micro-politics of the workplace and the macro-politics of the state" (Knutsen & Hansson 2010: 159). It has inspired a range of studies of workplace labour regimes that continue to this day, ranging across, for instance, the workplace regimes associated with the logistics industry in northwest Europe (Dörflinger, Pulignano & Vallas 2020) to the construction industry in China and India (Suresh 2010) and Africa (Wethal 2017). In this latter context, for example, Fei (2020) profiles the bifurcated "compound" labour regime associated with Chinese construction projects in Africa, which uneasily combines expatriates housed in segregated residential spaces with a precarious local workforce. Over time, and as we shall return to shortly, these studies have shown increasing attentiveness to global competitive dynamics and the distinctiveness of the labour control strategies associated with foreign investors. Indeed, Burawoy (1998) himself has argued that factory regimes and their national contexts need to be integrated more with "international forces".

A step in this direction was already taking place, however, within two parallel but interconnected bodies of work that were developing from the late 1970s, one within development studies and one within feminist political economy. Both deployed a hierarchical understanding of global capitalism and examined labour regimes across colonial and postcolonial Africa, Asia and Latin America. Within development studies, and through the lens of agrarian political economy, the main focus was on rural labour regimes (see Chapter 3 by Lerche, for more detail), itself a reflection of the ways in which global capitalism incorporated vast tracts of the global South. Notably, Bernstein (1988a, 2007) sought to differentiate between different kinds of colonial labour regimes, which he defines broadly as “different methods of mobilising labour and organising it in production, and their particular social, economic and political conditions” (1988a: 32). In distinguishing between four types of labour regimes – forced labour, semi-proletarianization, petty commodity production and fully fledged proletarianization – he was able to profile how these foundations underpinned different kinds of capitalist transitions in the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Here the notion of labour regime served to highlight “how the making of colonial economies entailed the braking of pre-colonial economies and that the essential mechanism of this process was *restructuring the uses of labour* within a developing international division of labour” (Bernstein 1988a: 39, emphasis added). Colonial labour regimes were, first and foremost, racialized divisions of labour enforced through an arsenal of economic and extra-economic forces. Importantly, they “were the outcomes of processes of struggle” (Bernstein 1988a: 41), expressing the colonial “labour problem” – i.e. the resistance of the colonized against brutal capitalist discipline that served to structure working lives, livelihoods and social reproduction around market forces. When the colonized were able to retain some means of production – crucially, but not always, land and household labour – the notion of the labour regime was important to highlight that these forms, often seen as “subsistence-like production” or “pre-capitalist”, and their associated intra-household relations, were in fact the product of capitalist penetration into the countryside and therefore had to be investigated from this perspective (Gibbon & Neocosmos 1985; Bernstein 1988b). This understanding of labour regimes was therefore fully cognizant of the difference between “modes of production” and the diversity of “forms of exploitation” that can exist under a mode of production, as spelled out by Banaji (1977) and as remains foundational to contemporary labour regime analysis. Indeed, this interest in rural and agricultural worksites resonates today, as seen, for instance, in work on flexible oil palm labour regimes in Mesoamerica (Castellanos-Navarrete, Tobar-Tomás & López-Monzón 2019) and on colonial and contemporary plantation labour regimes in Indonesia (Li 2017; Pye 2017), among others.

Parallel to analyses of factory and colonial regimes, a prolific strand of feminist scholarship across agrarian and global political economy was at the same time *de facto* investigating the gendered nature of labour regimes underpinning the globalization of production (see Chapter 2 by Bair). Without explicitly using the concept of labour regime, this scholarship was nonetheless in conversation with the works of Braverman, Burawoy and Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye. Answering the question “Why then do women increasingly become the bearers of labour so defined?” (Fernández-Kelly 1983: 152) required sourcing all the key ingredients of labour regime analysis: relating different *dynamics* (exploitation and subordination), *territories* and *institutions* (the household, the village, the state, the local/global interactions inherent to the export economy) and *temporalities* (precolonial, colonial and postcolonial relations of production and reproduction). For Bair (2010), the female face of global production that emerged from this work is simultaneously “contingent and patterned”. In other words, this literature demonstrates that the creation of difference across gender, race, and ethnicity lay at the heart of labour regimes, bridging the transition from the “old” international division of labour structured around primary commodity exports from the global South to the “new” one, which also incorporated standardized manufactured goods (e.g. Young, Wolkowitz & McCullagh 1981; Nash & Fernández-Kelly 1983).

This early feminist labour regime analysis was influenced by different Marxist strands and engaged with debates on modes of production and the relation between production and reproduction (e.g. O’Laughlin 1977; Mackintosh 1977; Young 1978; Beneria 1979) and the value of housework (Dalla Costa & James 1972; Federici 1975). Within feminist agrarian political economy, a careful analysis of the peasantry and household relations was already showing different forms of exploitation *within* capitalism and arguing that vast tracts of workers and women in the South endured a *marginal* as opposed to a “formal” or “real” subsumption to capital: they constituted those masses fully integrated into capitalism but also fully in charge of their own reproduction – i.e. a population selling products and labour power below any minimum subsistence level (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1982; von Werlhof 1983). Much of feminist global political economy was examining the multiple forms and hidden relations of work accompanying the new global assembly line emergent from the 1970s onwards with the explosion of manufacturing GVCs. Overall, these analyses were intrinsically historical and multi-scalar, as the effort to understand the gendered nature of global production required investigating the capitalist transformation of production and reproduction *while* situating this transformation globally, both geographically and theoretically (drawing from the works of Luxemburg, Wallerstein, Amin and Mandel, among others). The “world market factory” and “runaway shops” (Elson & Pearson 1981; Safa 1981) and their counterparts in the “world market

plantation and outgrower schemes” depended upon armies of female workers produced by the different ways capitalism had transformed and reconstituted pre-existing social relations (Afonja 1981; Mackintosh 1981), often through processes of *housewifization* (Mies 1982, 2014). This work was thus critical in starting to reveal some of the most invisible social relations within labour regimes – i.e. their gendered discursive and ideological components. The dogmas of docility, acquiescence, permanent availability and cheapness were deconstructed and the relations between the discursive/ideological and material dimensions of exploitation were demonstrated. Although this literature largely failed to inform and expand the boundaries of labour regime analysis at the time, as we will see shortly, elements of this tradition are now experiencing a revival in a new generation of studies that integrate labour regime and social reproduction analyses.

Phase 2: inserting the local/regional scale

A second phase of work on labour regimes emerged in the 1990s, initiated largely by economic geographers seeking to understand the social formation and distinctiveness of local labour markets (Peck 1989; Hanson & Pratt 1992). In contrast to prevailing theories of labour market regulation and segmentation, which were largely aspatial and articulated primarily at the national level, there was a growing recognition that labour markets were spatially differentiated and formulated more locally (i.e. at subnational scales). This “localness” was seen to derive from two main sources (Peck 1996). On the one hand, labour market dynamics are locally constituted through unique intersections of labour demand structures and labour supply structures (the “production–reproduction” dialectic), intersections that have been shown by Hanson and Pratt (1995) to be highly gendered. On the other hand, labour market institutions vary geographically in terms of their structure, their functions and the local impacts of their strategies (the “regulatory” dialectic). In sum, local labour markets were each seen as a “*geographically specific institutionalization of labor market structures, conventions, and practices, providing unique contexts against which the strategies of labour market actors are formulated*” (Peck 1996: 266, emphasis in original). This perspective resonated with an ongoing research agenda prompted by Massey’s (1984) seminal work on spatial divisions of labour, including studies of variegated trade union geographies (e.g. Martin, Sunley & Wills 1996).

The terminology of labour regimes was invoked in this context by Jonas (1996) through his conceptualization of the “local labour control regime” (LLCR). Jonas argues that the LLCR is a “historically contingent and territorially embedded set of mechanisms which co-ordinate the time-space

reciprocities between production, work, consumption and labour reproduction within a local labour market” (1996: 325). These mechanisms are enacted through networks of what are often locally distinct institutions and reciprocal social relations. The notion of “control” is construed here in a broad sense, rather than just in terms of workplace measures to improve efficiency or productivity. It therefore follows that the full range of worker, household, firm, civil society, state and quasi-state institutions are – or, at least, may be – involved in shaping the LLCR.

The development of these relatively stable regimes was seen to be driven by one of the basic contradictions of capitalism, namely that which exists between the spatial mobility of capital in general, with its associated bargaining power, and the need for specific capitals to extract profits from concrete investments in particular localities. Although an LLCR is characterized by an element of stability, Jonas (1996: 329) makes it clear that it “is not a static and fixed object but rather a fluid and dynamic set of social relations and power structures which are continuously reproduced and/or transformed by the forces of domination, control, repression and resistance operating at a variety of scales”. Jonas’ conceptualization is thus a potentially powerful one. In particular, it reflects the way in which the peculiarities of particular labour markets are integrated into production systems operating at the wider national and international scales. Moreover, it emphasizes that differences *between* various LLCRs are a key force driving the mobility of capital investments.

Subsequent research sought to advance Jonas’ approach by incorporating the importance of hegemonic discourses circulating within and around local labour regimes in reproducing their inherent power dynamics. Deploying a Singapore case study, Coe and Kelly (2000, 2002) make three arguments in this regard. First, they highlight the mobilization of discourses that shape particular understandings of the “external” economy at the larger national and global scales, as, for instance, in relation to the nature and inevitability of “globalization”. Second, these representations are in turn used to justify and operationalize particular labour strategies and policies within the LLCR, such as suppressing labour costs to remain “competitive” in international terms, or emphasizing certain kinds of skills upgrading and training schemes. Third, representations circulating within the LLCR serve to validate and prioritize certain segments of the labour market over others – such as knowledge workers versus consumer service workers – thereby potentially creating problems for maintaining social cohesion or the notions of local community that Jonas (1996) alludes to. The dominant representations that emerge in particular labour regimes are thus integral to the power structures through which control and regulation are enacted.

In the 25 years since the notion was first mooted, Jonas’ LLCR regime concept has inspired a range of studies, particularly in industrializing contexts

in Asia, ranging from Kerala (Neethi 2012) and Tamil Nadu (Vijayabaskar 2017), to the export-processing zones (EPZs) of the Philippines (McKay 2006). Rather than seeking to generalize across local labour regimes to create ideal types, a different impulse has generally been at play in these studies, namely to show in detail how labour regimes evolve locally and to evaluate the consequences for workers (Magnusson, Knutsen & Endresen 2010). The work of two scholars is indicative here. First, Kelly (2001) explored the local labour regimes associated with foreign-investment-fuelled industrialization in the provinces of Cavite and Laguna to the south of Manila, the Philippines. He details how the regimes were constructed by a range of actors and institutions – encompassing national investment agencies, corporate investors, industrial estate management companies, recruitment agencies, village/community leaders, local governments and labour organizations – geared towards the education, recruitment, training, discipline and reproduction of the local workforce. In turn, comparison with similar industrial enclaves in Batam, Indonesia, and Penang, Malaysia, shows how locally specific combinations of mechanisms were used to underpin labour control (Kelly 2002).

Second, in more recent work in Karnataka, India, Pattenden (2016) has sought to deepen theorization of local labour control regimes through a focus on class relations. In effect integrating the insights of the two phases of labour regime analysis we have described hitherto, he proposes a three-level approach that distinguishes between, but integrates across, (a) a “macro labour control regime”, shaped by India’s national political economy; (b) local labour control regimes; and (c) control within the labour process.

Local labour control regimes ... are understood here as an expression of class struggle in a particular place, and at a particular time. They centre on the relationship between simple and expanded reproduction in a particular place (how labourers make a living and how capitalists accumulate). (Pattenden 2018: 1042–3)

He identifies two distinct LLCRs, one typified by dryland agriculture and commuting (Dharwad district), and one by wetland agriculture and circular migration to Bengaluru (Raichur district). Each was characterized by distinctive patterns of accumulation, class and caste relations and local institutional dynamics.

In sum, this second phase of work on labour regimes has driven a shift “away from an exclusive focus upon production and the *workplace* (i.e., firms, industries, and labor markets) to the relationships between production and regulation in the *workplace* (e.g., the analysis of labor practices extending into the wider locality and beyond)” (Jonas 2020: 56, emphasis in original).

Although research has tended to operate predominantly across the workplace/local/national scales, it has of course not been blind to the significance of global capitalist relations. It is fair to say, however, that the LLCR was first posited in the early stages of intense neoliberal globalization, and the global context in such studies has often been described in quite general and contextual terms, thereby prompting a third phase of labour regime research.

Phase 3: labour regimes and global production

Over the past decade or so a third phase of labour regime analysis has sought to more fully incorporate these global dynamics and at the same time recover some of the earlier analytical attention to the construction of social difference. The intensification of economic globalization in the 1990s and 2000s, along with the concomitant rise of organizationally and spatially fragmented global value chains/production networks across a wide range of natural resource, manufacturing and service sectors (Coe & Yeung 2015; Dicken 2015), enhanced the need for approaches that explored the causal effects of how those global production systems were structured in relation to labour. This body of work emphasizes how the dynamics shaping national, regional/local and workplace labour regimes are often extra-territorial and, more specially, international in nature. Work on dormitory regimes in China in the mid-2000s was perhaps at the cutting edge of this trend, looking at how the labour requirements of various forms of export production within a national context exhibiting high levels of domestic migration lead to the formation of a particular workplace regime that profoundly blurs the boundaries between the spheres of production and reproduction in terms of labour control (see also Andrijašević, Chapter 16, and Schling, Chapter 17). Its proponents argue that this opens up a “transnational labour process perspective” that looks at how work relations in concrete production processes are “locked into transnational capital flows, labour flows, and work organization practices that are not only nationally bounded, but transnational and global in their structure” (Pun & Smith 2007: 42). Such an argument is also demonstrated persuasively in Lüthje *et al.*'s (2013) study of standardized “regimes of work” across the global IT industry.

Various studies have tackled different elements of this analytical jigsaw, even if not always explicitly using labour regimes terminology. Riisgaard and Hammer (2011), for instance, chart how worker agency in the cut flower and banana industries is shaped both by the extent to which the global value chain in which they are embedded is driven by powerful consumer-facing actors, and by the nature of the local and national labour regimes within which they work. Locke (2013) and Bartley (2018) interrogate the role of the transnational

private regulation initiatives that now typify the governance of global production networks, also emphasizing that it is the intersection of transnational and domestic governance dynamics that determines worker outcomes, while Graz, Helmerich and Prébandier (2020) delimit the interactions between transnational, national and local dynamics that determine the potential for labour agency in the context of private regulation. Anner (2015) explores how worker agency more broadly is shaped by the interplay of global industry conditions and national labour regimes (see also Chapter 11 by Anner). In turn, Lakhani, Kuruvilla and Avgar (2013) and Nathan, Tewari and Sarkar (2016) profile how different configurations of global production networks, and the different inter-firm governance arrangements therein, produce different employment patterns across localities in the various national economies that they interconnect.

More broadly, this third phase of research also intertwines productively with feminist global value chain approaches that seek to explore how gendered labour regimes are integrated into global production structures in a mutually constitutive way (see Chapter 2 by Bair). Inspired by the 1970s/1980s feminist political economy and development studies debates around labour regimes discussed above, some of the current approaches are recovering and expanding earlier agendas on social reproduction, focusing on the creation of difference and the multiple ways subordination and exploitation intertwine in global capitalism today (Mezzadri & Fan 2018; Baglioni & Mezzadri 2020; Baglioni 2021). Forty years into the international fragmentation of production and the deepening of hierarchically organized global webs of outsourcing relations, these approaches challenge any clear boundary between forms of inclusion and exclusion in the global factory. They also highlight the ever-growing “marginal subsumption” of a swelling army of racialized and gendered workers across the world.

Even if they do not invoke the notion of a labour regime, Werner and Bair’s (2019) disarticulations perspective (itself drawing on Hall 1980) advances a labour-centred analysis of global capitalism that accounts for the production of difference along axes of race and gender. Their approach challenges the “inclusionary bias” of most studies of global production and, instead, seeks to explain the formation and restructuring of networks of global production via specific subregional contexts and their distinctive politics, including of labour. In export-oriented garment global value chains in India, for instance, racial capitalism manifests in caste relations, and the ways in which these relations are articulated with gender and class, as women home workers straddle both commodity production and social reproduction. By connecting in this way the local to the global and back again, Mezzadri (2017) shows the dynamic interplay of different scales of labour regimes and their associated “relations of domination and subordination”. Alimahomed-Wilson (Chapter 15) develops

this further by drawing on Robinson's (2000) theorization of racial capitalism, which serves to demonstrate a broader contradiction at the heart of contemporary capitalism: self-framed "good" corporations such as Amazon may position their corporate image around equality (now that class is no longer an axis of mainstream debate on equalities), and even support campaigns such as Black Lives Matter, but they actively bust unions where workers are often predominantly people of colour (Bakan 2020). Indeed, given the racial and colonial logics of global production, one challenge to the advance of labour regime analysis is to unravel the ways in which "the main tools of raciality (racial and cultural difference) effectively produce the kind of necessary subaltern subjects" (Chakravartty & da Silva 2012: 372) that sustain and reproduce labour regimes across time and space (see Chapter 17 by Schling). We return to this theme of centring race in analyses of labour regimes in our conclusion to the book (Chapter 18).

The study of contemporary labour regimes and networks of global production can be usefully historicized to understand the specific forms of domination and subordination – as well as the management and capitalist accumulation strategies – that bind labour regimes in a form of antagonistic relative stability. A powerful set of publications that seeks to do just this is global labour history (Lucassen 2008; van der Linden 2008). This field has taken working-class history away from a Eurocentric focus to examine labour in an always/already global economy – one in which the formation of commodity chains was the foundation and competitive driver of early capitalist expansion and creation of colonial labour regimes. For example, although it does not develop the labour regime concept, a recent edited collection on global labour history – *Global Commodity Chains and Labor Relations* (Komlosy & Musić 2021) – explores intersecting themes to those of this book.

How, then, might we bring these analytical lenses together through the notion of labour regimes? In one suggestive study, Smith *et al.* (2018: 556) conceptualize labour regimes as "historically formed, multiscalar phenomena resulting from the articulation of struggles over local social relations intersecting with lead-firm contracting practices in [global production networks] at the workplace scale". Importantly, labour regimes are forged not only through local and national processes but also by the nature of inter-firm relationships (e.g. subcontracting, modular and just-in-time [JIT] production systems), through which workers and firms are integrated into GPNs. This is an avowedly multi-scalar framing, which intersects (a) workplace labour processes; (b) the local/regional political economy of labour, incorporating local labour markets and dynamics of social reproduction as suggested by the LLCR concept; (c) national-level employment regulation and labour relations systems; and (d) inter-firm relations and buying practices within global production networks (see also Campling *et al.* 2021). Smith *et al.*'s

(2018) framing is used to show how employment conditions in the Moldovan apparel industry have been forged through three dynamics: the structural pressures associated with price and delivery pressures in the wider GPN; the legacies of Soviet-era workplace and local labour regimes; and the impacts of national-level regulation by the Moldovan state (more detail in Chapter 14 by Campling, Smith and Barbu). Arnold and Campbell (2017) similarly offer a multi-actor, multi-scalar analysis of worker actions within Myanmar's apparel industry, which, interestingly, also includes a discursive component to the analysis in relation to corporate social responsibility (CSR) impulses.

Both alone, and in combination, these various studies are indicative of the research agenda that this book seeks to contribute to. In many respects, this work seeks to resolve what labour process theorists have called the “connectivity problem” of linking “the dynamics of the labour process at the point of production with the broader political economy shaping the nature of contemporary production” (Taylor *et al.* 2015: 5). As that broader political economy has deepened its cross-border connections through the governance mechanisms of lead and supplier firms in global production networks, the analytical challenge has been how to theorize the multi-scalar linkages and connections between workplace regimes and the wider local, regional, national and international political-economic formations that structure the employment relation and the social reproduction of workers.

Synopsis

The three broad phases of labour regime analysis we have portrayed here have necessarily been stylized and selective, but they provide a basic architecture within which to position the themes and ideas developed in this book. The chapters that follow offer alternative accounts, add detail and nuance, and foreground different interdisciplinary conversations that have unavoidably been glossed over here. This initial survey does, however, allow us to collate some foundational elements of contemporary labour regimes analysis, namely that they are seen as:

- ◆ influencing capitalist investment strategies, and shaping directly the possibilities for capital accumulation;
- ◆ ultimately experienced by workers labouring in particular workplaces, meaning that the labour process itself is incontrovertibly inherent to the regime;
- ◆ multi-scalar in nature, being shaped by varying and contingent combinations of dynamics ranging from the household, workplace, through the local/regional and national scales, to global influences;

- ◆ reflective of temporary, yet contested, stabilizations of capital–labour relations and, as such, having a certain stability and durability;
- ◆ dynamic and evolving over longer time periods, with the drivers of change being internal or external in nature, or both;
- ◆ multi-actor and contested, involving the relations between the full gamut of capital, state, labour and civil society organizations, often working (or not working) in tension with one another;
- ◆ produced at the interface of labour control and labour agency, thus meaning that they should be thought of as arenas of contestation and struggle;
- ◆ not just constituted in the realm of production but, rather, also defined by the intersecting domains of social reproduction and consumption, the former of which can also serve to foreground home-based work;
- ◆ heavily shaped and inflected by the politics of class, gender, race, ethnicity and other relations of domination and subordination and their articulations;
- ◆ involving not just the social reproduction, mobilization and utilization of labour but also the *motivation* of labour (Taylor & Rioux 2018) – one of Burawoy’s foundational questions when seeking to explain why workers work as hard as they do – and thus necessitating a range of discursive strategies around different forms of work and who “should” be doing them.

In the following, final section of this introductory chapter, we move on to explain the structure and contents of the book, distilling how the various contributions that follow deepen and extend the analytical purchase of the labour regimes approach in important ways.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Labour Regimes and Global Production engages with, and further develops, the themes set out in the previous section of this introduction across three main parts. The first part, which we call “Antecedents”, comprises three chapters that trace the intellectual development of labour regime concepts across various disciplines, notably feminist political economy, development studies, sociology and human geography. The second part, “Theoretical and methodological developments”, spans six chapters, which build upon these earlier intellectual roots to consider a range of contemporary conceptual debates around labour regimes and global production. The third part, entitled “Doing labour regime analysis”, comprises seven chapters exploring recent mobilizations of labour regime analysis in relation to a variety of cases.

The three chapters in the first part cast a view back over the intellectual antecedents of the labour regime project in its many and diverse forms,

elements of which have been touched upon in the introduction. The chapters explore the various debates and bodies of work bringing us to where we are today and explore, in different ways, the resonance between these antecedents and current debates on labour regimes. In Chapter 2, by Jennifer Bair, the antecedents of contemporary labour regime debates in feminist political economy analyses of the new international division of labour are mapped out via their connections with feminist global value chain approaches. Bair argues that “the feminist NIDL scholarship anticipates some of the core concerns of labour regime analysis, ... [and that] feminist GVC analysis represents an advance in understanding how gendered labour regimes are implicated in the globalization of production” (page 31). Central to Bair’s argument is a recognition of the place that gender plays in the very creation and operation of value relations in global systems of production. Bair argues that “GVCs are less structures that ‘cause’ gendered outcomes than they are sites for studying how capital mobilizes social difference” (page 32). This argument resonates through other chapters later in the collection. Jens Lerche (Chapter 3) also makes connections between labour regime analysis and work emanating from development studies and agrarian political economy in his chapter. For Lerche, there are close resonances between contemporary labour regime debates and earlier work on colonial labour regimes, on transitions to capitalism in the countryside and on agrarian labour, unfree labour and social reproduction in the global South. Drawing on work on India and several countries in Africa, Lerche explores the myriad connections among and between these debates.

The final contribution in this first part, Chapter 4 by Jamie Peck, explores the antecedents of contemporary labour regime concerns within earlier debates in sociology, political economy and economic/labour geography. He argues that labour regime analysis helpfully occupies an analytical and methodological middle ground between the “workplace-focused tradition of labour process theory, on the one hand, and the eclectic domain of labour market studies, on the other” (page 63). Peck makes the point that the power of labour regime analysis lies in its refusal “to lose sight of the workplace setting-cum-scale, but at the same time attending to the dynamic spatiality of capitalist restructuring and regulation”. Labour regime analysis, Peck implies, provides a mechanism of transcendence. Although he recognizes the work still to be done to fully understand the dynamic determinations structuring contemporary labour regimes, Peck argues that the analytical power of a labour regime analysis lies in its central claim that such regimes “are more appropriately conceptualized as *situated and relational constructions*, realized as institutionalized configurations, rather than as empirically delimited ‘islands’ or free-standing ideal types” (page 71; emphasis added).

The six chapters in the second part of *Labour Regimes and Global Production* focus on recent theoretical and methodological developments in the field. Together, the chapters in this part explore the connections with the lineages mapped out in the preceding section in considering a range of contemporary conceptual debates around labour regimes and global production. Elena Baglioni *et al.* insist in Chapter 5 on the importance of placing exploitation at the heart of labour regime analysis. For them, labour regimes provide a “category of theory and a tool of method” (page 81) to advance such an analysis. They argue for a non-productivist theorization of labour regimes that always recognizes that global capitalism comprises simultaneous systems of production, circulation and reproduction. But, building further, they also insist on centring ecology at the heart of an understanding of labour regimes. “Bio-physical ecologies”, they argue, are at the core of all systems of production. As such, “labour regimes necessarily and constantly mediate the relationship between human and non-human nature” (page 85). This foregrounds the materiality of the body, involving the need for social reproduction to engage in the very process of production, and the differentiation of bodily traits characterizing labour regimes that are fragmented by different categories of socially constructed workers. Baglioni *et al.* thus widen the ontology of labour regimes by articulating the materiality of exploitation and value extraction in the production process with the forms and dynamics of circulation, reproduction and the transformation of nature.

Carlos Oya (Chapter 6) develops an approach to labour regime analysis designed to compare labour relations and conditions of work in two industries, two countries and across various types of firm and “varieties of capital”. His chapter, which introduces a more methodological orientation, sets out the research design for his project, explaining the choices of methods used, with special focus on large-N worker surveys, which have been deployed only very rarely in labour regime analysis. In addition to demonstrating the power of this method when combined sequentially with others such as interviewing and oral histories, Oya narrates some of the major difficulties of “doing” large-scale labour regime research, especially in terms of negotiating access to managers and workers, and in changing and difficult political contexts.

Sébastien Rioux (Chapter 7) develops two important claims in existing labour regime work in his contribution. The first is Rainnie, Herod and McGrath-Champ’s (2011: 161) claim that chains and systems of global production “are ultimately networks of embodied labour, which lives within particular communities and is embroiled within particular geographies of work, employment and life in general”. The second is Coe and Jordhus-Lier’s (2011) arguments concerning the structural and relational constraints on worker agency in global production. For Rioux, the “norms, rules and practices” (page 121) by which labour is mobilized and incorporated into global production

networks provides “a comprehensive, multi-scalar approach that is able to account for the different modalities and forms of labour control and exploitation under capitalism in general and within specific GPNs in particular” (page 134). But, furthermore, Rioux argues that “the embodied nature of labour regimes highlights the extent to which the latter are also regimes of contestation shaping the possibilities and limits of workers’ resistance and struggles” (page 134). As such, Rioux centres an understanding of embodied labour in labour regime analysis.

Dae-oup Chang makes a different kind of intervention with respect to debates on the east Asian “miracle” economies (Chapter 8). He argues for a labour-centric explanation, rather than one focused on state policy formulations or foreign direct investment (FDI) and export growth as key drivers. For Chang, the conceptualization of transnational labour regimes is key to any such explanation of the growth and global integration of east Asian economies. As such, the conceptualization of transnational labour regimes builds on and extends other arguments around the multi-scalarity of labour regimes, discussed above. He argues that “the integration of east Asia is driven not only by increasing trade between national economies that subsumes local labour to national capital but also by a spatial transformation of capital–labour relations ... through which capital and labour are transnationally combined across national borders to produce surplus value for transnational corporations” (page 138). Using the example of textile and clothing production, Chang explores how transnational labour regimes in east Asia contribute to the uneven integration and uneven development of political economies across the region “by hampering an upward convergence of labour standards and welfare across the region” (page 138).

In the following contribution, Stefanie Hürtgen (Chapter 9) draws upon and extends Burawoy’s conception of despotic factory regimes and argues that, with the transnationalization of production relations across space, these forms of despotism are, essentially, “glocalized”. She argues for a conjoint “spatialization” and “feminization” of Burawoy’s arguments and explores these dimensions in the context of debates around despotic labour regimes in the global North. For Hürtgen, this provides an analytical lens for understanding the ways in which the glocalization of production “unevenly but systematically detaches (wage) labour from the means of socially integrative reproduction and effective political representation” (page 156).

The final contribution in this second part, by Kevan Harris and Phillip Hough (Chapter 10), extends further this engagement between debates on labour regimes and theories of social reproduction. Through a focus on what they call “valued” and “devalued” labour, Harris and Hough stretch “the analytic boundaries of labour studies beyond the workplace and ... [provide] insights into how organized labour can mobilize alongside broader struggles

for gender, racial and social justice” (page 173). They also draw on world systems theory to argue that, via an appreciation of proletarianization and dispossession, we can better understand how the “politics of labour regimes today are impacted by macro-historical transformations associated with the rise and fall of world hegemonies” (page 174).

The third part of *Labour Regimes and Global Production* provides a range of treatments of the practical “doing” of labour regime analysis. The seven chapters in this part draw on the theoretical and methodological threads pulled through the previous two parts and explore some concrete cases of the intersection and multi-scalarity of labour regimes in systems of global production. Mark Anner (Chapter 11) draws upon Burawoy’s framing of ideal-typical labour regimes to explore two interrelated dynamics: the relationship between the international dispersion of clothing production and labour control regimes, and the relationship between labour control regimes and patterns of worker resistance. Anner argues that where apparel production has concentrated in the last decade has as much to do with labour control regimes as with wages and other economic factors. His analysis suggests that there are three main labour control regimes in the sector: state control, market despotism and employer repression. Anner then goes on to suggest that these systems of labour control are conducive to three patterns of worker resistance: wildcat strikes, international accords and cross-border campaigns. The chapter explores these arguments by examining examples of apparel global supply chains in Vietnam, Bangladesh and Honduras.

In their contribution, Tim Bartley and Neil M. Coe (Chapter 12) also use the apparel sector, as well as the footwear industry, to examine how labour regimes are shaped by mechanisms of transnational private regulation (TPR). Bartley and Coe argue that, rather than TPR frameworks providing a basis for improvement in working conditions and enhanced governance of labour standards in global production networks, their efficacy is inevitably shaped by the different and uneven labour regimes that they are deployed within. Through an examination of the cases of China and Indonesia, Bartley and Coe find that the “dormitory labour regimes” and their associated working conditions prevalent in China lead to a series of rather “pragmatic” and superficial forms of compliance with TPR requirements. By contrast, in what they call Indonesia’s “precarious labour regime”, characterized by “the persistence of protective labour law and the growing precarity of employment in practice” (page 221), TPR efforts have enabled more effective “leveraging [of] the protective aspects of the Indonesian labour regime to increase minimum wages and resist flexibilization” (page 224) in workplaces.

Shyamain Wickramasingha’s contribution (Chapter 13) develops Anner’s (2015) earlier work on the hyper-competitiveness of the global apparel industry to argue that labour regimes in the Bangladeshi apparel industry are

driven by “(a) strong state–manufacturer alliances against organized labour; (b) the structural deficiencies of national trade unions and contested labour politics; and (c) the interventions of international civil society organizations” (ICSOs) (page 229). She focuses on the dynamics of both labour governance and labour agency at the national level, with the labour regime being characterized by relations among and between labour, capital, the state and ICSOs. Her claims regarding the importance of ICSOs embellish further our understanding of the range of institutions and actors that structure labour regimes operating in systems of globalized production.

Liam Campling, Adrian Smith and Mirela Barbu (Chapter 14) explore the intersections between labour regimes, global value chains and public policy frameworks in their contribution on labour regimes and international trade policy. Using the examples of the European Union’s trade agreements with South Korea and Moldova, they highlight the need to focus on what they call “the relational dynamics involved in the trade–labour regime nexus, through which trade agreements shape the landscape of labour relations and labour politics, while at the same time these relations and politics shape the dynamics of trade” (page 264). Deploying the conceptualization of “hierarchically differentiated labour regimes” in the South Korean automotive industry and of “immiserized labour regimes” in the Moldovan clothing sector, they point to how a nested scalar understanding of labour regime dynamics enhances our understanding of the ways in which trade deepens capital accumulation across borders, but in ways that are differentiated by value chain and labour regime configurations.

Jake Alimahomed-Wilson’s contribution, in turn, explores the racialized nature of labour regimes (Chapter 15). Using the example of Amazon, Alimahomed-Wilson argues that “Amazon’s increasing dominance in the logistics-driven global economy is made possible by the large-scale exploitation of a vast, racialized blue-collar labour force ... across Amazon’s warehousing and last mile logistics delivery operations” (page 270). Drawing upon and extending Robinson’s (2000) theory of racial capitalism, Alimahomed-Wilson examines how the devaluation of racialized labour allows for Amazon’s increasing corporate dominance alongside the operation of a racially segmented labour force.

Rutvica Andrijasevic (Chapter 16) develops the conceptualization of dormitory labour regimes, already outlined by Bartley and Coe and used later by Schling, to engage with the temporalities of labour regime formation. Building on Pun and Smith (2007), she argues that much focus has been on the spatial approaches to the transnationalization of production relations, to the neglect of temporal dimensions of labour regimes. Andrijasevic recognizes the importance of understanding “how global capitalism transforms the territoriality of labour regimes from local to transnational and how such

transformation is premised on the spatial integration of workers' productive and reproductive spheres" (page 286). But she also insists that analysis needs to "make visible diverse ways in which capital deploys time to reorganize and expand and keep labour enrolled within regimes of capital accumulation" (page 286). She explores these arguments through examples from electronics production networks across Europe. Highlighting the ways in which the dormitory coalesces labour regime dynamics in the context of the just-in-time drivers of supply chains in electronics, Andrijasevic provides a reminder of the importance of always holding the temporal and spatial dimensions of labour regimes and global production together in productive dialogue.

Hannah Schling (Chapter 17) further deepens the arguments around the racialized nature of labour regimes and the temporal-spatial dimensions of the dormitory labour regime through her examination of Czechia's dormitory labour regimes in JIT electronics production. Using the cases of Foxconn and Panasonic investments in Czechia, she focuses on the social reproduction of a migrant workforce to argue that the dormitory labour regime is "a terrain of struggle over the very (re)production of labouring subjects within changing local conditions and geographies of global production" (page 302). Through an examination of differentiated citizenship rights, migration flows and corridors, and social constructions of foreignness, Schling highlights the social violence at the heart of the dormitory labour regime.

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