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*Working through the Past: Labor and Authoritarian Legacies in Comparative Perspective*, Edited by Teri L. Caraway, Maria Lorena Cook and Stephen Crowley (2015) Ithaca: Cornell University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8014- 7994-6

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social» et les caractéristiques d'une entreprise «développante» sont esquissées par Minet, une entreprise axée sur le développement humain et la prise en compte des besoins divergents des personnes. Plus largement, et pour sortir de cette impasse où la compétence apparaît en difficulté, insaisissable, voire dangereuse, les quatre derniers chapitres mobilisent la notion de «capabilité» pour venir, sinon remplacer, du moins apporter de nouvelle façon de penser la compétence. Cette notion, issue des travaux d'Amartya Sen, est ici convoquée dans la sphère des organisations et du travail, et éclairée sous le prisme de quatre disciplines: la sociologie, les sciences de l'éducation, l'ergonomie et l'économie. Il ressort de ces contributions que la notion de capabilités permet d'embrasser tout à la fois les compétences et les possibilités réelles de les développer ainsi que de les mettre en œuvre. Selon Zimmermann, cette notion reformule ainsi le débat, tout en déplaçant le propos vers les conditions d'effectivité du pouvoir d'agir des salariés en situation de travail, que présuppose le modèle de compétence. Parmi ces conditions, la conception d'*environnements capacitants*, favorables au développement professionnel, est mobilisée et opérationnalisée dans les champs du travail et de la formation par Fernagu Oudet, et Vidal-Gomel et Delgoulet. Selon Vero, les entreprises «capacitantes» offrirait de réelles opportunités — de formations, de mobilités professionnelles, d'apprentissages dans le travail, de dialogues... — laissant une place centrale au développement des personnes au travail.

Simple déplacement du regard ou nouveau paradigme? Les quatre derniers chapitres ne permettent pas encore de le savoir et appellent d'autres recherches afin d'éviter que cette nouvelle notion, aussi séduisante soit-elle, ne connaisse les mêmes écueils que la compétence. Quelques questions se posent à ce stade: peut-on transposer une théorie centrée

sur le sujet individuel — la théorie de Sen — aux organisations? Peut-on décrire et développer les capacités? On regrettera ainsi que n'ait pas été plus explicitée cette voie d'ouverture prometteuse.

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**Working through the Past:  
Labor and Authoritarian Legacies  
in Comparative Perspective**

Edited by Teri L. Caraway, Maria Lorena Cook and Stephen Crowley (2015) Ithaca: Cornell University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8014-7994-6.

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*  
Karl Marx (1852)

Reviewing a book of collected national case studies is never easy no matter how well written or interesting each of the individual case studies may be. No single reviewer can hope to claim any specialist knowledge of all twelve (fourteen actually) national cases—Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Poland, Former Yugoslavia, Russia, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and China—spread across three broad geographic areas. That said, it is the very breadth of the national cases covered and the history of their national labour movements' relationship to their authoritarian legacies that makes this book such an interesting read.

In reviewing a book of this type, reviewers are often faced with the choice of adding

little value that a potential reader could not gain by simply reading the introduction or providing a superficial jacket review. Here, I do not want to provide either: rather, I will try and touch on some of the more contentious and thorny issues raised by the book. I will start with some observations about the general strengths of this edited volume and then, briefly, outline what I consider to be three of its problematic aspects: convergence and divergence; the uneven hierarchical structure of the world market; and a normative bias towards a pluralist view of the liberal democratic state.

At the outset, it must be observed that each case study contained *inter alia* is very well written, informative and presented within the context of a historical political narrative which makes them imminently readable. Indeed, comparative political economy is now so thoroughly infused with rigorous yet by and large vacuous hypothesis testing that this book reminds the reader of what the older historical institutionalist political economy once did so well: it puts the political agency of actors in a relationship with their economic/developmental trajectories.

That is to say, if you read this book, you will learn something novel about organized labours' relationship to the dual processes of democratization and globalization (neoliberalism, marketisation, privatization). But more than that, you will also learn something about the evolution of each political system over the past thirty years or more, the juridical frameworks surrounding their industrial relations systems and, in particular cases, their civil society. In short, there are some social and political history lessons to be had here and, for that reason alone, I would encourage anyone interested in labour politics, political history, economic development or global affairs in general to order a copy of this book.

However, from a more specifically academic perspective, this book is not

without its limitations. First, in both the introductory and concluding chapters the respective authors make reference to the crude convergence theory of globalization (p. 4 and 217) which they, rightly, reject. My initial quip here is that very few academics (outside of obvious neoliberal protagonists like Thomas Friedman) have actually pushed the hard convergence thesis of globalization: i.e., "that the economic forces of globalization would lead to cross-country convergence" (p. 217). If one takes the hard version of the convergence thesis to mean that all national institutional structures and relationships were going to converge on a single cookie-cutter neoliberal model, then, the hard convergence thesis is patently false and was always going to be so.

Conversely, if a more subtle convergence hypothesis is taken; namely, that in a mono-polar world with United States as the leading liberal democratic state shaping the international economic architecture from the IMF to the WTO, and itself caught up in a domestic resurgent liberalism (neoliberalism) since the mid-1970s, the post Bretton Woods world order has come with strong inducements towards marketization, privatization, and increased capitalist competition away from state planning, and popular economic development. That is to say there are strong inducements for the transition to liberal democracy; and not just away from authoritarianism, but also away from more popular forms like social democracy and democratic nationalism (resource nationalism). There have of course been exceptions (Venezuela, Brazil for a time, Greece for 6 months, for example) but these are exceptions. Even in the advanced capitalist zone, it must be admitted, there has been a relative hollowing out of social democracy driving in the direction of (neo)liberal democracy over the last 40 years and in earnest since the mid-1990s.

With respect to this book, the good news is that the case studies interrogate how national labour movements have

been able or unable to negotiate their way through the transition to this convergence on a liberal democratic model even if the problem is not posed exactly in those terms. There are, of course, two important exceptions: China and Russia. As Mary Gallagher notes in her penultimate chapter, China is very much living within the bounds of its past and present authoritarian legacies: the Chinese economy has been progressively liberalized, but its political system has not been progressively democratized. In the case of Russia, it is possible to speak of the tentative reconstitution of a post-communist authoritarianism under the tutelage of Vladimir Putin, notwithstanding the brief sojourn between the end of communism and the shelling of the Russian parliament. To the extent that the Russian economy can be said to have liberalized it has been done so, since Putin, in manner that drives in the direction of what might termed authoritarian resource nationalism. Nevertheless, for all the particularities there has been a remarkable convergence on a liberal market model, even if the democratic half of the equation has been more tumultuous and tentative.

This brings me to my second quip. I am not sure *Authoritarian Legacies* are necessarily the most relevant variable precisely because authoritarianism refers to form of political rule and not a type of economic development. By singling out the form of political rule and not the type of economic rule the book suggests more coherence between the cases than might be warranted. And it is not just that there is wide gambit of economic legacies from state directed and planned production (Poland, Russia and China) through to import substitution (Korea early on, Brazil throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Argentina) and outright neoliberalism (Chile under General Pinochet and Milton Friedman), there is also a long stretch of time between the different cases and their insertion into the global market hierarchy. This is important because the post war international eco-

nomie order was decidedly a more pluralist and indeed pragmatic environment than it has been since the nineteen eighties.

Take the polar extreme cases of South Korea and Poland for example. When South Korea came out of its civil war, it was one of the poorest countries in the world. As part of a broader American strategy of hemming in communism and nationalism in South East Asia and Asia, South Korea enjoyed preferential trading access to the US markets, massive foreign aid and the acceptance by Washington of the institutionalization of a strong Korean developmental state. Poland's (re)insertion into the global economy did not receive anything close to such advantageous terms. As the author notes, for example, the European Union provided asymmetric unequal market access, and even despite domestically developing its own radical economic liberalization programs the instant the Polish economy stumbled the IMF threw the neo-liberal book at them further undermining the economic transition legacy of Solidarity and the Polish state. It is not that David Ost fails to make mention of the particular difficulties in the de and re-industrialization of the Polish economy or the political fallout from it, he does. Rather the problem is that the counter-factual is never raised: what would have been the Polish experience, including organized labour, had they been glad-handled into the global economy like South Korea? I appreciate that the author is more concerned to tell a convincing story about how labour acted given the actually existing pragmatic and ideological constraints of the time, but in order to understand Solidarity's epic failure, one must raise the counter-factual if only to put in strong relief just how boxed-in they were (putting Solidarity's ideational deficit to one side). And invoking such imagination goes some distance to explaining the convergent forces of globalization towards (neo)liberal democracy. This form of criticism could be raised against the majority of national cases

presented in this volume.

Lastly, throughout the volume, there is a persistent normative bias towards a pluralist view of the liberal democratic state. To be clear, I am not taking issue with a normative commitment to a pluralist state form; but, rather, with the normative view of the liberal democratic state as *pluralist*. For whatever factual merit the pluralist view of the liberal democratic state may once have had in the post-war era, if it ever did, it is hard to argue that the liberal democratic state in advanced capitalist countries has acted as an objective referee between capital and labour over the past forty years. There are many reasons why the liberal democratic state cannot play such a sustained role of which I shall not go into here. The point is this: rather than benchmarking post transition political economies against a pluralist view of the liberal democratic state, it might be more fruitful to simply evaluate the strength of democracy and civil society, including labour, from the point of view of a liberal democratic state, that is a best disinterested in deep democracy and, at worst, actively in support of capital and capitalist accumulation.

All of this said, I come back to my initial observations: this is a very good book and there is much intellectual profit to be had from reading it in its entirety.

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### **Empty Labor. Idleness and Wokplace Resistance**

Par Roland Paulsen (2015) Cambridge :  
Cambridge University Press,  
217 pages. ISBN 978-1-107-66393-0.

Dans leur grande majorité, les enquêtes sociologiques sur les conditions actuelles de travail en entreprise font le constat quasi-généralisé de l'émergence et du développement de nouvelles formes de gestion de la main-d'œuvre génératrices de stress et

de mal-être, d'un contrôle de plus en plus insidieux sur les travailleurs et d'une intensification de l'exercice de l'activité productive. Toute une panoplie de chercheurs et experts expriment leurs opinions dans des livres ou sur les diverses plateformes médiatiques sur ce sujet. À les entendre et à lire leurs ouvrages, souvent vite écrits et peu pensés, on croit que le monde du travail est devenu un enfer invivable.

C'est avec ce cliché que le sociologue suédois Roland Paulsen souhaite rompre dans le présent livre. Sa thèse consiste à dire que le travail salarié est l'antithèse de la liberté, mais qu'il n'est pas aussi contrôlé qu'on le prétend et que l'intensification du travail ne concerne pas tout le monde. En prenant comme point d'observation ce qu'il appelle le « travail vide » (*empty labor*), il se propose de comprendre les dynamiques du comportement des employés en entreprise en relation avec leurs tâches, en étudiant ce qui n'est pas du travail à proprement parler, c'est-à-dire les activités privées réalisées durant les heures de travail. Défini comme tout ce que les gens font au travail, mais qui n'est pas du travail (au sens d'une activité productive pour l'employeur), le « travail vide » ou *empty labor* inclut des comportements aussi variés que le « *surfing* » sur le net, les discussions avec les collègues ou les amis, les conversations téléphoniques privées, etc. Ces types de comportements sont, selon l'auteur, assez répandus dans le monde du travail contemporain. Les différentes enquêtes qu'il cite (une douzaine, centrées principalement sur les États-Unis, mais aussi sur des pays comme la Suède, l'Allemagne ou la Finlande) suggèrent qu'en moyenne, un employé est engagé dans du « travail vide » pour une période comprise entre 1,5 et 3 heures par jour.

Fort d'une riche bibliographie de référence et d'un travail de terrain comprenant des entrevues avec des individus qui s'identifient comme dépendant au moins la moitié de leur temps dans le « travail vide » (*empty labor*) ainsi que des analyses