

The SAGE Handbook of
**the Sociology of Work
and Employment**



Edited by
Stephen Edgell, Heidi Gottfried
and Edward Granter

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SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
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Copyeditor: Rosemary Campbell
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Indexer: Avril Ehrlich
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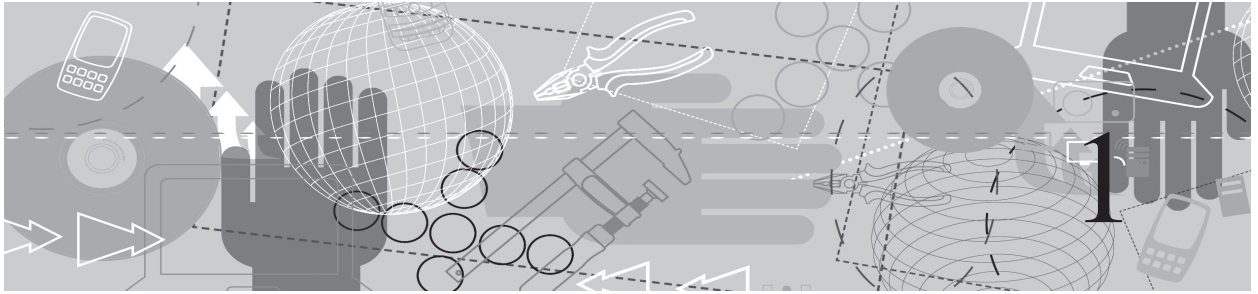
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Introduction: Studies of Work and Employment at the Global Frontier

Stephen Edgell, Heidi Gottfried
and Edward Granter

I ask the political economists and the moralists if they have ever calculated the number of individuals who must be condemned to misery, overwork, demoralization, degradation, rank ignorance, overwhelming misfortune and utter penury in order to produce one rich man. (Almeida Garrett [1799–1854])¹

The Portuguese poet, playwright and politician, Almeida Garrett, lived during the heyday of classical liberalism, a period when the Manchester School of Economics was advocating and agitating successfully in the world's first industrial capitalist city for the adoption of a *laissez-faire* policy by the national government (Grampp 1960). It was an era when 'collective bargaining by riot' was prevalent – to use Hobsbawm's (1952) memorable phrase – since labour unions were not recognized as legal entities, the majority did not have the right to vote, and the state was relatively small but its armed forces large – ready to quell protest whenever it erupted (the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, for example). Punishment included

execution or banishment to penal colonies for those who combined with other workers and/or damaged property (as with the Swing Riots of 1830), and the gap between the power and wealth of the owners of capital and the propertyless classes was a chasm. For a relatively short period in the twentieth century – the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s, often referred to as the Fordist era – the long-term trend of increasing inequality was interrupted, reversed even, due to a combination of special circumstances, notably a major depression and world war that provoked state economic intervention on a hitherto unknown grand scale and promoted an enhanced role for unions (Piketty 2014). Fast-forward to the beginning of the twenty-first century and the post-1970s era of neo-liberalism, during which the effectiveness of organized labour has been impaired, the social welfare function of the state much reduced, the power of capital and the free market expanded, and inequality increased markedly. It seems that Almeida Garrett's concern regarding the

extent of exploitation and oppression of the underlying 99 per cent has a contemporary resonance that would have surprised and perhaps dismayed nineteenth-century reformers and revolutionaries.

The twenty-first century started somewhat inauspiciously with a crash in the value of technology shares (the so-called bursting of the dot.com bubble), followed by recessions in various major economies, affecting initially European Union countries such as France and Germany, and subsequently the USA. Meanwhile in Japan, after a short recession in the late 1990s, deflation returned and continued to defy government attempts to remedy the situation. These sporadic and localized economic problems culminated in the most severe global economic crisis since the late 1920s. In 2008–9 there was a ‘three-fold crisis, with no end in sight: a *banking crisis*, a crisis of *public finances*, and a crisis of the “*real economy*” (Streeck 2014: 6, italics in the original). According to Streeck, these three dimensions of the current crisis are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, although the precise pattern of interactions varies from one country to another depending upon such factors as the policies adopted and the institutional framework. For example, a banking crisis makes it difficult for companies and consumers to obtain credit, which in turn reduces demand for goods and services and induces unemployment. Similarly, when a government favours fiscal rectitude over a Keynesian-style expansion of public expenditure, the consequent austerity and related social policies depress incomes of the middle and working classes, curtail economic growth, and weaken the employment protections for workers achieved over many years of struggle (Daguerra 2014; Heyes 2011). In other words, ultimately, the financial and fiscal dimensions of the crisis impact on the actual economy in terms of the nature and extent of employment and work – the focus of this Handbook.

The current global crisis therefore is not merely a monetary or a momentary phenomenon, but a sociologically significant process

that involves social, political, cultural and ideological causes and effects (Granter and Tischer 2014). More specifically, in terms of the world of work and employment, the recrudescence of the values and practices of free market capitalism has contributed to the emasculation of trade unions, mass unemployment, mass underemployment, mass income insecurity, mass dispossession, mass incarceration, and mass poverty, even in the wealthiest industrial capitalist nation states. In short, the collective responsibility of risk has been transferred to individuals rather than shared between the state, employers and employees, and class inequality has been exacerbated with the ‘gap between rich and poor at its highest level in most OECD countries in 30 years’ (Granter and Tischer 2014: 1).

The neo-liberal project, imposed from above and resisted from below, has also had major gender inequality consequences for individuals, households and nation states (Gottfried 2013). For example, from the earliest years of the public spending cuts by the first Thatcher government in the UK, women were affected more than men, since most public sector workers are women, women are the main consumers of collective social provision, and women are the major care providers in the family (Edgell and Duke 1991). Unsurprisingly, the global economy in general, and the changing pattern of employment and work in particular, are rarely out of the news, whether it is record-breaking youth unemployment in countries of the global North such as Greece and Spain, persistent deflation and economic stagnation in Japan, or severe economic recession and prolonged wage stagnation in the UK and Germany for example. To these we can add bankrupt banks (Lehman Brothers) and national economies (Iceland), economic expansion (the USA), economic contraction (Russia), rampant/rising inflation in the global South (e.g. Venezuela/Brazil), and life-threatening mass migration on a transcontinental scale – from Africa to Europe. It is a febrile morass of economic instability and uncertainty on a global scale.

Thus, capitalism is in crisis (the latest of many, we accept) and the contours of work and employment are changing dramatically, almost certainly to the benefit of a few at the cost of the many. This Handbook is intended to increase our sociological understanding of the causes of the major current trends in paid and unpaid work and employment, and their impact on individuals, groups, organizations and societies. The coverage is both comprehensive and comparative with respect to time and space, and each of the original contributions by leading specialists combines a critical and up-to-date review of the literature with some thoughts on the future directions of research. Considered as a whole, the Handbook represents a strong argument for the view that, contrary to the claim by Offe, work remains the 'key sociological category' (1985: 129).² In fact, the neo-liberalization of work and employment globally over the past 40 years, an issue that features prominently in many of the contributions to this volume, has arguably increased rather than diminished the sociological and ethical centrality of work and employment at all levels of society.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK AND EMPLOYMENT: CONTOURS OF A DISCIPLINE

This Handbook, which readers will find both authoritative and timely, is divided into six core themes:

- 1 Historical Context and Social Divisions
- 2 The Experience of Work
- 3 Work and Organization
- 4 Non-standard Forms of Work and Employment
- 5 Work and Life Beyond Employment
- 6 Globalization and the Future of Work

The first part, **Historical Context and Social Divisions**, traces the emergence of sociology as an autonomous academic discipline with special reference to the impact of capitalist industrialization, which transformed societies in general, and work and

employment in particular. Indeed, for the majority of social scientists and sociologists the classification of different types of societies was and continues to be based on the predominant form of work prevailing at specific times and places, such as the familiar distinction between agrarian and industrial societies, and the more recent industrial and post-industrial dichotomy. The social divisions that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism, notably those based on class, gender and race/ethnicity, persist to this day in the neo-liberal global era. The purpose of this first section of the Handbook is to consider how sociologists, since the classic contributions of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, have theorized and analysed the changing nature of work/employment and related social divisions. This opening part of the Handbook also addresses the strengths and weaknesses of this historically important sociological specialism and introduces the issue of intersectionality.

In the first chapter in this section (Chapter 2), Tim Strangleman discusses the development of the sociology of work from its pre-classical origins to the present day with special reference to the UK and the USA, and the classic contributions of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. Among the many issues covered in this chapter, the challenges and impact of Marxism and feminism on the sociology of work and employment are highlighted. He focuses on the historical context of sociological interests and emphasizes the continued need for theoretically informed empirical research via a secure disciplinary base, yet makes a plea for greater inter- and multi-disciplinary research.

In Chapter 3, Tracey Warren's account of work and social theory advances the historical theme in her wide-ranging review and critique of the classical canon from the standpoint of the pervasive influence of Marx, Weber and Durkheim on the sociology of work and employment. Her analysis emphasizes the contested meaning of the concept of work and identifies some of the key concepts, such as alienation, that have informed social

theories of work. It also reveals the relative neglect of research on gender and elites that is being addressed at last by contemporary sociologists in this sub-discipline, but she suggests that more research is needed, especially on the post-economic-crisis role of dominant groups.

The historical dimension of the sociology of work and employment is developed by Barry Eidlin's chapter (Chapter 4) on the core concept of class and work. He discusses how sociologists have conceptualized and operationalized class in relation to work since the founding classics up to and including recent societal changes, notably post-industrialism. The continued relevance of class, objectively and subjectively, is examined, and the 'class is dead' thesis is evaluated critically. He suggests that in view of the widely documented increase in economic inequality, the issue of class and work is likely to be debated by sociologists and policy makers into the foreseeable future.

In Chapter 5 Harriet Bradley notes that in the immediate post-World-War-II period male workers were the main focus of attention, but this changed gradually to the point where paid and unpaid work by women became a major research interest. Although European and American studies of women and work are the main focus, there is also a discussion of the contemporary gendering of work and employment in a global context and the issue of intersectionality. This chapter concludes by noting that the implementation of neo-liberal policies represents a significant setback for gender equality that needs to be researched and challenged.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) in this opening section by Evelyn Nakano Glenn presents a wide-ranging examination of race and ethnicity in the sociology of work and employment and reminds us of the origins of racial divisions associated with 'unfree' labour, in both settler and franchise colonies. Glenn goes on to explain racial inequality and racial dynamics in the contemporary labour force by reviewing human capital, Marxist-inspired critical whiteness

and racial formation theories along with other approaches. She draws on a variegated array of historical and ethnographic studies, including studies of black and Latina housekeepers and lawyers, to uncover how processes of racialization shape labour experiences at work and racial identities. Paralleling the preceding chapter on gender and work, Glenn's discussion emphasizes that race always functions in interaction with other vectors of difference.

The second thematic section concerns **The Experience of Work**. The authors here not only reflect on what makes work enjoyable or toilsome, dignified or debased, but also on who has the power to define its nature and content. Substantively, we find that the balance has shifted even further in this regard towards capital, whether we define capital's agents as 'managers' or 'leaders'. The content of this work changes, and the chapters herein offer new conceptual frameworks, reflecting on established themes along the way.

Chapter 7 covers the perennial yet increasingly pressing and controversial issue of the quality of work. Arne Kalleberg reviews the main dimensions of job quality, discusses the theoretical explanations for cross-national differences, and analyses recent trends with special reference to the current debate about the polarization of good and bad jobs; a debate that is of great importance to employees, employers, academics and policy makers. This renewed focus on job quality moves analysis from a problem of individuals to one related more widely to the nature of work.

In Chapter 8 Philip Hodgkiss traces the history of the idea and the ideal of dignity in relation to the sociology of work and employment from the Enlightenment to the present day. His account shows that theory and empirical research on dignity developed slowly, but in the recent past it has featured more prominently and explicitly as the object of investigation, which has raised the question of how best to operationalize the concept of dignity in sociological research on work in industrial capitalist societies.

At issue in Miguel Martínez Lucio's chapter (Chapter 9) is the struggle waged



over work between the forces of capital and labour. Drawing on the classical social theories introduced earlier by Warren, Martínez Lucio points to the inseparability of changes in working life from the evolution of global capitalism since the 1800s. While history matters, so do national institutional frameworks; thus the chapter covers conflict over work across both temporal *and* spatial dimensions. The concept of dignity appears once again as Martínez Lucio outlines recent shifts towards a workplace politics that increasingly seems to hinge on the individual, as well as the more traditional issues of workplace solidarity.

In Chapter 10 Leo McCann takes aim at the systems of ideological framing that dominate the way we manage, and are managed, at work. Or rather, how we lead and are led, since there has, according to McCann, been a dramatic shift from management to leadership, over the past 40 years. But although leadership promises a more dynamic and inspirational, even visionary, mode of work organization, the chapter argues that this is a rhetorical, rather than an actual evolution of workplace culture. Drawing on diverse literature encompassing the Vietnam War and ‘funky business’, McCann’s chapter offers a critique of management fads and the gurus who promote them.

In the era of the ‘third spirit of capitalism’ (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), the scope for misbehaviour at work could be seen to have declined in the face of performance management and scripted emotional labour. Not so, according to Stephen Ackroyd and Paul Thompson (Chapter 11). They map the debates around workplace misbehaviour from early industrialism, through Fordist control regimes, to the current context of financialized capitalism. The authors chart the turbulent fortunes of sociological engagements with a set of workplace behaviours that, they argue, must be conceptually differentiated from more commonplace understandings of ‘resistance’ at work.

Since the publication of Harry Braverman’s *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974) more than 40 years ago, labour process theory

has been both an inspiration for empirical research on working life, and a source of academic debate. Chris Smith has been extensively involved with both, and in Chapter 12 charts the development of labour process theory from Marx to the present day. Capitalism has undoubtedly evolved since the high point of the Fordist consensus – it is globalized, computerized, and attuned to cultural flows as never before. It remains, however, a system of political economy with conflict at its centre, and Smith provides a theoretically informed and empirically detailed illustration of labour process theory’s continued relevance.

In Chapter 13, Braverman’s work provides something of a touchstone once again. In this case it is the so-called deskilling thesis that features in Alan Felstead’s account of the skill debate. Whilst acknowledging the importance of labour process theory to the study of skills and work, Felstead goes beyond simply rehearsing arguments over whether work is becoming more or less skilled. Instead, he provides an account, which, by distinguishing between ‘job skills’ and ‘person skills’, helps students and scholars alike understand how the concept of skill has been operationalized in both empirical and analytical terms.

The third section focuses on **Work and Organization** as a changed and changing field, following the demise of Fordism, deindustrialization, and the rise of service work and neo-liberal globalization. Strikingly, all of the industrial enterprises iconic of Fordism no longer rank among the top-ten employers, having been replaced by Walmart and other service-based firms. Service jobs ‘span the occupational spectrum’ from low-wage routinized work to ‘expert service work’, which includes ‘knowledge work’.

The changing shape of organizations and the shifting demands they make of their employees are the central concerns of Charles Heckscher in Chapter 14. At issue here is the status of bureaucracy as the classical form of organization and management at work. The giant firms of the twentieth century drew on research by management scholars that spoke

of the need for hierarchy, narrow spans of control and stability of office. Since this time, a paradigm shift has taken place, and discussions now centre on alternative organizational forms such as market mechanisms, mutualism and networks. In his chapter, Heckscher seeks to distinguish between rhetoric and evidence in considering whether our transition from bureaucracies to networks is complete.

In Chapter 15 Mats Alvesson offers a critical review of the field of organizational culture and work. Along the way, he offers the concept of 'functional stupidity' to help us chart a middle course between corporate visions of fun-filled workplaces, and dystopic visions of organizations as glorified panopticons. Alvesson stresses the importance of retaining some sense of analytical distinction between the material and the cultural. And yet in the best traditions of Critical Theory, understanding these two realms as interconnected – even at a level of some indeterminacy – is crucial to the sociological study of workplace cultures.

Matt Vidal's contribution (Chapter 16) provides a sweeping yet detailed historical account of the development of Fordism, from its origins in the US to its reluctant adoption in the UK and its flexible adaptation in Germany. His analysis shows that in the post-World-War-II period, Atlantic Fordism was consolidated via the Bretton Woods system until it broke down in the early 1970s, and he advances a case for comparative research in relation to his analytical framework. He concludes that the demise of Fordism signalled the end of the golden age of economic growth and stability fuelled by mass production and consumption, and the beginning of a post-Fordist era of neo-liberal globalization.

The focus on the Fordist paradigm is continued in Chapter 17 with Huw Beynon's perceptive and perspicuous critical overview of the changes that have taken place in the global capitalist economy since the end of Fordism. His wide-ranging historical analysis covers both industrial and service sector work and employment and shows that from the standpoint of workers, the early optimism

regarding post-Fordist work regimes was misplaced. He argues convincingly that at the beginning of this century Fordist inspired deskilling and rationalization were being reinvented to the disadvantage of labour and the advantage of capital.

Classics such as Leidner's *Fast Food, Fast Talk* (1993), C. Wright Mills' pioneering study *White Collar* (1968 [1951]), and Hochschild's (2003 [1983]) research on emotional labour, animate Wharton's encyclopaedic chapter (Chapter 18) on interactive service work. There is a new emphasis on 'body work' in addition to emotion work/labour (Wolkowitz et al. 2013). Paid body work increases for several reasons, including the neo-liberal retreat of the welfare state, the rise of 'pampering' industries, the cultural acceptance of the commodification of 'intimacy' opening new spaces for capitalist intervention, and the socio-demographic shifts and cultural expectations of aging bodies representing increasing markets for goods and services. Households are becoming 'enterprises' employing interactive service workers, many of whom are immigrants.

In Chapter 19 Kiran Mirchandani delves into the global dispersion of service delivery, asking if the shift to service-related labour exacerbates inequalities and/or offers new opportunities for worker advocacy. This chapter is enlivened by diverse examples of the new 'service proletariat' in Chile, Argentina and Barbados, and by reference to her ethnographic field research, bringing together service workers in India from across the employment spectrum. She finds hierarchies produced and reproduced through everyday interactions between the interdependent service workers. What she aptly calls 'vagabond global capitalism' captures the hyper-circulation of capital in search of profits wherever the highest returns can be made. The resulting outsourcing and offshoring of these jobs creates a new international division of labour.

The fourth part focuses on trends of **Non-standard Forms of Work and Employment**, and explores them from a variety of viewpoints, few of which examine workplaces

alone. Precarity and precarious work are emblematic of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century work: increasingly workers are being made to labour in situations where the workers themselves must manage the risks of their employment. States and businesses arrange and manage work and workplaces so that uncertainty, instability, vulnerability and insecurity have expanded and become an important feature of global production.

In Chapter 20 Vicki Smith casts a wide net to capture the literature on employment uncertainty and risk, providing a rich and penetrating view of industrial and economic restructuring. Risk now permeates the career tracks of the well-heeled, such as Wall Street bank employees, as well as the lower-skilled working population. Beck's notion of risk society gave a more positive spin to the self-enterprising individuals reinventing themselves as they prepared for volatile careers, but Smith tempers this view with critical reference to discourses that 'idealize flexible employment' and propagate 'positive thinking' in the face of structural dislocation and displacement.

In Chapter 21 Françoise Carré details the qualitative and quantitative aspects of destandardization, characterized by diversifying employment relations, changing work sites, decentralizing work, and irregular work schedules. Prior to the expansion of destandardized labour in the advanced economies, the most significant quantitative and qualitative form of it was female-dominated part-time work. Among other things, the implications of this are that standardized labour was gendered (see Gottfried 2000), and destandardization only became a major issue when it spread to male labour and altered the gender contract. Using the apt metaphor of 'canary in the coal mine', Carré evokes the last century's beacon of unseen dangers and relates it to the negative effects of destandardization on work's trajectory.

Destandardization and informalization are twin processes in the neo-liberal, global era. Martha Chen's chapter (Chapter 22) reviews

informal employment in its myriad guises. Much of today's informal labour recalls the 'dust mountain' workers in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, which, for those of us in the global North, recalls a bygone era where child labour was widespread. Yet informal work, including child labour, persists in the global South – in China, India and the favelas of Brazil. Often, the processes of rapid urbanization and changing land tenure in the countryside contribute to a swelling pool of informal workers. Drawing on a wide range of examples, Chen argues persuasively for a legal and conceptual vocabulary more attuned to the realities of informalized work conditions and employment relations.

Kevin Hewison's chapter (Chapter 23) examines the activist and academic lineages of 'precarious work', before turning to a discussion of how precarious work is debated and conceptualized in the academic literature. Recent research indicates that advanced capitalist economies have seen both an expansion of precarious work and a decline in collective bargaining coverage and union density. By focusing on Asia, along with the usual cases from Western Europe and the US, Hewison adds a unique flavour to less well known material. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the debate on whether the rise of precarious work has resulted in the development of a new class identified as 'the precariat' (Standing 2011).

The final chapter (Chapter 24) in this section surveys the literature on unpaid domestic work. Despite the growing number of women in the paid workforce, higher rates of political participation and increasing educational attainment, women continue to perform the lion's share of unpaid domestic work. The gender division of domestic labour stubbornly resists fundamental redistribution between men and women. Janeen Baxter and Tsui-o Tai approach this sociological puzzle by delving deeply into the literature on the amount of time and the share of time spent on routine domestic tasks, both over the life-course and across countries. Their comparative strategy pays off; contextual factors are

key to understanding variation of the gender gap in housework.

The fifth thematic section, **Work and Life Beyond Employment**, concerns the inter-relationship between work and non-work broadly defined. Following the momentous changes wrought by industrial capitalism that impacted profoundly on the nature of work, the multidimensional issue of life outside employment became increasingly significant. Although work and non-work for the vast majority became separate physical and institutional spheres, the demands of wage labour tended to dominate everyday life throughout the life cycle. In other words, most people spend their early years preparing for entry into the labour market, the next 40 plus years in employment (albeit intermittently for many) that structures their daily, weekly, monthly, yearly routines, and, upon retirement, their remaining years recovering from work and enjoying (hopefully) the fruits of their labour. Consequently, the continued centrality of work in the twenty-first-century global era can be illustrated with reference to, among other things, contemporary debates about unemployment, the increased pervasiveness of voluntary work, the difficulty of balancing work and life, the importance of working time in terms of health and well-being, and the changing role of government intervention regarding all aspects of employment.

This part begins with Ken Roberts (Chapter 25), on the topic of unemployment. In his comprehensive overview he discusses how the meanings, measurement, causes, consequences and solutions to this socio-economic and political issue have changed historically. He distinguishes between different types of unemployment (for example, transitional, long-term, frictional, cyclical and structural) and the policy responses to them. Roberts concludes that since unemployment does not seem to be a major policy priority in the current neo-liberal era, it is likely to persist at a high level in the foreseeable future.

In the next chapter by Rebecca Taylor, her critical review of the relevant research on various forms of unpaid voluntary work

analyses how it has related to paid work historically and how people experience it. Unpaid voluntary work is arguably the most diverse yet under-researched type of work in sociology. This chapter makes a strong case for an increase in sociological research on voluntary work with reference to the restructuring of labour markets implemented in advanced industrial capitalist societies that are in the vanguard of neo-liberalism.

Work-life balance is an issue disrupting intellectual, cultural and political paradigms that separate work and employment from other social spheres. In Chapter 27 Abigail Gregory evaluates both existing policy and theoretical frameworks on work-life balance. Policy analysis reveals that the promulgation of various working-time regulations and parental leave initiatives at national, regional (EU) and international (ILO) levels has enshrined new rights around care responsibilities. These measures do not uproot the gender division of labour however, and the risk of poverty is high for single mothers in particular. Though the phrase has now entered the popular lexicon, 'work-life balance' remains elusive for many.

The time dimension of work and employment is discussed more generally in Michael Bittman's contribution (Chapter 28) on working time. He shows how the buying and selling of labour power in units of time was central to the development of industrial capitalism. In his review of the history of working time, contentious issues such as the length of the working day and the introduction of time-and-motion studies into the Fordist workplace are considered in considerable detail. Moving to the globalized neo-liberal present, Bittman's analysis suggests that working time remains a highly contested issue, one manifestation of which can be seen in the demands for flexible labour by employers and the preference for more family-friendly working-time schedules by employees.

The role of the state is a central concern for the study of work and life in capitalist society, and in Chapter 29 Karin Gottschall and Irene Dingeldey bring the analysis up to

date. Their compact history tracks work and social policy from its 'golden age' of expanding rights and welfare provision to its current neo-liberal form of narrowing governmental social support and protection. In many societies, institutional restructuring has privatized state functions and widened the scope of the market. Good jobs have been shifted from the public sector to more precarious work in the private sphere, thus deepening insecurity for large numbers of workers. Paid and unpaid care work and personal services, often performed by migrant women in insecure employment, fill the vacuum left by the retreat of welfare state services.

In the sixth and final section of the Handbook, the interconnected issues of **Globalization and the Future of Work** are considered. Over the past two centuries industrial production has relocated and has been transplanted from sites in one part of the world to sites in another. Global value chains now extend and intensify linkages between people and places in even the most remote areas. This has implications for workers both in the global South, and in what we might now call the *post*-industrial nations of the global North. Often these implications are less than positive, but the discussions in this section speak also to utopian, radical critiques, and to no-less utopian action and resistance in and around the 'global' workplace.

In Chapter 30, Paul Stewart and Brian Garvey's global value chain analysis of the ethanol sector in Brazil is used to exemplify their thesis that in order to understand sociologically what goes on inside a company, it is imperative in this era of globalization to look beyond, to the wider geographical and temporal context of production and worker subordination. The methodological, theoretical and political (in terms of the response of organized labour) implications of global value chains are all discussed.

As Winifred Poster and Nima Yolmo illustrate in Chapter 31, outsourcing enables the production and circulation of every imaginable commodity, ranging from macabre body parts to intimate labour to bits and bytes

crisscrossing the globe in nanoseconds. The 'contemporary face of globalized labour' and work involves service provision. Outsourcing can have horrific ramifications, for example the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh, when firms seek to cut expenses and keep costs low by ignoring health and safety standards. More positively, Poster and Yolmo show how the same global processes and technologies used to exploit workers can mobilize sentiments and actions among labour and consumer advocates.

New economic cartographies have propelled (and sometimes compelled) mobilities as people cross borders on a global scale. In Chapter 32, Eleonore Kofman documents the complexity of contemporary labour migration in the neo-liberal global era, offers an impressive review of the most up-to-date scholarship on the topic, and amasses empirical information mapping new migratory flows, not only from poor countries to wealthier metropolises, but also movements from destinations within the South and returns from North to South. Labour migrations are highly asymmetrical: a transnational business elite finds lucrative work and perks; and a supply of low-wage, at times unfree, labour is available for male-typed jobs in traditional sectors such as agriculture and construction and for female-typed jobs in the burgeoning service sector that includes human trafficking, the sex trade and care work.

In Chapter 33, David Frayne traces something of a hidden intellectual current in the sociology of work: the notion of freeing ourselves from work altogether. Or perhaps two hidden currents, since, at the analytical level, Frayne highlights the rarely acknowledged role played by Critical Theorists such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse in developing radical critiques of work. Frayne shows how their work relates to that of later key theorists such as André Gorz, and to recognized changes in the world of work itself. In doing so he provides a lucid and up-to-date summary of the intellectual history of a concept at once utopian and yet, to many observers, profoundly realistic; the 'end of work'.

Jennifer Chun and Rina Agarwala (Chapter 34) present a kaleidoscopic global account of how informal, precarious workers outside of traditional labour movement structures have sought to establish their rights as workers and as citizens. In this chapter, the concept of intersectionality provides the theoretical underpinning for an account of how a vast array of ‘organizational repertoires’ and institutional forms have been deployed, and how attempts to organize some of the most exploited workers might continue into the future.

Increased inequality, increased precarity and increased informality are all trends reflected across many of the chapters in our Handbook and are all, according to Peter Evans and Chris Tilly, the result of strategic moves by capital, rather than ‘neutral’ technological advance. All is not lost, however, and in Chapter 35 they too examine counter-movements for strengthening the position of workers and improving their conditions of work. As part of this, Evans and Tilly (re)consider the role of the state in relation to strategies for labour such as those found in the ‘solidarity economy’. Touching also on the potentials of the new knowledge economy, Evans and Tilly offer us a distinctive and stimulating overview of work’s possible futures.

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Robert Dubin’s *Handbook of Work, Organization and Society*, provides us with a convenient point of comparison as we draw together some of the key themes which now animate the sociology of work. Published in 1976, it largely reflects the cultural politics of its time and today appears as a classic example of ‘malestream’ sociology. Only one chapter out of 23 has a female author. It tends to assume that all workers are male and that they work full-time in large, complex

organizations; and it includes very little discussion of women except with reference to their limited occupational opportunities. In other words, ‘work’ is equated with employment (of male workers on a full-time basis) and although there is a chapter on leisure, unemployment is only discussed on one page in a chapter on work and politics.

Today the sociology of work and employment, as our Handbook illustrates, possesses a rich multiplicity of viewpoints in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, institutional context, and so on. This holds both for the researchers engaged in driving the discipline forward, and their subjects – the two factors are interrelated, without a doubt. Work has always been universal, and the achievement of greater inclusivity in the field has been a triumph we are proud to reflect. Epistemological progress, then, is clear. Issues of inclusivity aside, however, it is Dubin’s volume that speaks to something of a golden age, and not our own.

Standing as it does on the cusp of the neo-liberal turn in political economy, policy and everyday life, it is striking how so many of the key concerns of Dubin’s contributors came to seem rather anachronistic: job enrichment, the shop floor, motivation, the new values of post-industrialism. Some of these – the shop floor for example – were effectively swept away as foci from both collective consciousness and academic research by the rapid de-industrialization of the West: for many of us a defining feature of living memory. As if to demonstrate the interrelationships between cultural, academic, political and economic spheres, is it not the case that issues of motivation have been largely resolved as a management problem by the advent of permanent mass unemployment in many societies? This is the post-industrial reality for many; rather less about ‘new values’ of ‘self-actualization’ in employment, rather more a constant battle to locate, achieve and keep it.

As Hegel’s dictum has it, ‘the owl of Minerva begins its flight only when the shadows of night are gathering’ (1991 [1821]: 23). By 1976, the challenges of high Fordism

were well rehearsed in the sociology of work, and yet from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, they appear almost quaint. If the passage of 40 years or so provides dramatically new perspectives, change can also be understood as part of an ongoing historical process. Thus, many of today's best sociologists of work have a sense of historicity, of evolution – with capitalism as a determinant factor of the first order. In our Handbook, key themes – which, if not just out of their conceptual packaging, are at least recently installed in the store cupboard – are understood not just neologically, but as developing manifestations of currents and contradictions which have circulated within capitalism since the advent of industrial society – precarity, intersectionality, globalization, technology, emotional labour, to name a few. By some accounts, even reports of the death of Fordism have been greatly exaggerated, and capitalism exhibits an uncanny ability to change everything, but keep everything the same.

It is fortunate then that as scholars of work, employment and organization we have the classics on which to draw, classics whose power to offer conceptual 'keys' to unlock the dynamics of life and work under modernity remains undimmed. And we continue to draw on them, as evidenced by the chapters presented here. While Marx, Weber and Durkheim remain the touchstones, it is striking to see writers of the late twentieth century take their place in the canon. Braverman's influence is well established of course, and this influence now extends way beyond discussions of skill, technology, or the labour process specifically. Burawoy, one of Braverman's most perceptive interpreters, and Hochschild, with her theory of emotional labour, also join the ranks.

In opening and closing this introductory chapter, we have highlighted the tendency for history to repeat itself. It remains unclear which epochal period of work's evolution under capitalism represents tragedy, and which farce. Indeed, it remains unclear whether we can talk of an 'evolution' at

all. Scholarship, however, has evolved, and whilst concepts can be tracked historically, it is clear that for sociologists of work today, certain among them have particular, renewed significance. Globalization is now a dominant reality in the study of work and employment. This does not mean that all accounts must include references to multiple nations, regions, and diasporas, although with this Handbook, we find that many of our contributors are accustomed to working with 'the global' as an epistemological frame. It may not be that all workers are communicating across continents – or crossing them – all the time, but even for people employed in 'local' organizations, dimensions of hyperglobalism such as competition, offshoring and outsourcing are a permanent reality at some level.

Whether we understand technological advance as determining or determined by globalization, it is clear that it has fundamentally reshaped the world of work. Perhaps it always has; in today's sociology of work we continue to look at the relationship between technology and skill, for example, but increasingly we see it as a factor in new forms of supervision, the nature of managerial work, and the shape of work organizations themselves. As many of our authors relate, advances in digital, and crucially, networked ICT systems allow the globalization not only of industrial labour but of formerly 'white-collar' service and knowledge-management jobs.

As always, migration flows continue to be of great significance to scholars of work – perhaps greater than might have been predicted in 1976. Thus, in the era of globally mobile, hypercompetitive organizations, ever more diverse populations are drawn into the ambit of employment in ever more complex ways, and the theme of intersectionality has come to the fore as an analytical reflection of this. Having gone beyond looking at male 'breadwinners' to the exclusion of all others, sociologists of work have helped develop a concept which goes beyond debates about whether class, race, sexuality or gender are dominant. Intersectionality offers a conceptual lens for many employment contexts,



but it is particularly interesting to see how it relates to global labour flows, and the new politics of resistance.

In speaking of resistance, we first must speak of exploitation, domination and injustice. Contributors to this volume, in the best traditions of the sociology of work, provide an analytical account for the reader, not only of work as an academic construct, but also as a normative one. Technology advances, as do universalist declarations of rights, memoranda of understanding on child labour, and so on, and yet 'bad work' remains the reality for too many people, as we noted in the opening section of this introduction. We now, for example, refer to the precarity of labour at a global level. Whether or not work in the West has become more insecure has been the subject of some debate (Fevre 2007), but there is now widespread recognition, and evidence, reflected in this Handbook – that precarity is a defining feature for workers and managers, and indeed (from another perspective) capital, worldwide. Sociologists of employment now understand precarious work as both a key analytical motif, and, more importantly perhaps, a social reality for increasing numbers of people.

Of course, precarity plays out differently for different groups, and in different global contexts: work intensification, life-course disruption, poverty and psychological 'adjustment' in the global North, hyper-exploitation and a fight for survival in some parts of the global South. Yet amidst the 'shadows of night' which are the ontological backdrop for many under the neo-liberal work regime, there are shafts of light. It is heartening to be able to present so many accounts of new forms of worker solidarity – community activism, technologically facilitated protest and capacity building, even 'bringing the state back in' in some cases. The sociology of work has always looked to the future, but in many respects this future has been elusive. If the 'society of leisure', 'self-actualisation', 'worker self-management' and even permanent, fairly rewarded employment now take on the character of academic daydreams,

it is the task of the sociologist of work and employment to explain why. Further, it is necessary to define the state of the art as we know it now, so that future generations of scholars can make their own judgements about the contours of utopia, and work's place within it. It is in this spirit that we present the *Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*.

NOTES

1. This epigraph appears in J. Saramago's *Raised from the Ground* (2013 [1980]), an autobiographical novel about landless peasants in twentieth-century Portugal and their struggles against poverty, repression and injustice.
2. For a concise and critical review of Offe's thesis see Granter (2009).

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