
Toby Shelley, *Exploited: Migrant Labour in the New Global Economy*, London, Zed Books, 2007. 183pp.

If you are new to migration and always wondered what goes on behind the neatly washed and packed salads you find in your supermarket, or the friendly face that greets you at a London hotel, *Exploited: Migrant Labour in the New Global Economy* by Toby Shelley is the book for you. *Exploited* provides not only an engaging and fast moving account of the exploitation of migrant workers, but also an in-depth analysis of how the current political and economic systems allow this exploitation to happen.

The book refers to the exploitation of migrant workers in the global economy but it is largely focused on Britain. This does not make it any less interesting. The global dimension of the exploitation of migrant labour becomes evident through Shelley's cross-referencing to the situation migrants face in the United States and parallels with the exploitation of workers in export processing zones. The introduction sets the scene and cleverly brings migrant workers closer to the reader. It does this by describing the sectors that rely heavily on migrant workers

through the products and services people are likely to encounter in their everyday life: salads and tomatoes, construction sites, and domestic, hospitality and entertainment services. All this serves to introduce Shelley's main argument, that "abuse is not only widespread but is part of the structure of key industries in the global North" (p.6). The idea that migrant abuse and exploitation is systemic to the economies in the global North serves as the central axis for the chapters that follow.

Migration in Context (Chapter 1) provides global figures on migration as well as an analysis of why people migrate. This largely relies on push-pull theories, which are well rehearsed in the migration literature. However, this chapter also provides a more nuanced critique of the "victim-villain dichotomy" (p.25) so prevalent in the general media as well as in some academic literature, particularly in relation to trafficking. Shelley also begins to introduce other key ideas that guide the book: the various contradictions inherent in the current migration system (with particular reference to the British one), the reduction of migration issues to a law and order issue and the ideological displacement of undocumented migrants as having no place in a society (p.28).

Migrant Labour (Chapter 2) is the real empirical chapter, detailing harrowing accounts of exploitation in six sectors: food, cleaning, construction, transport (land, sea and air), domestic work and the sex industry. Shelley's analysis is based on a wealth of secondary literature that spans academic publications, journalistic articles as well as reports by international organizations and civil society organizations. This is followed by a chapter on the social and economic impacts of migration, particularly in relation to the current debates on whether migration undercuts native workers' wages and the impact migration has on schooling, health and housing.

The final chapter focuses on government responses and responsibilities by analysing how government can (and cannot) predict the number of migrant workers needed by its economy; how it can enforce its desired number of migrants; and whether it is able to police the employment of migrant workers (whether employed legally or illegally). Based on the evidence presented, Shelley argues that the government is not only turning a blind eye towards the exploitation of migrant workers but it is also complicit in their abuse, given that it is "at best inept and at worst

wilfully negligent of the welfare of migrant workers, documented and undocumented” (p.153). He persuasively explains how the government developed a migration policy based on tasks and processes, which are largely outside of its control, such as predicting the number of migrants needed in specific sectors of the economy at any given time and controlling its extensive borders. Moreover, Shelley also shows how the Points Based System (which was being discussed as the book was being written) creates two classes of migrants: (1) a skilled class that is provided a path to citizenship and given a number of appealing privileges, such as the right to enter the country without a contract and the right to family reunification; and (2) an unskilled class, with only a temporary work permit, with no right to family reunification and (in some cases) no right to change employer.

The real treasure of this book is the many references to collective attempts to improve migrant workers’ rights. Rather than stopping at the narratives of exploitation, which this book could easily have done, Toby Shelley goes beyond the simple narration of exploitation. His numerous references to union actions and campaigns to push forward a rights-based agenda for migrant workers provides inspiring material for scholars and activists alike. His final chapter in fact finishes with a list of, in Shelley’s view, modest proposals:

- regularizing migrant workers;
- ensuring health and safety inspectors are adequately staffed;
- granting legal status to grossly exploited migrant workers;
- opposing the racialisation of entry into low-skilled work;
- localising social investment of taxes paid by migrant workers;
- ending the poaching of professional staff from developing countries; and
- expanding the labour movement’s support of migrant workers.

These proposals are based on organised labour’s principles. Shelley hopes that they can provide a starting point to build alliances across borders for a collective response to what has become a systemic exploitation of migrant labour in the global North.

The book will be useful to anyone interested in gaining a better insight into the exploitation of migrant workers in countries

of the global North. It will also be of interest to those who seek to know more about the way organized labour relates to migrant workers and the kinds of initiatives community organizations and labour unions have implemented to push forward a rights-based agenda for migrant workers.

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