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BOOK REVIEWS

Marino, S., Roosblad, J., & Penninx, R. (Eds.) (2017), *Trade Unions and Migrant Workers: New Contexts and Challenges in Europe*, Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.424

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Migration is today a major issue for governments and a crucial topic in the public debate in western societies. Fears of “invasion” or social dumping, islamophobia and racism, seem to be growing in Europe especially since the beginning of the economic recession. In this context trade unions, as social and political actors, can play a major role in promoting inclusion and solidarity, as well in contrasting restrictive immigration policies. However, recent developments in the economic and political context – financial globalization, widespread unemployment, labour market competition and segmentation - are undermining the power of trade unions and determining a decline of their influence, as hi-lighted by the progressive decrease of union density in many European countries.

How are trade unions responding to those challenges ? Which are the social, cultural and economic factors that explain contrasting attitudes toward migrants workers and immigration between countries? Which are the strategies that different organizations are putting in place in order to promote migrant's workers participation? *Trade Unions and Migrant Workers: New Contexts and Challenges in Europe* is the systematic attempt to answer to these crucial questions.

Thought an updating of the heuristic model of Penninx and Roosblad (2000) - used by the authors as a guideline for data collection and analysis - the volume provides a rich comparative analysis of the relationship between trade unions, immigration and migrant workers across eleven European countries between 1990 and 2015.

Giving a comprehensive overview of European trade union's actions and strategies toward migrants in a context of rising hostility, this work is useful both for scholars studying migrations and industrial relations, as well as for activists involved in immigration and labour movements in the context of the economic globalization.

Book's Content

The book introductory chapter, written by the editors, revises Penninx and Roosblad (2000) "three-dilemmas" model: (1) Trade unions should resist employers' efforts to recruit migrant workers or cooperate (cooperation vs resistance) ? (2) Should migrant workers be regarded as an integral part of the trade union rank and file and therefore be actively recruited as members with the same rights (inclusion vs exclusion) ? (3) Should trade unions treat all workers the same or develop targeted policies to address the special needs of migrant members (equal vs special treatment) ? In order to explain the variations in outcomes, the original model proposes four sets of factors. First, the power that trade unions have in society and in national socio-economic decision-making. Secondly, the state of the economy and labour market conditions. Thirdly, social trends and in particular the public discourse on migration and migrants. Finally, the characteristics of migrants themselves.

In the wake of the major political and economical changes that occurred since the 1990 – notably the European enlargement, the rise of racism and islamophobia and the increase of migration flows – the authors of *Trade Unions and Migrant Workers* propose a revision of the original analytical model by actualizing the three dilemmas and the the four sets of explanatory factors. With regards to the latests, the authors conclude that all – although in an amended form – "are worth considering when explaining unions actions" (p.12). However, they appropriately underline how more attention should be given today to transnational dynamics in the European Union, to the characteristics of migrants in terms of labels given by the policies of destination countries (refugee, labour migrant, family migrant, and so on) and to the history and the traditions shaping trade unions ideological identities.

After the introductory chapter, the book is divided in two parts, the first providing a close examination of the contextual changed conditions of labour market and

immigration policies in Europe, as well as of the social and political context in which trade unions operate. In chapter 2, Jason Heyes and Thomas Hastings develop a comparative analysis of neo-liberal social and economic policies developments, with a focus on the consequences of the financial crisis. In chapter 3 Rinus Penninx deals with the evolution of migrations in Europe from the guest worker regimes to the contemporary, more pervasive, phenomenon of migration. By describing the different immigration and integration models - including the European regime of free mobility - that influence trade unions relationship with migrants, he underlines the growing heterogeneity (in terms of origin, form and duration) of migration patterns, recalling the importance of speaking of “migrations” in the plural. Chapter 4 address the crucial issue of the growing hostility towards migrants in the public discourse and in the political sphere. In this chapter Alberta Giorgi and Tommaso Vitale discuss the individual factors that influence hostility toward migrants, the different European migration policies and philosophies of integration, pointing out the central role played by mass media, and thus the importance of the analysis of the discursive context in the current political scenario. Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Richard Hyman and Magdalena Bernaciak, in chapter 5, look at trade unions nature, characteristics and power resources (divided by the authors into structural, associational, organizational, institutional, moral, collaborative and logistical). How do unions' “internal factors” - ideologies and structures - influence the decisions in regard to migrants? The authors underline the importance of unions' democracy and strong ideological identity in terms of inclusion and representation of migrants and call in conclusion for an “imaginative counter-offensive”.

The second part of the book provides an in-depth analysis of trade unions attitudes towards migrants workers in the eleven country cases. Chapters 6 to 11 comprehend six west European “old”, or “first generation”, immigration countries - Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK - that were all part of the original Penninx and Roosblad (2000) study. Chapters 12 and 14 analyze three “new”, or “second generation”, European immigration countries that turned from emigration to immigration countries in the late 1980: Ireland, Italy and Spain. Chapters 15 and 16 address unions' attitudes toward migrants in the Czech Republic and Poland, two countries of Central Europe characterized by growing lower levels of immigration but where emigration and transit migration are still the dominant dynamics.

Finally, drawing on the updated “three-dilemmas” framework, chapter 17 provides a rich and detailed cross-country analysis of the eleven cases, pointing out similarities and differences in trade unions attitudes and actions. The most relevant outcomes can be summarized as follows.

With regards to the “cooperation vs resistance” dilemma, in Poland and in the Czech Republic – where a significant increase of immigration has took place over the two past decades - unions seem to privilege a protectionist attitude, especially since the beginning of the economic crisis. In Sweden, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands – all countries sharing a similar past of immigration after the II World War and a tradition of “cooperation” between trade unions and governments since the time of the “guest worker” regimes – unions have continued to contribute to governmental admission policies. However, this is mostly done with the objective to prevent the erosion of national labour markets standards. Both in the UK and in Ireland, trade unions seem to do not have a common and well articulated policy framework on immigration: in the UK because of the lack of involvement of trade unions in national policy making, in Ireland as a consequence of the absence of a coherent governmental policy. Finally, in the three mediterranean countries - Italy, Spain and France - unions have pushed for regularization policies and engaged with social issues, especially in Italy and Spain where the high labour market segmentation decrease the competition between local and migrants workers.

Concerning the “inclusion vs exclusion” dilemma, in Poland and in the Czech Republic the debate seem to be underdeveloped, while in Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK, inclusive policies have been put in place by trade unions during the last two decades. In Austria and Sweden the idea of a “subordinated inclusion” have conduced to a only “formal” inclusive approach.

Finally, relating to the “equal vs special treatment” dilemma – which involves the question of representation and migrants' union membership - special policies, and sometimes innovative practices (e.g. “organizing”), aimed at improving migrants workers participation, seem to be totally absent only in Poland and in the Czech Republic. Moreover, in Italy and Spain, efforts to address migrants have focused not only on labour, but also on matters related to social issues (e.g. housing). In Sweden and Austria, unions' resources dedicated to migrants workers participation seem to be weaker as a consequence of the idea of “subordinated inclusion”.

With respect to the four contextual factors, and their power to explain differences and similarities, the state of the economy (1) appears to be particularly relevant, as concerns about the deterioration of national standards of employment and labour rights have shaped unions' action since the economic recession. In this context, trade unions' power (2) – and their involvement in policy making - is also diminishing. However, especially the UK, the erosion of unions' influence and density helps to explain the efforts to enlarge and increase migrants' membership. Concerning the characteristics of migrants (3), the authors conclude that - as unions rarely engage with

their “intersectional” differences - individual characteristics have little relevance in explaining union efforts. On the contrary, the labels given to migrants by receiving societies - determining migrants legal status and possible patterns of inclusion in the labour market - have a strong effect in building inclusive union strategies. Finally the evolutions of the social context (4) have strongly affected unions action. This is visible for instance through the widespread use of more “neutral” labels – e.g. “vulnerable” or “precarious” workers - instead of “migrants” and through the growing focus on “diversity” (which also implies the risk of a “color blind” approach).

On the base of those outcomes, the authors conclude that while the immigration history is still an important factor influencing unions strategies, it can't explain alone all the variations among countries. Thus, instead of the further distinction between “old” and “new” immigration countries, cases are divided in three main clusters: central Eastern (Poland and the Czech Republic), north-west (Sweden, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK), and mediterranean European countries (Italy, France and Spain). However, as fixed models tend to “overestimate the homogeneity within types and countries” (p.381), the authors encourage to seriously take into account the importance of a sector based analysis, as well as the history and the political and ideological identity of unions that have a strong impact on the way they address migrants workers issues.

The great value of this work, also rich in terms of data, is to provide a compelling theoretical and methodological tool for cross-country analysis of trade unions action in the context of financial globalization and European enlargement. However, and despite the explicatory strength of the proposed model, in my opinion that more attention could be given to the role of the migrants themselves in shaping trade unions attitudes and actions. Not just with regard to their “fixed” characteristics - in terms of labels given by the State or their sociological profile – and individual aspirations, but also to their agency as an active social actor inside European trade unions. Two examples.

According to the authors, the historical legacy of trade unions is one of the main factors explaining variations in the attitudes towards migrants and migrations. However, the role that migrants struggles have actively played – especially in “second generation” immigration countries - in shaping trade unions attitudes and ideologies is seldom addressed in the analysis of the country-cases. France - where trade unions have been facing since the 1970 migrant workers movements - is a case in point. Migrants workers strikes, often conducted “outside” the unions, the most emblematic of which in March and April 1973 at Renault-Billancourt against the ethnic and national management and classifications (Pitti, 2001), have strongly contributed to change trade unions approach and discourse.

In contemporary labour movements, migrants are also playing an active role in many countries in influencing trade unions strategies and innovations. In the logistics sector in Italy for instance, the long cycle of migrants workers strikes, mainly organized within grassroots unions, seem to have pushed traditional trade unions (especially CGIL) to further invest in this sector during the last period. In countries where the “organizing” model is growing drawing on the experience from North America, scholars have shown, at the micro-level, the influence of workers' identities and the extent to which migrants experience work on unionization efforts in a “qualitatively different way” (Tapia, Alberti, 2018). Thus, migrants' identities, agency and action, and not just unions' strategic decisions, seem to be shaping trade unions' renewal.

Moreover, in order to appropriately deconstruct and inverse the tendency of the public discourse toward a “reification” or “objectivation” of migrants - correctly underlined by Alberta Giorgi and Tommaso Vitale (pp. 81-82) – the role of migrants themselves, and of their struggles inside labour organizations, should be seriously taken into account. This could also be useful for avoiding the risk of producing an ethnocentric perspective on these crucial issues.

In other words, in order to provide a deep understanding of the challenges unions face, I suggest that the analysis would benefit from the integration within the model of a more dialectical analysis of the relationship between trade unions and migrants workers, taking into account the agency of migrants as one of the explanatory factors that shape and determine unions attitudes and strategies.

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