

Long abstract – Open section

EXPLOITATION OF WORK, RIGHTS AND HEALTH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Edited by Marco Omizzolo

Struggle and self-organization. Class formation and mobilizations in the logistics industry

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The concept of “class struggle” which characterized the mobilizations of the workers’ movement until the 1970s is no longer recurrent to describe workplace conflicts.

This happened because capital managed to “reshape” the working class through “class segmentation” operations, introducing new mechanisms for dividing the workforce into the production system.

The use of outsourcing and subcontracting with companies that hire on a fixed-term basis has produced a fragmentation among workers which has effects on the organization of the working class.

Since the mid-1970s, through a series of crises, the capitalist system has successfully dismantled the sense of identification within the working class. However, something significant is happening due to the role of “non-traditional” trade union organizations that support mobilizations in the logistics sector.

Logistics is undoubtedly a leading sector in the current phase of the capitalist system, demonstrating that class struggles shift from one sector to another. In particular, following the growth of e-commerce around the early 2000s, the logistics sector developed new systems for the movement of goods within cities and incorporated private consumers into the relationship between suppliers and businesses. In this industrial sector, the level of automation in storage facilities is very low.

Consequently, companies rely on unskilled and exploitable labor, including many immigrant workers.

Is it possible, in this context, to imagine new possibilities for working class formation?

This paper focuses on the struggles and self-organization in the logistics sector in Campania, where the number of immigrant workers is very low compared to northern Italy, but where working conditions are very challenging. The subject of the paper is the activism of workers affiliated with the grassroots union SI Cobas, an organization closely aligned with social movements and more oriented towards social conflict compared to traditional unions.

This type of organization lacks a formal internal hierarchy and effectively represents a response to the crisis of the “traditional” Fordist working class in

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industrialized countries. Its goal is to reconstruct the conditions for class struggle by fostering the active participation of workers within the union.

Using a qualitative research approach, the paper investigates the dimensions and meanings of workplace conflict today through interviews with workers, porters, and drivers operating in companies and cooperatives within the logistics sector in Naples and Campania, who are members of the inter-branch rank-and-file committee SI Cobas.

What emerges is that the formation of the class occurs through a “collective journey” in which very different experiences and biographies intersect.

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