

## Long abstract – Monographic section

### **EXPLOITATION OF WORK, RIGHTS AND HEALTH IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

*Edited by Marco Omizzolo*

#### ***Migrant Bodies at Work. Exploitative practices and (in)visibilization processes from the Sicilian countryside to digital platforms***

Federica Cabras, Luigi Di Cataldo and Monica Massari

The profound transformations that have affected migrant labour in a global scenario dominated by the neo-liberal paradigm have brought to light systemic exploitative practices. The increasing deregulation and precariousness of the labour market and the vulnerability of male and female migrant workers have affected extremely differentiated production sectors and markets - from agriculture to domestic care services, from tourism to logistics, from construction to catering, from cleaning to home delivery of goods, first and foremost food - with varying degrees of intensity. In these sectors, forms of recruitment, management and control of the labour force inspired by a predatory logic emerge, with a limited consideration of the needs and fundamental rights of the people involved, which enhance an overall deterioration of their conditions of existence.

Reference is here made to the fact that although these workers are formally free to accept specific working arrangements, they are *de facto* pushed by their condition of existential, social, legal and economic vulnerability towards jobs where their agency is often undermined, while opportunities for a positive change are extremely limited. With few exceptions, these are jobs that do not require a high level of qualification and where the body - with its related material and symbolic value - not only becomes the main *means* of production subject to such an intensive use that sometimes leads to exhaustion, but also a *place* where multiple social relations are condensed.

This article provides an explorative qualitative analysis of the living and working conditions of migrant workers within two distinct labour markets and different geographical contexts that present forms, sometimes particularly extreme, of exploitation: farmwork in the greenhouses of the area of Ragusa in Sicily and food delivery in Milan.

Based on an extensive fieldwork carried out in 2023-2024 through in-depth interviews with workers, union members and other privileged observers, the study proposes a comparative multi-sited analysis developed along three closely interrelated lines: (i) the correspondences existing between market developments and social composition of the workforce; (ii) the recruitment patterns carried out by both farm employers and food delivery platforms; and (iii) the link between work and health, paying specific attention to the psycho-physical effects that highly exploitative employment and living conditions may impose on migrant bodies.

Interesting similarities emerge between the two fields of research related, *inter alia*, to the conditions of subordination, marginalization, and segregation experienced by migrant workers employed into these two markets, alongside counter-intuitive divergences related to the different

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strategies of survival and resistance carried out by them, often supported by associations, unions, and groups of citizens active in these areas, which enrich the scholarly debate on the forms of subordination and exploitation imposed by neoliberal capitalism, suggesting further research agendas.

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