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## Book Review: Working Life and the Transformation of Malta 1960-2020

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This edited volume presents a timely scholarly investigation of employment practices in Malta, between 1960 and 2020. During this period, the Maltese economy was influenced by changes such as Independence, industrialisation, EU membership, and a growing services sector.

open book's editors, Debono and Baldacchino, are elite Maltese scholars in the field, and the vo'

dealt with, providing the reader with an indispensable scholarly companion on such an important aspect of Maltese society.

The first part of the book focuses on changes in Malta's labour market during the six decades in question. Alan Cordina and Catherine Vella provide an analysis of the big picture through relevant statistics, whilst Anna Borg focuses on women's participation. Saviour Rizzo reflects on the 'tangled web of tradition and modernity' related to socio-economic changes, and Marie Avellino discusses the tourism sector and related challenges of sustainability. This section ends with a curious analysis by David Boswell and Manwel Debono, who examine the evolution of occupational status in Malta since a sociological survey carried out by the former in 1979.

The second part of the book deals with workers' rights and employee relations. Godfrey Baldacchino discusses the changing strategies, influence and challenges of trade unions, whilst George Grima reflects on workers' rights and power at the workplace. Gerard Kester reflects on experiments related to workplace democracy in the 1970 and the related setting up of the previously mentioned centre at the University of Malta, in which he himself was involved. On the other hand, David E. Zammit focuses on employment experiences – including exploitative ones – of African migrants living in Malta. Unfortunately, various exploitative experiences, including those of other third country nationals, are often practiced within the 'backstage' of society, beyond the public sphere.

Section Three looks into specific policies and strategies, ranging from the 1980s worker-student scheme, discussed by Peter Mayo, and the development of occupational health and safety (OHS), explained by Luke Fiorini and Frank La Ferla. I was particularly struck by their observation that the occupational health and safety of (the frequently invisible) seafarers is not under the responsibility of the respective authority, but of Transport Malta. The authors also relate the development of OHS in Malta with Malta's EU membership. Europeanisation is further discussed by Roselyn Borg and Patrick Farrugia, this in time in relation to industrial and employment legislation.

The fourth and last section of the book explores current and future education and employment challenges in a changing society. Ronald G. Sultana, who focuses on workers' dignity, looks at the relationship between career education/guidance and neo-liberal policies. Antoinette Caruana, on the other hand engages with challenges being faced by human resource professionals. Finally, Manwel Debono reviews the early impacts of Covid-19 on employment, and proposes a timely typology of worker categories in Malta, which is very useful for analytical purposes. Both Debono and Sultana respectively ask if another world is possible, presumably with more egalitarian employment practices and a stronger social model.

As shown by some examples above, Malta's EU membership is frequently referred to in this book. Indeed, Malta's employment practices have their particularities, but they also share various commonalities with socio-economic trends in other countries, with the European Union deserving special attention due to the respective legal frameworks and policy harmonisation in various fields. Besides, Malta is a small island state, which, as various chapters show us, does tend to influence various work practices, for example in relation to social networks.

One related aspect in this regard is the role of trade unions in employment matters. Such organisations are important players at national and European levels, and are often main protagonists in the politics of workers' rights. At the same time, however, it has to be kept in mind

protection of the environment, and the role of 'misbehaviour' amongst different workers both through 'front stage' activities such as protest, and also within the 'backstage' at the place of work.

It is important to emphasize that this book focuses on 'employment', and not 'work' in general, which has broader connotations. Hence, the book does not directly focus on activities such as voluntary work, emotional work, invisible work, care work within the family and various forms of informal work, though these would understandably merit a book in their own right. Similarly, complementary studies could also analyse the lifestyles of different workers, in fields such as politics, consumption, sport, religion, and social movements. Besides, can we speak about 'class consciousness' among workers, or is such terminology specific to academic and activist discourse?

This book will appeal to readers interested in employment, sociology, economics, social policy, management and related areas. I consider it to be a must-have addition to my own sociological collection and I will surely consult in my own sociological investigations.

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