Work in the Global Economy • vol 1 • no 1-2 • 33–53 • © Authors 2021
Online ISSN 2732-4176 • https://doi.org/10.1332/273241721X16286100144143
Accepted for publication 9 August 2021

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Subcontracted racial capitalism: the interrelationship of race and production in meat processing plants

Valeria Piro, valeria.piro@unipd.it
Devi Sacchetto, devi.sacchetto@unipd.it
University of Padua, Italy

The aim of this paper is to extend discussion on subcontracted labour by focussing on the labour process and on the role of race and racialization within it. The existing literature has so far analysed the factors that have encouraged employer decisions to outsource labour, together with its effects on labour conditions and on industrial relations. Missing, however, has been any detailed analysis of the role of race and racialization processes, pivotal elements in the facilitation of subcontracting thereby accelerating the worsening of labour conditions.

Based on qualitative empirical research on the meat industry in Northern Italy, this article highlights how the processes of outsourcing and racialization intersect to support the segmentation of labour within the workplace. In particular, we argue that, through contracting out work to racialized groups of migrant workers, outsourcing has been both facilitated and legitimized. Furthermore, the presence of in-plant contractors has fostered the implementation of racializing practices, which in turn have bolstered workforce fragmentation on racial lines.

Notwithstanding this, our findings show that race can be a factor in the mobilization of subcontracted migrant labour through the production of pragmatic (racial) solidarities. These informal ties are a key component in the development of the everyday struggles and alliances that emerge within grass roots worker organisations as well as beyond their boundaries through hybrid forms of collective organisation.

Key words subcontracting • racial capitalism • cooperatives of convenience • migrant workers • meat industry

To cite this article: Piro, V. and Sacchetto, D. (2021) Subcontracted racial capitalism: the interrelationship of race and production in meat processing plants, *Work in the Global Economy*, vol 1, no 1-2, 33–53, DOI: 10.1332/273241721X16286100144143

Introduction

> When you enter a slaughterhouse for the first time, the most striking aspect is not the view of tonnes of meat in front of you; it is not the smell of blood, to which you get used quite quickly; the most striking aspect is the noise: the rhythmic and mechanical sound of the assembly chain mixed with deep and loud animal screams. The production manager introduces us to the place we are visiting and remarks 'A slaughterhouse is like this: it's loud, it's frantic! And – addressing a room to our left – this is the beginning of the disassembly chain because we don't assemble the animal; we dis-assemble it.' He decides to start the visit from the 'end' of the productive process, guiding us into the trimming and refrigerating rooms where the meat is already a block of ice and the environment looks clean and aseptic. When we move to the cutting room, we are attracted by the view of hundreds of workers boning meat with extreme ability while moving quickly along the assembly line. All of them are wearing a white coat, though with different labels. Our guide explains that, except for him, there is a small group of people on the shopfloor whose coats are marked with a pink circle, many of whom are in the trimming room, which indicates that they are direct employees of the firm. All other workers, marked with green triangles and blue rectangles, are employed by different cooperatives: together with the labels on their coat, their skin colour is also a clear marker of difference. The atmosphere changes completely when we reach the killing sector. Here, the smell of blood and flesh is unbearable, as unbearable as the noise of the animals screaming. Almost all the workers are migrants, none of them wearing the coat marked with a pink circle. The heat increases when we enter the area called 'dirty slaughterhouse': migrant cooperative workers are washing guts, emptying tripe of faeces (one tripe every 3–4 minutes) or boning cow legs. We spend some time looking at a Black worker whose task is to cut the bovine skullcap, extract the brain and set it aside. We think that the brain is warm as the animal was alive a few minutes ago. We are stunned as the man continues his task plainly and naturally, from time to time cleaning his face from blood and liquid sketches.
>
> (Fieldnotes from a visit to a slaughterhouse, Modena, Italy, 23 April 2019)

After changing into white coats and disposable shoes, we both had great interest in entering the slaughterhouse to grasp, at least visually, the labour process that workers had often described to us during the interviews. As we focused on the workforce composition, its segmentation by employer (that was visible through the labels on the workers' coats), and the labour process, our guide attempted to provide us with reassurances regarding the treatment of animals, feeling obvious stress about the numerous inquiries that turned this topic into a proper 'battlefield' (Keucheyan, 2016). However, in the journalistic debate around animal well-being, labour conditions, particularly those relating to subcontracted migrant workers, are often overlooked.

The existing literature has focused extensively on migrant workers in the European Union, who are often employed in dirty, demanding and degrading

jobs through subcontracting or transnational temporary agencies (Doellgast et al, 2018). The debate on subcontracting has analysed the reasons behind the decision by management to outsource labour, the effects of subcontracting on labour conditions and workforce composition and the impact of outsourcing on industrial relations, workplace democracy and representation (Wills, 2009; Drahokoupil, 2015; Peck, 2017). However, in this lively debate, the role of race and racialisation processes as pivotal in facilitating subcontracting and accelerating the worsening of labour conditions has hitherto remained largely understudied (see Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019).

To address this gap, this article focuses on labour-force racialisation in subcontracted capitalism (Bonacich et al, 2008; Bhattacharyya, 2018). Based on a qualitative empirical study of the meat industry in Northern Italy, this article highlights how the processes of outsourcing and racialisation intersect and support labour segmentation in the workplace. Even though racialisation practices do not refer exclusively to subcontracted workers and also involve direct employees, for the former these processes are more intensive and extensive.

In this article, we examine how race is reproduced in routines and discourses through which workers are 'racialised' and 'de-racialised' (Gans, 2017) and show that racialisation is a structural and intersubjective process that takes place in everyday labour practices. Moreover, we stress that, as these processes are fluid and unpredictable, they can be actively re-appropriated by workers. Therefore, we also highlight how race can be mobilised among subcontracted migrants in order to produce pragmatic (racial) solidarities.

In line with the labour process theory tradition, we illustrate that the output of the labour process does not simply comprise goods and services but also everyday differences and social divisions as well as practices of solidarity that 'extend out' from the workplace to society (Edwards, 2003; Thompson and Smith, 2010). Moreover, our analysis aims to shed light on the connections and intersections (instead of distinction and separation) between the 'inside' and 'outside' by considering the strong relationship between the workplace and society at large. This allows us to emphasise that the set of hierarchies, power relations and social categories existing outside the workplace are mirrored inside firms. In other words, we aim to show how the labour process is shaped around social divisions and broadly legitimised social categories.

The following section summarises the debate on subcontracted labour in an attempt to broaden it by also considering race and racialisation studies. The third section introduces the methodology used in this study and provides more information about the context of the inquiry in Northern Italy. Sections four to six are devoted to presenting and analysing the empirical findings, which are then discussed and summarised in the conclusion.

Outsourcing and racialisation processes

According to Wills (2009), subcontracting has become a paradigmatic model with multi-layered effects on work and employment relations. Outsourcing is considered an ever-expanding phenomenon, although it remains differentiated based on factors such as the type of industry, the company size and technological levels (Dekker and Koster, 2016). To summarise the academic debate around subcontracted labour, we can point to three research streams.

In the first stream, the main objective is to analyse factors explaining subcontracting. Among them is the need for firms to recruit skilled workers externally when they lack internal expertise in specific areas (Contractor et al, 2010). Additionally, companies often opt to outsource labour to comparatively increase flexibility and contain labour costs. In these cases, outsourcing is implemented jointly with other strategies, such as resorting to national and international temporary agencies or other forms of labour casualisation (Drahokoupil, 2015; Peck, 2017). Moreover, scholars identify other motivations that push companies to outsource labour; for instance, in the manufacturing of luxury goods or 'traditional' and 'local' food, extending the value chain can be one way of concealing the migrant workforce as consumers could consider migrant labour as incongruent with the quality and, above all, the price of goods (Ceccagno, 2017).

The second stream of the debate on the effects of subcontracting on labour conditions and workforce composition. In this literature, there is a general focus on highlighting that subcontracting worsens labour conditions in almost every sector by lowering salaries, intensifying the pace of work and increasing workers' occupational and health insecurities (Drahokoupil, 2015; Doellgast et al, 2018). More recently, Grimshaw and colleagues (2019) argued that labour conditions are also under pressure due to marketisation, with competition among subcontractors contributing to a race to the bottom. Additionally, several of these scholars analyse outsourcing as a trigger for labour market segmentation, conceived in terms of polarisation, by resorting to classical 'dual' (Piore, 1979) or 'split' (Bonacich, 1972) labour market models. These theories postulate the existence of a relatively protected 'core' of local workers and a highly insecure, poorly paid and physically strained 'periphery' composed of women, migrant, young, elderly and disabled workers (Emmenegger et al, 2012; Holst, 2014). Nevertheless, some scholars tend to blur this rigid dualisation by stressing that labour markets are stratified in complex assemblages based on different socio-institutional contexts and social divisions among workers (Tsing, 2009; Ong, 2006).

Last, the third research stream focuses on the impact of subcontracting on workplace democracy and industrial relations (Taylor and Bain, 2008; Wills, 2009; Benassi and Dorigatti, 2020). Within this group, we can single out at least two poles between 'pessimists' (who interpret outsourcing as weakening unions and their membership) and 'optimists' (who identify specific mobilising opportunities emerging from subcontracting). Among the latter, it is relevant to include scholars who emphasise the 'high positional power' acquired by subcontracted workers in a just-in-time system of production (Bonacich and Wilson, 2008; Benvegnù et al, 2018).

Among the 'optimists', some scholars underline the importance of the social composition of subcontracted workers (mostly migrant and/or young) as it affects and innovates mobilisation practices, pushes established unions towards greater inclusivity towards marginalised workers' groups (Marino et al, 2015; Pulignano et al, 2015; Ibsen and Tapia, 2017) and fosters the emergence of new forms of organising. By merging the classical repertoire of trade unions with the social movement tradition, these organisations carry out hybrid actions, strategically mixing formal and informal practices (Alberti, 2016; Alberti and Però, 2018). Moreover, these emerging forms of 'community unionisms' enlarge membership by recruiting affiliates through community networks and providing support on non-work-based issues (Wills, 2001; Holgate, 2005).

In the debate on subcontracted labour, the role of race and racialisation processes as pivotal in facilitating subcontracting and accelerating the worsening of labour

conditions has been largely overlooked, with a few exceptions (for example, Holgate, 2005; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2019). Generally speaking, scholars stress that racialisation has to be understood as a process, implying that racial meanings, which change through history and across geographical areas, are dynamic and relational, that is, they arise in relations between groups or individuals.[1] As a process, the term 'racialisation' is coupled with 'de-racialisation' ('when phenotypical differences are recognised but ignored') and 're-racialisation' ('when deracialized populations are restored to their previous racial status') (Gans, 2017: 349–50). Thus, the main objective of racialisation studies is 'to identifying how, when, where, why, and under what conditions it operates' (Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss, 2019: 505) in order to understand the causes, effects and social agents promoting and experiencing racialisation – the 'racializers' and the 'racialized' (Gans, 2017).

Starting from these programmatic definitions, scholars have empirically investigated racialisation in various contexts, shedding light on different aspects. This article contributes specifically to the stream of debate studying the racialisation of labour and considers 'race' as a 'fundamental shaper of global capitalism' (Bonacich et al, 2008: 342; see also Roediger, 1991). By also referring to a recent set of studies (Battacharyya, 2018; Virdee, 2019; Strauss, 2020), this article investigates the current configuration of 'racial/racialised capitalism'. In Battacharyya's (2018: 3) clear-cut definition:

> Racial capitalism is a way of understanding the role of racism in enabling key moments of capitalist development [...]. [It] helps us to understand how people become divided from each other in the name of economic survival or in the name of economic well-being. One aspect of its techniques encompass[es] the processes that appear to grant differential privileges to workers and almost workers and non-workers and the social relations that flow from these differentiations.

However, in addition to these studies, our main aim is to demonstrate that race and racism are reproduced through the everyday practice of work and inside specific workplaces where 'groups of workers are located within a hierarchical system of labor exploitation that affords certain groups more or less benefits than others depending on a group's racialized-gendered location' (Bonacich et al, 2008: 344).

Moreover, as suggested by Gonzalez-Sobrino and Gross (2019), our aim is to move beyond fixed dichotomies, such as capitalists versus workers or white versus black. The latter becomes theoretically imprecise and empirically less evident in countries that host migrants from 'white' areas, where white migrants could also undergo racialisation processes (that is, Eastern European migrants, see Fox et al, 2012; Ciupijus et al, 2020). Furthermore, the 'management versus workers' dichotomy is nowadays much less clear-cut as a consequence of subcontracting, thereby blurring the distinction between formal and substantial employers in multi-employer workplaces.

In the following sections, the article shows how outsourcing and internal shopfloor divisions in units and tasks are legitimised and supported by racial arrangements widely shared outside the workplace. Moreover, it highlights that subcontracting reinforces racialising practices within the workplace, which 'extend out' into society at large. Finally, it illustrates that workers are also able to strategise around racial arrangements in order to organise themselves inside and outside the perimeter of trade unions.

Context and method

The meat processing industry in Italy and the spread of cooperatives of convenience

The meat industry is divided into three main sub-sectors: poultry, beef and pork processing. In 2018, the Italian poultry supply chain consisted of about 15,300 agricultural companies and 1,600 processing firms, employing respectively 38,500 farmworkers and 25,500 factory workers.[2] The market is controlled primarily by two large companies, both located in Northen Italy. Conversely, about 105,000 firms are involved in meat production in the beef sector, 1,540 slaughterhouses and 3,556 processed foods companies, all of which are mainly concentrated in the north of the country. The pork and beef industries together employ more than 50,000 workers (Campanella and Diazzi, 2020). Further, a consistent number of workers are employed in the logistics sector, transport and other services; they are covered by different collective agreements but operate within the meat industry.

Poultry companies are semi-vertically integrated since they grow part of their animal feed and maintain exclusive agreements with independent farmers, to whom they supply breeding chickens. This is countered by more fragmented beef and pork supply chains: slaughterhouses buy animals from independent farmers, including in other countries, and sell the processed meat to large distribution centres or food companies for further processing.

Since the 1990s, the slaughtering sector in the European Union has undergone significant transformations in terms of productive structures, recruitment methods and workforce composition, with a substantial increase in atypical and outsourced work and frequent recourse to subcontracting and posted workers (Wagner and Refslund, 2016; Lever and Milbourne, 2017; Birke and Bluhm, 2020). In Italy, subcontracting through cooperatives of convenience (COCs) (Iannuzzi and Sacchetto, 2020), where a large part of the workforce is composed of migrants, has been used as an instrument to increase flexibility and downsize labour costs, favouring a process that we could define as 'in-house delocalization' (Ceccagno, 2017). In COCs, workers are asked to become members of cooperatives or are hired as employees. Moreover, within these companies, the nature of employment relations remains ambiguous because solidarity and participation are penalised in favour of a business-like approach (Sacchetto and Semenzin, 2016). Firms outsourcing to COCs enjoy a reduction in labour costs that can reach 40–50 per cent compared to labour costs in the main firm (Carchedi and Franciosi, 2016), thanks to the adoption of different national collective agreements; this cut in wages is also possible through the widespread practice of forcing cooperative members to reduce their own salaries and other benefits through internal assemblies by threatening production crises (Dorigatti, 2018). Last, by resorting to COCs, companies avoid any responsibility regarding recruitment, employment relations and workforce control, since they do not formally manage subcontracted labourers.

In the last few years, even though the presence of COCs has remained substantial subcontracting has increasingly become entrusted to limited liability companies (*Società a responsabilità limitata – Srl*) and limited simplified liability companies (*Società a responsabilità limitata semplificata – Srls*), reproducing a similar system of enduring worker segmentation.

Direct and indirect workers are both included in the Italian industrial relations system in terms of union representation and collective bargaining. However, the two groups are often covered by different collective agreements, diverse employment contracts and multiple unions, depending on their formal employer. Moreover, in workplace elections, they vote for different internal representatives since shop stewards are elected for each employer. Therefore, the segmentation strategies, which are pursued by the firm and adopted by trade unions, lead to a broader division of workers, weakening their structural power, with the consequent worsening of labour conditions.

Method and case-study

The data presented in this article are based on empirical research conducted between October 2018 and March 2020 in two plants, both located in Northern Italy, which is home to the majority of meat companies. The plants were selected based on characteristics such as the kind of meat processed, the number and social composition of the employees and the use of subcontracting. We decided to use pseudonyms for both the companies and interviewees in order to preserve the anonymity of the research participants. As a result, We named *Chicken Group* the first company a poultry processing firm located in Veneto. Chicken Group is the fifth largest Italian agribusiness company according to sales volumes (more than €3 billion in 2019). It is the national leader in the production of animal feed, first in poultry in Europe, with its own brand and among the top companies in the Italian charcuterie industry (Chicken Group's website). In 2019, Chicken Group employed 8,600 employees: 84 per cent blue collar, 14 per cent white collar, with the remainder being managers and executives (Annual Report, 2019, Chicken Group's website). We studied two plants belonging to this group, both located in the province of Verona, with close to 4,000 direct employees and around 1,000 COC workers. In addition to the Italian employees, many of whom came from Southern Italy, there were also numerous foreign workers (around 50 nationalities, mainly from Eastern Europe, Northern and Western Africa and the Indian sub-continent).

The second company, pseudonymised as *Beef Group*, is located in Emilia-Romagna and processes cattle. Beef Group constitutes the most important enterprise in the production of beef in the European Union. In 2019, the firm employed close to 18,500 employees worldwide and had a revenue of around €4.5 billion (Beef Group's website). Being one of the main European suppliers of beef burgers for well-known global fast food chains, Beef Group has 11 plants in Italy, nine of which are dedicated to slaughtering and processing cattle. Our research focused especially on the plant close to the city of Modena, which employs around 1,000 people, including clerks (400) and blue collar workers (600). Among the latter, the majority are employed through COCs (400) and, during our research, they gradually started signing contracts with a limited liability company directly controlled by Beef Group. Many of the employees in the plants are immigrants, both from Southern Italy and other countries (especially countries from Eastern Europe, Northern and Western Africa and Sri Lanka).

The fieldwork material consists of 90 in-depth interviews (37 in Veneto and 53 in Emilia-Romagna) and two focus groups (in Emilia-Romagna). Among the interviews, 16 were carried out with key informants (members of established trade unions and newly formed grass roots organisations, managers and researchers in

food processing companies). The remaining 74 interviews were conducted among male and female workers, 38 of whom were Italian (25 men and 13 women), and 36 were foreigners of various nationalities. Among the migrants, it was more difficult to interview female workers (only 6 compared to 30 men). Of the 74 workers interviewed, 42 were direct employees, while 32 were subcontracted. The interviews, which lasted on average 90 minutes, were conducted at the interviewees' homes, union headquarters or in public spaces. Except for two, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed and analysed following a thematic approach (Riessman, 2008). In addition, we participated in various union activities, such as assemblies, outreach actions and pickets. In particular, it was possible to attend the weekly activities of the legal assistance desk of one rank-and-file union, a space assiduously and almost exclusively frequented by migrants, mostly employed by cooperatives. Last, thanks to a manager, we succeeded in visiting two slaughterhouses.

Outsourcing and racialisation as intertwined processes

> 'I was working on the assembly line, boning the animal, but I also had other tasks […] I was young, I wanted money in my pocket, and I went to work at Beef Group. Beef Group was a different story [compared to my previous job in Southern Italy]. I earned three times as much, but I worked 14 hours a day. I started at five in the morning until seven or even eight at night. […] Here, in Modena, they used to say that 'whoever worked in a slaughterhouse was mad' because it was a really hard job. But whoever went there got a lot of money because you earned part of your wage under the table […] Anyway, the pay was good… the work I was doing was physically demanding, and those who did it wanted to get money, otherwise nobody would have done it […] [I worked on the assembly line] for a certain period and then became a foreman for 12, 13 years, always in the same unit.' (Giuseppe, Southern Italian, previously subcontracted, now a direct worker at Beef Group)

Although the type of work varies extensively according to the area of the shopfloor, slaughterhouse work is a physically and emotionally tough experience. As illustrated in the account of Giuseppe, a 58-year-old man who migrated from Southern Italy, meat companies in Northern Italy have struggled to recruit and retain a local workforce since the mid-1980s. In order to ensure available labourers and prevent staff turnover, firms started recruiting workers from the South of Italy, for whom wages were considered comparatively higher than what they could get in their areas of origin. Therefore, the workforce composition in the 1980s gradually started to change, with an increase in the number of internal migrants. According to Giuseppe and many other informants, the heaviest and dirtiest tasks were delegated to *terroni*[3] since 'no one else would have done it'. From the perspective of both managers and local workers, South Italian migrants – typically associated with a rural background, a low level of education and loutish manners (all connotations epitomised by the derogatory term *terrone*) – started to be largely perceived as the most 'appropriate' or 'suitable' slaughterhouse workforce (McDowell, 2008; Simpson and Simpson, 2018).

From the mid-1990s, two main changes affected labour in meat production in Italy. The first was a general worsening of working conditions (intensification of

work pace, multiplication of flexible employment contracts and stagnant wages), producing a 'second wave' of changes in the composition of the workforce, with the hardest and dirtiest jobs being gradually carried out by international migrant workers (*extracomunitari*[4]). As epitomised by Giuseppe's biography, this change represented an opportunity for experienced Southern Italian workers who, instead of having to move jobs, were now able to obtain internal promotions' upgrading from their position on the shopfloor (Bonacich et al, 2008).

The second relevant transformation concerned the progressive outsourcing of segments of the production to COCs operating within the same plant, often illegally intermediating labour (Dorigatti, 2018; Iannuzzi and Sacchetto, 2020). At Beef Group and Chicken Group, these processes were initially hailed positively by Italian workers as they involved avoiding the most unpleasant tasks and shifts (for example, cleaning, logistics or night shifts), which were outsourced to subcontractors:

> 'Very often, the heaviest, dirtiest, and physically demanding activities were contracted out or decentralised, therefore, the workers of those plants who assisted in the outsourcing of logistics, cleaning, evisceration not complaint about … I was not working in the evisceration; I was doing a different activity at that time – [raises his voice] but loading trucks in the summer with 30 degrees, or in the winter when it is cold, it is a tiring job, that if someone can avoid it, they would try to avoid it. At that time, they created subcontracts, cooperatives and similar logistics companies, which were gladly considered, and no one dared to question: "They come here to steal our jobs". Then, slowly, with small regulations that gradually changed, these contracts, which theoretically had to be only logistics, warehouse and transport, began to affect parts of the labour process and then [the cooperative workers] started to be recruited *as if they were agency workers*.' (Francesco, Northern Italian, trade unionist at the regional level in Emilia-Romagna)

Moreover, similar to other cases (Doellgast et al, 2018), including in the meat industry (Wagner and Refslund, 2016), in the Northern Italian context, established unions initially defended 'core' workers to preserve their working conditions and showed limited interest in protecting subcontracted workers' interests, particularly those of migrants. One of our interviewees, employed directly by Chicken Group, explained:

> 'The cooperatives at Chicken Group are contracted for the heaviest tasks. They do night shifts. Cleaning cooperatives, for instance, work exclusively on night shifts. When cleaning wasn't subcontracted, cyclically, we had to do night shifts too. I did it, for example. Working at night is not pleasant! Sure, you get paid more, but people said: "Yes, yes, but I don't want to stay overnight". […] When they contracted out the cleaning, people who wanted to avoid working on night shifts were asking to subcontract labour. Even a shop steward asked the company to subcontract cleaning because he didn't want to work on night shifts! And that was representative of a certain type of worker mentality. I called him a scab. I said: "Sorry, but how dare you ask the company – you should defend labour, and you should defend salaries – how dare you ask other people to do the work you always did for less [money]?"' (Antonio, Northern Italian, direct worker at Chicken Group)

The spread of a model largely based on subcontracting has progressively led to outsourcing to COCs task of recruiting, training, controlling and retaining the workforce. Like the main companies, COCs also experienced a change in workforce composition: while for the first decades they were mainly employing Southern Italian workers under worse labour conditions compared to direct workers,[5] since the 2000s, they have mainly recruited international migrants and relied on migrants' own networks to hire new workforce (Benvegnù et al, 2018; Ciupijus et al, 2020).

From the perspective of migrants, COCs often represent a chance to obtain a labour contract that, notwithstanding the poor working conditions, a requirement if they are to maintain their to maintain legal migration status. Moreover, despite the physical strain the possibility of working overtime allows migrant labourers to access good wages in a short period of time. Nevertheless, migrants show limited attachment to cooperatives and experience mobility within companies and sectors in search of better job opportunities.

These multiple changes in the workforce composition, both for the main companies and subcontractors, has implied a twofold process: in Ignatiev's words (1995), South Italian internal migrants have progressively 'become white' (see also Roedigers, 1991), while at the same time international migrants began taking their place as 'racialised others'. In this regard, international migration to Italy constitutes the basis for the re-actualisation of racialisation processes that have long been present in the society (Andall, 2007).

The account of 45-year-old Guglielmo – working in the boning unit at Beef Group – conveys the common racialising attitude towards the international migrant workforce. At the same time, Guglielmo's attempt is to de-racialise his own position as an internal migrant and a previous cooperative worker (Gans, 2017).

> 'When we were in the cooperative, there was a gap [between direct and subcontracted workers] in terms of employment conditions, payroll, contributions, everything. We were those they could squeeze because, at any time of the night, they could call us, and we had to go there because we were subcontracted, so we had to do it. A Beef Group employee signs a work contract from 6:00 to 14:00, and he is required to work from 6:00 to 14:00. The cooperative had signed a contract for the provision of a service, so if Beef Group called at 2 in the morning asking: "You have to make 10 extra pieces", we had to get up and make the 10 extra pieces. It happened that S. [the foreman] would tell us "Saturday, Sunday or Christmas Eve, you have to work", or: "Come and work for two hours and then you can go". [For direct workers] this doesn't happen. [...] Right now, to debone bulls, we are... [thinking] previously we were 100 per cent Italians; now, we are 50/50 because there is a certain amount of physical labour, and they ask the *negretti* [negros, sic] to do it. The physical labour consists of separating half-carcasses: you have to remove the loin, lift it and then hang it. A loin weighs 15 kilos, and when you lift 400 loins of 15 kilos each, at the end of the day, your shoulders are wrecked... The work is tough! [...] At the beginning, you don't feel it, but then the problem is that a single piece is nothing, but 400 pieces are 400 pieces. Here, we slaughter 300–400–500 cows a day, from Monday to Friday, counting only cows. Around 1,000 animals a day.' (Guglielmo, Southern Italian, subcontracted worker at Beef Group)

In Guglielmo's account, migrant workers (especially racialised black migrants) are depicted as endowed with stamina and physical power, always 'disposable' and ready to work, suitable for menial jobs but with a limited ability to learn (see also Smith and Winders, 2008; McDowell, 2008; Maldonado, 2009). These processes of racialisation and stigmatisation, instantiated through both management and local labourers, lead to the production of an internal workplace hierarchy based on workers' contractual and social positions: local workers, usually employed directly by the main company, occupy the higher positions, while Southern Italian workers are located in a better position compared to subcontracted international migrant workers. The recruitment of foreign workers for hazardous tasks in workplaces makes it possible to create forms of vertical mobility for part of the Italian workforce, with significant spill-overs in the preservation of the social order. This hierarchical order is largely accepted and naturalised; it reflects the social order existing outside the shopfloor, while at the same time it is internally functional and legitimises a higher level of control over the entire workforce (Sacchetto, 2011).

These processes of othering and racialisation are also gendered, variously affecting male and female migrant workers in their everyday position in the workplace. An example was provided by Brenda, a Brazilian subcontracted worker at Chicken Group:

> 'The first impact was difficult because… I was seen as a prostitute, a whore. I'm sorry, but that's how it is! Because all Brazilian women are [perceived by Italians as] sluts, they are whores. Now it's the Romanians, it's no longer Brazilian women, who come here to steal other people's husbands. When I came here [people said to me] "*extracomunitaria* [non-EU migrant], you are a shit, go back to your country, you steal our children's work, you are a slut, you are a whore." I'm sorry, but it's how it is [laughing], how much I suffered! And then, you can never stay in a good work position because "non-EU, you don't understand a shit". They give the worst jobs to those black guys there… The young black guys, not even one black guy in the assembly line is a foreman. All Italians [controlling the process at] the end of the line, almost all Italians.' (Brenda, Brazilian, subcontracted worker at Chicken Group)

In Brenda's account, gender, nationality and skin colour interplay to define the different racialised positions of meat workers (Browne and Misra, 2003). Moreover, racial categories and stigmatisation change over time, as epitomised by the example of Brazilian women, initially stigmatised as prostitutes and then de-stigmatised when Romanian female workers substituted them (see also McDonnell and de Lourenço, 2009).

Following this analysis, we argue that processes of racialisation and de-racialisation, coupled with workforce genderisation, serve a double purpose in meat processing plants. On one hand, they legitimise and enable the spread of subcontracting by weakening the opposition of local workers and their unions and hampering worker solidarity (Wagner and Refslund, 2016). On the other hand, they amplify the worsening of labour conditions (which also occurs in the logistic sector, see Alimahomed-Wilson 2019), since 'bad' workers are deemed more appropriate for and 'deserving' of bad jobs (McDowell, 2008; Simpson and Simpson, 2018).

Racialisation practices: spatial and social distancing in workplace and trade union activities

As labour subcontracting became more pervasive in the meat sector, it produced additional segmentations among workers, reproducing and strengthening racialisation processes. These segmentations are evident on the shopfloor, where management and the workforce implement several everyday routines that we can define as racialising practices. By 'racialising practices', we mean activities that reproduce, although sometimes unintentionally, in the everyday dimension of the workplace the effects of racialisation processes, naturalising certain behaviours that shape both the division of labour and the way of thinking.

One of the practices implemented in meat processing plants is the spatial distancing between cooperative migrant workers and direct, mostly Italian, employees, since the workplace is divided into different areas for company and subcontracted workers. The space separation is a requirement included in the subcontracting legislation, that forbids the 'mixing' of direct and subcontracted workers, deemed an illegal form of intermediation (Assemblea Legislativa Emilia-Romagna, 2019). An easy way to get around this obstacle is to separate assembly lines, dressing rooms, break rooms and canteens for direct and subcontracted workers. Moreover, subcontracted and direct workers are often allocated different shifts, further reducing the possibility of interaction and informal sociability during working hours.

R: [In my shopfloor] subcontracted workers are mostly male; most of them are foreigners. Italians are very few, none in cooperatives. And I have seen maybe two women. […] I see them passing by, when I go to my dressing room, but it's not like I stop…
Q: Do you talk to them from time to time?
R: No, no, no, never… also because they are all men! Because they are all men… and then because they are all foreigners [derogatory meaning]. I have never… and anyway, you are in the workplace, you can't stop to talk! Eventually, it could happen during a break, but in any case, everyone has their own break room: we have our own room; they have their own room.
Q: So even in the break, don't you spend any time together, do you?
R: No, no, no… never, never! It never happens! (Maria, Southern Italian, direct worker at Chicken Group)

The practice of space differentiation can be identified as racialising since it produces separated and highly racialised internal areas where 'mixture' and sociability between direct (mainly Italians) and COC workers (almost entirely migrants) are forbidden or highly discouraged. Significantly, one of our interviewees working at Chicken Group defined the spatial arrangement inside his plant as a 'ghetto',[6] evoking the spatial separation in racialised groups and social distancing.

Another everyday practice that reproduces workforce racialisation is the organisation of union activities on the shopfloor. Established unions actually differentiate bargaining activities and representation of workers within the plant according to their employer (main company or subcontractor). One trade unionist of

the established union CISL (*Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori*) explained this practice during the interview:

> 'Workers have different hats, in other cases different coats; then there are forklifts with different labels because everyone must have their own equipment. [There are] lines on the ground with marked spaces where workers can or cannot stay. […] We usually went on the shopfloor to organise meetings and say to someone: "Come to the meeting" and then [our shop steward] explained to us: "No, those who have orange hats are not 'ours'." When we hold a meeting with the direct workers at Beef Group, we talk about the Beef Group contract. The subcontracted workers have to bargain directly with their subcontractors.' (Domenico, Northern Italian, trade unionist at the local level in Modena)

Moreover, established trade unions segment workers according to the sectors they belong to: since cooperative workers are often employed with a contract of 'logistics and transport' or 'cleaning and services', they are not unionised through the 'food industry' category, which represents direct workers.

Consequently, while in their rhetorical strategy unions seek to defend and represent the entire workforce, in practice, their membership results highly fragmented, which was visible during our weekly observations at the unions' premises and in their activities, such as strikes and public protests. Thus, despite their universalistic claims, established unions are mainly considered as the 'whites' union',[7] while grass roots unions are seen as the exclusive domain of migrant organisations. These differentiations, as well as the high level of conflict between established trade unions and grass roots organisations, exacerbate racialisation and social distancing among the workforce employed on the same shopfloor (see also Piro and Sacchetto, 2020).

This implies that solidarity ties between direct and subcontracted workers are often weak, with the differentiated practices of the unions reinforcing Italian/migrant opposition. In the interviews, the former often reported firm hostility towards migrants' more conflictual approaches (that is, frequent industrial actions, pickets, protests). By echoing political discourses concerning race and migration status, they define cooperative workers as 'guests in someone else's place', both in terms of subcontracted labourers ('guests' within the plant) and migrants ('guests' in a country that is not considered theirs). As 'guests', migrants should not be entitled to citizenship rights, namely those of protesting or taking industrial action in the workplace (Ong, 2006).

> 'The most powerful strikes were organised by the Cobas [grass roots union]. They organised strikes for 3–4 days consecutively. They interrupted the logistics, and goods went off at a hiccup. It was difficult to load the trucks because the cooperatives managed a pivotal part of the production […]. Usually, subcontracted workers go on strike and occupy the roundabout close to the plant where the trucks come in, so there is also the risk that production will not take place because the trucks will not arrive to supply the slaughterhouses. I always say they are right to go on strike, but they have to go on strike *at their own place* [in the cooperative headquarters] […] The general myth is that [at Chicken Group] we have a management that is not

> good enough because it allows a contractor to strike *at their place* [that is, inside Chicken Group's plant]. Chicken Group is paying cooperatives every month, but managers haven't the nerve to rescind the contract with cooperatives who cause problems once or twice a year.... The other three established unions agreed with the company to try to limit [industrial action] because they often, rightly, collaborate with human resources. Subcontracting workers represent one-third of the workforce inside Chicken Group, and [if they strike] this is a big problem. [...] They [the subcontracted workers] must feel that if they strike again, next time, there will be no more work for them... We [the direct workers at Chicken Group] would never allow something like that. When we go on strike, we do it for 40 minutes, for example, following all the procedures for strikes, that is, announcing it two hours in advance at most so that Chicken group's managers can organise everything, including for animal well-being... We need to do stuff correctly!' (Alberto, Northern Italian, direct worker at Chicken Group)

As stated by Doellgast and colleagues (2018: 20), 'employers' segmentation strategies and exclusive union strategies together contribute to weakening existing or potential worker solidarity, particularly the more inclusive forms of solidarity built within and through encompassing collective bargaining'. Nevertheless, as the next section shows, workers are also able to mobilise race, nationality and skin colour in order to engage in collective action.

'Racial' solidarities: how racialisation processes can be used to mobilise workers

In the plants observed during our fieldwork, race and racial meanings could also be mobilised to create pragmatic solidarities based on common material conditions. Workers and their unions often relied on racial 'vocabulary' by emphasising, for example, a common skin colour, religion or migration status as a way of stressing a common position in the workplace hierarchy. For instance, they put emphasis on experiences of stigmatisation and racism suffered as migrant workers employed in menial and dirty jobs. The pragmatic solidarities based on a similar migratory background and common experiences of stigmatisation also developed in the relationships between internal and international migrants. Riccardo, a 25-year-old South Italian employee, describes his personal relation with a Tunisian workmate:

> 'I can't see the differences between me and Tarek. I mean, between myself, from Naples, South Italian origin, and someone who comes from Tunisia, I can't see any difference. I can't see it because anyway... I'm not saying that we are "running away" from our land, but I'm saying that there are structural causes impeding our land from developing. So, we are [both] forced to migrate because if we had stayed at home, we would have been happy to stay there. I certainly wouldn't come here to bother you and take your job, no way! I would have gladly avoided it than to move here with the whole family; I would have been comfortable in my homeplace. [That's why] I can't see any difference with them... well, the language, this kind of stuff. We have organised many dinners at Tarek's house... so good, Tarek's lamb it's amazingly good!' (Riccardo, Southern Italian, subcontracted worker at Beef Group)

In Riccardo's words, solidarity is expressed by relying on workers' common migration experiences. Stigmatisation and racialisation instantiated by the 'others' (the Italian state, the political discourse, management, local workmates) become an occasion that fuels solidarity and strengthens social ties both inside and outside the workplace (that is, during communal meals).

In the last decades, kinship, national and friendship ties have become the basis for allowing the development of a specific form of trade unionism that counts among its membership and coordinators migrants of different nationalities, all of whom are employed by subcontracting cooperatives. Newly formed grass roots organisations (especially SiCobas – *Sindacato Intercategoriale, Confederazione dei Comitati di Base*; AdlCobas – *Associazione Difesa dei Lavoratori*; and USB – *Unione Sindacale di Base*) have been able to mobilise massive numbers of migrants on the picket lines and in direct bargaining with the management of cooperatives and some of the main companies as well as proceeding with legal action (Cuppini et al, 2015; Benvegnù et al, 2018). According to the literature, grass roots organisations represent an emerging actor in extending the field of industrial relations (Atzeni and Ness, 2018). Moreover, this migrant-rich organisations are developing specific practices defined as forms of 'hybrid unionism' since they are able to combine formal and informal tactics, as well as established union action (strikes, pickets, legal action), with practices adopted from the social movements repertoire, such as campaigning, lobbying and supporting global claims outside the scope of the specific industrial action (Alberti, 2016; Holgate, 2005; Alberti and Però, 2018). In addition, Italian grassroot organisations refer and try to model, within the local context, the repertoire of practices and slogans created abroad by leading trade unions to mobilise migrant workers, such as the US-based Industrial Workers of the World, which uses a variety of foreign languages to communicate, as well as migrants' national and religious networks to recruit and mobilise their membership.

However, the potential of migrants to define hybrid forms of unionism goes beyond these practices. Migrant workers might create autonomous spaces of action, outside and alongside established trade unions and grasroot organizations, where race, skin colour, religion and migration status are used to unite workers who are in a common social position – as subcontracted and racialised migrant labourers. These informal organisations do not only foster innovation in union practices but also promote and enlarge the very concept of the union organisation. These field notes describe an example of a hybrid form of unionism encountered during the fieldwork.

> We met Paul, a 45-yo Ghanaian worker, for the first time at his place in a small town nearby Modena. We discussed his work experience in several meat processing plants, always through cooperatives where the boss and his workmates were mostly Ghanaian (or from West Africa). In his account, he put a lot of emphasis on an industrial action he actively participated in. In 2017, subcontracted workers in his plant organised for better working conditions and asked for support from the local branch of CGIL [*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, established union]: they organised around three months of protests, including 12 days of hunger strike. Since we looked so interested in this action, Paul proposed that we join his informal group of people, meeting every week to pray

> as well as discuss the labour conditions in cooperatives, mainly relating to subcontractors in meat plants. […] We joined the meeting, which was held at one member's place. Around 30 workers were in the room with us, all of them Ghanaian, speaking with each other in Ashanti and translating from time to time to let us understand the topic of conversation. Before starting the meeting, they all started to pray, making invocations to God in loud voices. The meeting lasted around two hours. After praying and introducing us to the group, they discussed the work pace, difficulties regarding taking breaks from the assembly line to go to the toilet, injuries occurring while working and hidden by the management of cooperatives, episodes of racism experienced by some of them and so on. From time to time, they mentioned some of the names of the trade unionists from the local branch of CGIL, whom we were also in contact with. Nevertheless, they explicitly said that they no longer trusted the union; in fact, they decided to organise autonomously, and they directly referred to a lawyer whenever they intended to proceed with legal action against the cooperatives. (Fieldnotes from a meeting with a migrant workers' informal group, Modena, 14 April 2019)

The members of this organisation collectively organised on the basis of a common religion, nationality, skin colour and, above all, a common position as cooperative workers. Some of the informal leaders gained experience within a established union – and participating in a specific industrial action – but they exited the organisation (in this case, CGIL) without entering other unions. This case exemplifies that racialisation processes are not only experienced by migrant workers, who are racialised both within the labour process and through the segmented forms of union actions. The processes of racialisation are also re-signified by migrants themselves, who organise autonomously and assume a conflictual attitude towards both the meat processing companies and the established trade unions (without merging into a grass roots organisation). They produce a collective space of discussion where race, skin colour and migratory status are mobilised and used as a pretext to discuss common labour conditions and take action. In this space, race represents the pivotal axis in motivating collective action, working as a mouthpiece that accelerates and makes visible a common class position (racialised migrant subcontracted workers in the meat sector).

Conclusion: subcontracted racial capitalism as an emerging paradigm

This article sought to contribute to the debate on outsourcing as research in this field has hitherto underestimated the role of race and racialisation processes in the proliferation of labour subcontracting and degrading working conditions. Recent scholarship has mainly investigated the causes and impact of subcontracted capitalism on trade union activities, barely merging these analyses in their conceptualisations of capitalism as a 'racial' project from its inception to the present. In contrast to this colour-blind understanding of subcontracting, we argue that racialisation, conceived of as a process that is materially experienced within workplaces, enables outsourcing and is reinforced by it.

Departing from the analysis of the empirical data concerning the meat industry in Northern Italy, we suggest that racialisation has facilitated the introduction of subcontracting, as jobs characterised by the worst working conditions have been attributed to racialised subjects through COCs. This process reinforces the segmentation of the labour market and hinders forms of solidarity (Iannuzzi and Sacchetto, 2020). In slaughterhouses, in particular, dirty, physically and emotionally demanding tasks have been progressively attributed first to internal and later on to international migrant workers, thus leading to the coexistence of processes of racialisation and de-racialisation (Gans, 2017). Workers, initially directly employed and then subcontracted, are selected according to specific social characteristics to embody 'suitable' gendered and racialised labourers (McDowell, 2008; Simpson and Simpson, 2018). These processes of racialisation, which also involve direct workers, are more severe for subcontracted labourers as they are subject to a different labour contract.

Moreover, we argue that worker segmentations carried out by firms strengthen racialisation processes by producing spatial and social distancing on the shopfloor. Consequently, once the outsourcing process has begun, it reinforces differentiation and hierarchies within workplaces through specific racialising practices.

Finally, we highlighted how workers, and sometimes unions, mobilise racial meanings to create pragmatic (racial) solidarity. In the last decades, kinship, national and friendship ties have become the basis for the development of grass roots organisation whose membership is mainly composed of migrant subcontracted workers. Mobilising racial meanings and networks, migrant workers (not only those in the meat sector) have carried out important industrial actions, especially within these new emerging organisations. As noted in the literature, in several cases, migrants are implementing forms of 'hybrid' or 'community' unionism, combining formal and informal tactics with established union action and the social movement repertoire (Alberti and Però, 2018; Atzeni and Ness, 2018). Adding to this, our empirical findings show that they are also developing hybrid forms of collective organising that overcome the perimeters of both established and grassroot unions.

Longitudinal analyses of the processes of racialisation within the workplace help in underlining that race should not be conceived as an issue concerning migrants as particularly exploitable, since it is a consubstantial process in contemporary capitalism that valorises existing differences while also producing and reproducing new ones on a daily basis (Tsing, 2009; Roediger and Esch, 2012; Bhattacharyya, 2018). Therefore, 'racial capitalism' is a powerful framework within which to better understand the current development of capitalism (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Virdee, 2019) by assessing how 'economic exploitation and racist othering reinforce and sometimes amplify each other' (Bhattacharyya, 2018: 103). Thus, considering the contemporary capitalist phase, we can speak about a 'subcontracted racial capitalism' to stress both the adaptive and performative effects of outsourcing on processes of capital accumulation and racial formation. Empirically investigating these processes is fundamental in order to highlight that they take place in the material dimension of workplaces, mirroring and reproducing social categories diffused within the society at large. The understanding of mutual interconnections between workplaces and society, not only in terms of class but also in terms of race and other social divisions, helps shed new light on the political nature of labour processes and allows the further development of labour process theory as a productive heuristic device to better understand 'racial capitalism'.

Notes

[1] To reconstruct the genealogy of the concept, see Barot and Bird (2001). Among its most diffused definitions, see Omi and Winant (1986) and Murji and Solomos (2005). For a critique of the concept, see Hochman (2018).

[2] Data provided by ISMEA, an Italian institute servicing the agri-food market. See http://www.ismeamercati.it/carni.

[3] The term terrone derives from 'land' (terra, in Italian) and represents a stereotypical image of a Southern peasant. It is used as a derogatory term for people of Southern Italy.

[4] *Extracomunitari* means migrants from non-EU countries, but it is used to describe all migrants coming from a poor country (including within the EU, such as Romanian or Bulgarian citizens).

[5] Working conditions in COCs are often characterised by large irregularities in payroll, use of piecework, low wages, long shifts often not planned in advance, not payment of 13-monthly salaries, unpaid sick leave, forced and unpaid off days when production is slow, unpaid severance in case of changes of subcontractor.

[6] Interview with Alberto, Northern Italy, direct worker at Chicken Group.

[7] Interview with Massimo, Northern Italy, trade unionist at the local level in Modena.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Alberti, G. (2016) Mobilizing and bargaining at the edge of informality: the '3 cosas campaign' by outsourced migrant workers at the University of London, *WorkingUSA*, 19(1): 81–103. doi: 10.1111/wusa.12228

Alberti, G. and Però, D. (2018) Migrating industrial relations: migrant workers' initiative within and outside trade unions, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 56(4): 693–715. doi: 10.1111/bjir.12308

Alimahomed-Wilson, J. (2019) Unfree shipping: the racialisation of logistics labour, *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, 13(1): 96–113. doi: 10.13169/workorgalaboglob.13.1.0096

Andall, J. (2007) Industrial districts and migrant labour in Italy, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45(2): 285–308. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2007.00615.x

Assemblea Legislativa Emilia-Romagna (2019) Relazione conclusiva della commissione speciale di ricerca e di studio sulle cooperative cosiddette spurie o fittizie, www.assemblea.emr.it/attivita/attivita-dalle-commissioni/comm-spec-coop.

Atzeni, M. and Ness, I. (2018) *Global Perspectives on Workers' and Labour Organizations*, Berlin: Springer.

Barot, R. and Bird, J. (2001) Racialization: the genealogy and critique of a concept, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24(4): 601–18. doi: 10.1080/01419870120049806

Benassi, C. and Dorigatti, L. (2020) Out of sight, out of mind: the challenge of external work arrangements for industrial manufacturing unions in Germany and Italy, *Work, Employment and Society*, 34(6): 1027–44, doi: 10.1177/0950017020903039.

Benvegnù, C., Haidinger, B. and Sacchetto, D. (2018) Restructuring labour relations and employment in the European logistics sector: unions' responses to a segmented workforce, in V. Doellgast and N. Lillie and V. Puligliano (eds) *Reconstructing Solidarity: Labour Unions, Precarious work, and the Politics of Institutional Change in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 83–103.

Bhattacharyya, G. (2018) *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival*, London: Rowman and Littlefield.

Birke, P. and Bluhm, F. (2020) Migrant labour and workers' struggles: the German meatpacking industry as contested terrain, *Global Labour Journal*, 10(1): 34–51.

Bonacich, E.M. (1972) A theory of ethnic antagonism: the split labour market, *American Sociological Review*, 37(5): 547–59. doi: 10.2307/2093450

Bonacich, E. and Wilson, J. (2008) *Getting the Goods: Ports, Labor and Logistics Revolution*, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.

Bonacich, E.M., Alimahomed, S. and Wilson, J.B. (2008) The racialization of global labor, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(3): 342–55. doi: 10.1177/0002764208323510

Browne, I. and Misra, J. (2003) The intersection of gender and race in the labor market, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1): 487–513. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.100016

Campanella, P. and Dazzi, D. (eds) (2020) *Meat-up Ffire: Fairness, Freedom and Industrial Relations Across Europe*, Milan: Franco Angeli.

Carchedi, F. and Franciosi, U. (2016) Il contesto Agro-zootecnico, il comparto della macellazione delle carni e le condizioni di ingaggio e di lavoro degli stranieri. Il caso di Modena (Emilia-Romagna), in O.P. Rizzotto (ed) *Agromafie E Caporalato*, Rome: Ediesse, pp 141–58.

Ceccagno, A. (2017) *City Making and Global Labor Regimes: Chinese Immigrants and Italy's Fast Fashion Industry*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ciupijus, Z., Forde, C. and MacKenzie, R. (2020) Micro- and meso-regulatory spaces of labour mobility power: the role of ethnic and kinship networks in shaping work-related movements of post-2004 Central Eastern European migrants to the United Kingdom, *Population, Space and Place*, 26(5): e2300. doi: 10.1002/psp.2300

Contractor, F.J., Kumar, V., Kundu, S.K. and Pedersen, T. (2010) Reconceptualizing the firm in a world of outsourcing and offshoring: the organizational and geographical relocation of high-value company functions, *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(8): 1417–33. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00945.x

Cuppini, N., Frapporti, M. and Pirone, M. (2015) Logistics struggles in the Po Valley region: territorial transformations and processes of antagonistic subjectivation, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 114(1): 119–34. doi: 10.1215/00382876-2831323

Dekker, F. and Koster, F. (2016) Outsourcing in 18 European countries: the role of worker power, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 39(3): 481–99. doi: 10.1177/0143831X16633760

Doellgast, V., Lillie, N. and Pulignano, V. (2018) From dualization to solidarity: halting the cycle of precarity, in V. Doellgast, N. Lillie and V. Pulignano (eds) *Reconstructing Solidarity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 1–41.

Dorigatti, L. (2018) Ridotte all'osso. Disintegrazione verticale e condizioni di lavoro nella filiera della carne, *Meridiana*, 93: 51–70.

Drahokoupil, J. (2015) (ed) *The Outsourcing Challenge: Organizing Workers Across Fragmented Production Networks*, Brussels: Etui.

Edwards, P. (2003) The employment relationship and the field of industrial relations, in P. Edwards (ed) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp 1–36.

Emmenegger, P., Haeusermann, S., Palier, B. and Seeleib-Kaiser, M. (2012) *The Age of Dualization: The Changing Face of Inequality in Deindustrializing Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fox, J.E., Morosanu, L. and Szilassy, E. (2012) The racialization of the new European migration to the UK, *Sociology*, 46(4): 680–95. doi: 10.1177/0038038511425558

Gans, H.J. (2017) Racialization and racialization research, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(3): 341–52. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1238497

Gonzalez-Sobrino, B. and Goss, D.R. (2019) Exploring the mechanisms of racialization beyond the black–white binary, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(4): 505–10. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2018.1444781

Grimshaw, D., Cartwright, J., Keizer, A. and Rubery, J. (2019) Market exposure and the labour process: the contradictory dynamics in managing subcontracted services work, *Work, Employment and Society*, 33(1): 76–95. doi: 10.1177/0950017018759206

Hochman, A. (2018) Racialization: a defense of the concept, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(8): 1245–62, doi: 10.1080/01419870.2018.1527937.

Holgate, J. (2005) Organizing migrant workers: a case study of working conditions and unionization in a London sandwich factory, *Work, Employment and Society*, 19(3): 463–80. doi: 10.1177/0950017005055666

Holst, H. (2014) 'Commodifying institutions': vertical disintegration and institutional change in German labour relations, *Work, Employment and Society*, 28(1): 3–20. doi: 10.1177/0950017012464423

Iannuzzi, F.E. and Sacchetto, D. (2020) Outsourcing and workers' resistance practices in Venice's hotel industry: the role of migrants employed by cooperatives, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, doi: 10.1177/0143831X20960227.

Ibsen, C. and Tapia, M. (2017) Trade union revitalisation: where are we now? Where to next?, *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 59(2): 170–91. doi: 10.1177/0022185616677558

Ignatiev, N. (1995) *How the Irish Became White*, London: Routledge.

Keucheyan, R. (2016) *Nature is a Battlefield: Towards a Political Ecology*, Cambridge: Polity.

Lever, J. and Milbourne, P. (2017) The structural invisibility of outsiders: the role of migrant labour in the meat-processing industry, *Sociology*, 51(2): 306–22. doi: 10.1177/0038038515616354

Maldonado, M.M. (2009) 'It is their nature to do menial labour': the racialization of 'Latino/a workers' by agricultural employers, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32(6): 1017–36. doi: 10.1080/01419870902802254

Marino, S., Penninx, R. and Roosblad, J. (2015) Trade unions, immigration and immigrants in Europe revisited: unions' attitudes and actions under new conditions, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 3(1): 1–16. doi: 10.1007/s40878-015-0003-x

McDonnell, J. and de Lourenço, C. (2009) You're Brazilian, right? What kind of Brazilian are you? The racialization of Brazilian immigrant women, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32(2): 239–56. doi: 10.1080/01419870802361328

McDowell, L. (2008) Thinking through work: complex inequalities, constructions of difference and trans-national migrants, *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(4): 491–507. doi: 10.1177/0309132507088116

Murji, K. and Solomos, J. (2005) (eds) *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1986) *Racial Formation in the United States*, New York: Routledge.

Ong, A. (2006) *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Peck, J. (2017) *Offshore: Exploring the Worlds of Global Outsourcing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Piore, M. (1979) *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labour and Industrial Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Piro, V. and Sacchetto, D. (2020) Segmentazioni del lavoro e strategie sindacali nell'industria della carne, *Stato e Mercato*, 120(3): 515–41.

Pulignano, V., Meardi, G. and Doerflinger, N. (2015) Trade unions and labour market dualisation: a comparison of policies and attitudes towards agency and migrant workers in Germany and Belgium, *Work, Employment and Society*, 29(5): 808–25. doi: 10.1177/0950017014564603

Riessman, C.K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, London: Sage.

Roediger, D. (1991) *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London: Verso.

Roediger, D.R. and Esch, E.D. (2012) *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in US History*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Sacchetto, D. (2011) Xenophobia or democratic differentiation? A new path of separation and discipline for migrant workers in Italy, in M. Huysseune (ed) *Contemporary Centrifugal Regionalism: Comparing Flanders and Northern Italy*, Brussel: Kvab, pp 141–55.

Sacchetto, D. and Semenzin, M. (2016) Workers' cooperatives in Italy: between solidarity and autocratic centralism, in P. Ngai, K.H. Bun, Y. Hairong and A. Koo (eds) *Social Economy in China and the World*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp 135–55.

Simpson, R. and Simpson, A. (2018) 'Embodying' dirty work: a review of the literature, *Sociology Compass*, 12(6): e12581. doi: 10.1111/soc4.12581

Smith, B.E. and Winders, J. (2008) 'We're here to stay': economic restructuring, Latino migration and place-making in the US South, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(1): 60–72. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2007.00287.x

Strauss, K. (2020) Labour geography III: precarity, racial capitalisms and infrastructure, *Progress in Human Geography*, 44(6): 1212–24. doi: 10.1177/0309132519895308

Taylor, P. and Bain, P. (2008) United by a common language? Trade union responses in the UK and India to call centre offshoring, *Antipode*, 40(1): 131–54. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2008.00567.x

Thompson, P. and Smith, C. (eds) (2010) *Working Life: Renewing Labor Process Analysis*, Houndmills: Palgrave.

Tsing, A. (2009) Supply chains and the human condition, *Rethinking Marxism*, 31(2): 148–76. doi: 10.1080/08935690902743088

Virdee, S. (2019) Racialized capitalism: an account of its contested origins and consolidation, *The Sociological Review*, 67(1): 3–27. doi: 10.1177/0038026118820293

Wagner, B. and Refslund, B. (2016) Understanding the diverging trajectories of slaughterhouse work in Denmark and Germany: a power resource approach, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 22(4): 335–51. doi: 10.1177/0959680116682109

Wills, J. (2001) Community unionism and trade union renewal in the UK: moving beyond the fragments at last?, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 26(4): 465–83. doi: 10.1111/1475-5661.00035

Wills, J. (2009) Subcontracting and its challenge to labor, *Labor Studies Journal*, 34(4): 441–60. doi: 10.1177/0160449X08324740