international as well as regional human rights law allow her to look beyond well-covered issues and to create an abstract three-step assessment that may be claimed to be universally applicable. The necessary sacrifice of some depth of analysis is occasionally regrettable. Despite the wide array of sources considered as well as the ambitious layout of her study, Pijnenburg creates a very well structured and accessible text. And even though the guiding question of the book has a significant moral dimension, Pijnenburg manages to retain focus on the legal framework and basis.

Ideally, the book should perhaps be read by policymakers framing cooperative migration control mechanisms. It is, nonetheless, a very informative and insightful read for anyone dealing with responsibility and accountability under international law, or with human rights law, migration law, socio-economic rights, legal theory and other related fields of interest and research.

**ORCID iD**
Claudia Baumann https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9127-7950

---

Deepa Das Acevedo (ed.), *Beyond the Algorithm: Qualitative Insights for gig Work Regulation*, 2021, UK: Cambridge University Press, 221 pp., ISBN: 978 1 108 48776 4 (hardback).

**Reviewed by:** Primož Rataj, *University of Ljubljana*
DOI: 10.1177/13882627221092046

*Beyond the algorithm: Qualitative insights for gig work regulation* is a ten-chapter volume addressing one of the most controversial questions of modern society that has been tackled by policymakers and scholars, often titled as (technology-facilitated) ‘gig work’. As the authors describe it, it is the latest iteration of a decades-old pattern of workplace fissuring, where ‘gig companies’ are now striving to control work remotely and to shift risks and costs of service provision onto workers. In this manner, they evade obligations that are typically imposed on employers, for instance, by requiring from the worker the procurement of a transportation vehicle and coverage of insurance and fuel costs in the transportation or delivery sector, and having direct feedback from consumers about the quality of work.

This timely, creative, and ambitious book sheds a light on the background of work in the gig economy, and examines how law regulates working conditions in this area. While the volume deals with the situation in the United States, it is relevant for developments occurring in Europe as well.

The editor’s background is in legal anthropology, and the first part of the book gathers contributions in sociology, anthropology and law that draw on a range of methodological and analytical approaches to offer regulatory insights on gig work. Whereas law research oversees regulatory rules and case law on the rise and scope of gig work regulation and employee/independent contractor status, sociology and anthropology dive deeper into the various aspects of the human experience of this phenomenon, including how these rules affect different groups of people and their social interactions not only at work but consequently also at home, etc. Together, they attempt to establish an overview on the framed topic from ‘top to bottom’. The
second part features industry experts outside of academia, who draw on information gained through qualitative empirical means in the course of performing other tasks – developing policy reports, advertising gig workers, or reporting on the gig economy for the new media. Their thoughts originate from observations, conversations and first-hand participation. Collectively, the volume represents a large part of the corpus of qualitative empirical research on gig work across multiple US industries. Although the book is about labour exchange in the gig economy, it also convincingly argues the value of qualitative empirical data for law and policy development. In other words, government actors must go beyond quantitative data to truly understand the realities of gig work.

Readers can learn about federal and state case law in the United States on the question of delineating between independent contractors or employees, although there are less court cases than one might imagine, and even less coherence. In practice, workers are required to sign arbitration agreements that require them to litigate their claims individually in closed door, non-court settings, making it difficult to establish legal precedents. The editor goes further by briefly referencing various delineation tests, highlighting the developments achieved in the ground-breaking Dynamex case in 2018 and touching upon the rather recent Californian proposal in AB5 and the public campaign to roll back the rules in a ballot or ‘rewrite’ the rules of employment instead of avoiding accountability. Since the developments in California have been occurring with speed, the book is already slightly outdated and does not capture the ballot results and further developments over the past two years. The question of worker classification also appears repeatedly throughout the volume as contributors demonstrate the different and often surprising ways in which it impacts the incentives and conditions of work for individuals in the gig economy.

The second prevalent question that appears in several chapters is the question of costs, and more specifically, of pay and other legal rights out of employment that drive up the costs. This needs to be understood in the context where technology has enabled companies to coordinate a vast workforce with ease and to ensure good customer service while paying the lowest wages necessary to induce workers to work, which is sometimes described as innovative and disruptive. From a regulatory perspective, the volume goes further by addressing the wider range of aspects connected with gig work, for instance, how to understand the governance implications of the gig economy, such as seeking answers on how to regulate and design with respect to infrastructural, traffic and safety challenges raised by short-term rental or transportation platforms.

On top of the regulatory information, several chapters deal with illustrative empirical analysis providing for granular qualitative insights. This is done through various topics, for instance, how workers learn about their tax obligations and tax compliance, and longitudinal studies of (not) maintaining working relationships with platforms. Moreover, the volume reflects upon how gig work is often stigmatised and is damaging to workers’ personal well-being and outlines the extent of some of the consequences. Furthermore, in one of the chapters the volume brings to light the ‘invisible work’ of care workers and the myriad of issues these workers face. Feedback through interviews from workers themselves is particularly valuable as it offers insight into how people endure or approach daily issues. This is connected to the finding that relationships between workers and companies change often, and one of the chapters undertakes the task of a close reading of contract language in the ‘end user license agreements’. These currently govern relationships between gig companies and gig workers, where abstract terms and conditions allow for the use of digital algorithms to design, allocate, direct, monitor, correct, evaluate and compensate work, therefore undermining the independence of workers. Through a multitude of topics there are several things that could be noted by regulators by looking out for the experience of gig workers and understanding
their lives when trying to establish the needs or protections that these workers ought to have. One caveat that the book is successful in establishing is, that this is easier said than done, especially in an industry where there is a lot of variability when it comes to age, background, and even pay (whole or partial source of income).

Overall, this book does succeed in providing creative, rigorous, valuable and important empirical insights through its thought-provoking combination of empirical and legal analyses by academics and observers or participants in the gig economy. The noteworthy strengths of the book are its multifaceted treatment of gig work, the interdisciplinary approach, and the plethora of references to news outlets, signalising how widespread and socially present this phenomenon is. The book is written in an understandable manner and is very informative, comprehensive and of high quality, enriching the discussion on gig economy. The book is particularly relevant for researchers, social partners and policymakers that are seeking comparative information, but is recommended also to a wider range of readers, interested in understanding a bit about the work lives of the people who comprise the gig economy in the US.

**ORCID iD**

Primož Rataj  
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5358-4714

Bent Greve (ed.), *Handbook on Austerity, Populism and the Welfare State*, 2021, Cheltenham: E.Elgar Publishing, 432 pages, ISBN: 978-1-78990-673-8

**Reviewed by:** Irena Lipowicz, *The Faculty of Law and Administration, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw*  
DOI: 10.1177/13882627221104499

This book deals with a unique intertwining of issues: the idea, development, and crisis of the welfare state; and the idea of the welfare state in the light of public policies of severe austerity, especially after the financial crisis of 2008. Many analyses present the recent successes of populism in Europe and link them to longstanding excessive austerity policies, as in Greece or Portugal, for example, under requirements by international, global, and regional financial institutions. This contrasts with countries like Hungary or Poland, where populist policies, associated with a substantial intensification of the state’s redistributive function, led to the consolidation of the political success of those in power - but also record-high inflation and related economic and political problems, as well a crisis of the rule of law.

The reviewed work, consisting of 26 chapters, concerns not only current issues but also formulates a precise diagnosis and conclusions that are useful for both theoreticians and practitioners. The book argues that the temptation to resort to populist measures has already shaken the foundations of stable democracy in many countries, leading to social polarisation and increased political conflicts. Hence, does the welfare state have a future? Do we fully understand the mechanism of its functioning and the historical success of the opposite programme? The authors answer these questions comprehensively by shedding light on welfare state social, economic, and legal aspects.