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Temporary migration, precarious employment and unfree labour relations: Exploring the 'continuum of exploitation' in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program

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Abstract

Exploitation of international migrant workers in the Global North has been increasingly framed in terms of trafficking, in political and legal domains and by the media. Yet posing trafficking as a phenomenon that captures the unfreedom experienced by migrants obscures the variegated means through which unfree labour relations are both institutionalized, and related to more 'mundane' forms of exploitation including precarious employment (for migrants and non-migrants alike). In this paper we argue that conceptualizing forms of unfreedom along a continuum of labour relations highlights this interrelationship, which for migrant workers includes attempts to harness

and control mobilities through immigration regimes that restrict mobility bargaining power within labour markets. We use the example of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) in Canada to show how precarious employment, precarious legal status and unfree labour relations interact, and how they are negotiated and contested by of workers themselves.



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Keywords

Migration; Labour geography; Precarious employment; Precarity; Unfree labour relations; Mobility

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