Hannah Schilling. 2023. *Globalized Urban Precarity in Berlin and Abidjan: Young Men and the Digital Economy*. **Manchester: Manchester University Press. 232 pp.**

Hannah Schilling's *Globalized Urban Precarity in Berlin and Abidjan* is a comparative investigation into the precarious livelihoods of young men in two distinct urban settings, Berlin and Abidjan. Schilling presents a detailed observation of how digital and informal economies influence opportunities, identity, and resiliencies in response to socioeconomic pressures. Her broader thesis is that the commodification of labor in digital economies (for gig and informal laborers) is a structurally unequal manifestation that profits from the vulnerabilities of workers. Schilling's subjects include food couriers in Berlin's gig economy and airtime sellers in the informal market of Abidjan, allowing her to unpack the ways in which both groups of young men adapt to work that is transient, unstable, and bereft of social protections. It is here, in the "ordinary cities" of Berlin and Abidjan, where Schilling explores common challenges confronted by youth within urban centers amidst changes in the global economy. By doing so, she dismantles North-South reductionist hierarchies to tease-out the commonalities that define this economic precarity.

Schilling illustrates how young workers are positioned within digital and informal economies, with labor flexibility often serving as a euphemism for instability and unprotected work. Her comparisons expose the structural dynamics of how precarity unfolds across different urban settings. Schilling's analytic framework rests upon relational sociology, notably the work of Talja Blokland (on social inequality), and presents "social closure," "domination," and "exploitation" as important mechanisms to understand precarious labor. She uses the concept of social closure to explain how young men in both cities are excluded from more stable labor pathways, a phenomenon reinforcing class boundaries in gig and informal economies. Domination captures the power imbalance inherent in job markets, as gig workers like Tobias are at the mercy of algorithmic management practices that constrain their control over hours and earnings, while airtime sellers in Abidjan negotiate an informal network of business and personal relationships that circumscribes their autonomy. Schilling furthers her analysis by revealing how this labor is vital to the economy, yet undervalued and unprotected; as such, this phenomenon forms a robust theoretical foundation for her ethnographic analysis.

Schilling attacks what she calls the symbolic dimensions of precarious labor and how it shapes young men's sense of self and their views on masculinity. Drawing on Raewyn Connell's theories, she reveals how gig and informal labor offers a terrain upon which young men embrace tropes of resilience and self-sufficiency, even as they work within limited means. In Berlin, Schilling finds that young couriers often frame gig work as transitional, using the job to maintain social status while waiting for career advancement. Tobias remarks: "Next month, I'll probably look for something else; maybe start some film projects for real" (p. 10). Meanwhile, for young men like Marian in Abidjan, selling airtime is a means of agency in a difficult job market; family and community networks provide the backbone of their social worth. Schilling's insight into how these cultural ideals shape the self-concept of young men supports her work on complex intersections of gender with precarious labor.

Schilling continues her analysis with an investigation into the organizational dynamics of Berlin's platform-based labor versus Abidjan's kinship-based systems. While Berlin's couriers work under an app-controlled algorithm, in effect turning workers into data-driven laborers,

Abidjan's airtime sellers fall into informal networks where trust and kinship define business relations. Here, Schilling shows how both structures control workers while maintaining an illusion of worker autonomy, trapping them in a vicious cycle of dependency. Her observations here are instructive; she underlines the similarities across formal and informal economies where flexibility and independence are covers for deeper forms of economic domination. In both Berlin and Abidjan, they fall back upon family, friends, and community networks to shield themselves from what precarious employment is unable or unwilling to provide.

By exploring how changes in technological and informal work transform identity, social networks, and economic survival, Schilling's book represents an important contribution to urban sociology, labor studies, and the discourse on digital economies. For scholars in the fields of urban inequalities, labor dynamics, and the global digital economy, *Globalized Urban Precarity in Berlin and Abidjan* is an indispensable resource. Schilling's comparative approach and detailed ethnographic method provides a powerful examination of how young urbanites become ensnared by the social and economic forces that shape their lives. While defining new modes of survival in today's urban spaces, Schilling's book is an important guide in understanding the ways in which digital transformations reshape work.

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