

ideas about trade, presenting summaries and careful consideration of the posited arguments.

About halfway through the book there is a significant shift as it turns to the empirical evidence. International comparative data is presented on (1) trade and economic growth, (2) factor endowments, trade and growth, and (3) trade and economic inequalities. In each case the statistical evidence is notably underwhelming. This is not necessarily a weakness: on the contrary, negative or inconclusive results in statistical work can be powerful in showing the hollowness of over-generalised claims. That is the case here. Because Dunn's statistical work produces few strong correlations it helps to show the shaky empirical foundations underpinning claims about the benefits of trade. For this reviewer at least, it therefore reinforces the scepticism about politicians advocating trade agreements, such as the recent China-Australia Free Trade Agreement and the Trans Pacific Partnership. These agreements, and the econometric estimates on which claims about their macroeconomic benefits are based, are not specifically analysed in the book because Dunn's concerns are broader. He wants to make the case for looking beyond simplistic notions about the benefits of exchange to more fundamental concerns about production relations within different countries and global capitalism. This would put class and power more centrally in the political economic spotlight.

**Tom Barnes**

**Informal Labour in Urban India: Three Cities, Three Journeys**

*Routledge, Abingdon, 2015, 202pp.*

The transformation of the Indian economy during the last quarter century is widely acknowledged. As this book shows, however, what is involved is not a straightforward process of change to a Western-style industrial and consumer society. Given India's size and complexity, one could hardly expect that to occur anyway. Linear forms of change – whether from backward to modern industry, from informal to formal employment, from rural to urban living, from widespread poverty to relative affluence, or from small to big enterprises – these are not useful ways of seeing what has actually been happening. This book by Tom Barnes is based on

substantial fieldwork and data analysis he undertook in three urban centres where the economic and social transformations have been most striking. It offers deeper insight into the more complex transitions that have been occurring and the impacts on peoples' work and livelihoods.

According to Barnes, the key element in the story is the mass employment of informal labour. He demonstrates that there has been both a strong concentration of informal wage workers in formal sector enterprises and substantial growth in the number of waged workers employed in small enterprises. The fieldwork that he undertook in Mumbai, Bangalore and New Delhi gives a 'grounded' view of the nature of the jobs in areas of concentrated employment and the associated incomes and living standards of the people. It is a story of uneven and combined development, featuring industrial powerhouses, diverse forms of work in small businesses, deep inequalities based on caste, gender and class, sometimes bonded workers and recurrent industrial relations tensions.

The book ends with observations of the forms of resistance to the effects of the 'informalisation' processes that have been occurring. In his own words, 'Informalisation marks the most recent phase in India's historical development, intersecting with the neoliberal economic policies by successive governments. It has generated new modes of dispossession and exploitation among India's hugely diverse 'classes of labour'. Hope for the future lies with the resistance of these workers' (p.171).

### **John Pullen**

#### **Nature's Gifts: the Australian Lectures of Henry George on the Ownership of Land and Other Natural Resources**

*Desert Pea Press, Sydney, 2014, 225pp.*

Henry George's influence as a political economist more than a century ago should not be underestimated. His best-known book, *Progress and Poverty* (first published in 1879), sold in prodigious quantities worldwide (passing 2 million by 1905). Some argue that neoclassical economics developed, among other reasons, to counter George's widely discussed views. The Australian Labor Party was strongly influenced by Georgist policy concerns in its early days. Yet today few students of economics