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ESSENTIAL FEATURES AND REASONS FOR SCALING THE PHENOMENON OF PRECARIOUS PRACTICE

Oliinyk I.

ORCID 0000-0003-1291-2499

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine)

Abstract. *The article reveals the essence of precarity as a social phenomenon and substantiates the reasons for the spread of this phenomenon. The classical approach based on the relationship between the emergence of precarity and economic and social transformations, globalization, crisis phenomena and unexpected challenges of modern society is considered. As part of the precarity study, the concept of habitus by P. Bourdieu is reinterpreted, which is understood as a socio-economic position regarding work as one of the lifestyle aspects. The idea of "precarious habitus" is substantiated, which not only enables the "normalization" of the precariat in the public consciousness, but also contributes to the change of people's general ideas about work and employment in general.*

Key words: *precarious practice, precariat, middle class, income, downward social mobility, precarious habitus.*

Introduction. As in the second half of the 20th century the share of social and labor practices unfolding in the area of instability and insecurity of labor relations increased, the labor market reacted by forming fundamentally new relations between the employee and the employer. Many social and economic researchers tried to explain these relations, based primarily on the employee's involvement in the official organizational structure of the workplace. For example, D. Pink justified the division of all workers into two groups in the general structure of employment - those who belong to the organization and those who are "free agents". And for the second group, in his opinion, the most important factor is independence from external (state-legal and corporate) factors (Pink, 2001: 54). Even more this characteristic of "free agents" was developed by H. Standing, who, revealing the essence and content of this group of workers, insists on their non-inclusion and non-belonging to the fundamental characteristics of the existing society (Standing, 2001), that is, he defines that this is the poorest stratum with the lowest level of social and cultural capital, which is professionally represented by the

unemployed, van drivers, cleaners, carpenters, attendants, cashiers, postal workers and small shop owners. Thus, according to estimates (Savage, 2013: 222), there are up to 15% of such workers in Britain.

Taking into account the progressive scale of changes in the share of such workers, which are constantly intensified by the increase in migration flows due to military and economic crises in various countries, it is worth analyzing this rapidly growing layer of workers with an unstable social position, uncertain, flexible (flexible) level of employment, with unstable forms of distributing additional product and arbitrary wages.

The term "precariat", which characterizes this group of employment, owes its appearance to P. Bourdieu, who in the 1970s analyzed seasonal workers, their specific condition, rights and opportunities to realize their life plans (Bourdieu, 1998). Today, the state of this group's research in terms of their social self-realization proves that they:

1) do not enjoy any social rights (protection against unemployment, compliance with social obligations by the state, guarantees of support in difficult life

circumstances) – and this indicates significant discrepancies between the theory and practice of the welfare state;

2) increasingly prevail in the employment structure of the population in any country at the expense of not only representatives of the industrial class, but also other layers of society. Thus, the basis for changing the socio-cultural codification and life world of people is being formed;

3) are not always a marginalized part of the population, as their choice is often determined by a conscious attitude to work as a part of livelihood. I mean the so-called "creative class", which is not ready to put up with external day-to-day control and regulation adopted in official organizations and enterprises;

4) are in a state of social uncertainty from the point of view of the future social situation prospects. These are, in particular, migrants who, while their socio-economic integration continues, are forced to put up with direct and indirect socio-economic, ethnic and religious discrimination. As well as students who, while studying, are forced to accept part-time and casual types of employment, which are often below their capabilities.

Thus, in this article, we aim to analyze in more detail the above-mentioned social groups and communities that are part of the precariat, and to determine the reasons for the scaling of this phenomenon in the socio-economic communities of different countries.

Research methods. The methodological basis of our study is the sociological theory of P. Bourdieu, in particular his concept of habitus as the experience of socialization of individuals occupying certain social positions (Bourdieu, 2005). It is the social position acquired by an individual in the process of his socio-economic practice that permits not only to structurally supplement the group of the precariat with persons who consciously choose this way of working life (freelancers, creative class, etc.), but also to substantiate the "precarious habitus",

which not only enables the "normalization" of the precariat in public consciousness, but also contributes to changing people's general ideas about work and employment in general.

Results and discussion. We proceed from the fact that any work (socio-economic activity) a priori has certain features of precariousness, and most people are exposed to it in the course of their working life. Such an opinion becomes possible if one accepts the idea of P. Bourdieu about the possibility of structuring the social space on the basis of the domination and subordination characteristics. P. Bourdieu distinguished two classes in society: "businessmen" (owners of economic capital who lack cultural capital) and "intellectuals" (those who have a lot of cultural capital, but not enough economic capital).

Among themselves, they are constantly fighting for leadership, which takes place at the intersection of different types of capital. But since it is symbolic capital that has the ability to acquire (transform) economic capital, it becomes key in this struggle, which P. Bourdieu called the "field of power" (Bourdieu, 1996; 2007: 95). The field of power is structured with the help of a social relations system, which are determined by the so-called "habitus" (P. Bourdieu's term), or a way of life formed on the basis of one or another social group's life experience (Bourdieu, 2007: 95).

The more conscious and long period of life a person is in a certain state, the more likely a certain model of his social and labor behavior is formed. Therefore, a person who is engaged in wage labor without social guarantees can be attributed to that group of people who, according to H. Standing, "live an uncertain, unguaranteed life, work in random and constantly changing jobs without any prospects for professional growth" (Standing, 2011: 7–8). But they can also be attributed to those who, according to R. Florida, dominate in terms of income and

power. These are individuals who have creativity (the ability to create new forms) and professionally belong to creative spheres of activity (*Florida, 2018: 18*).

The first classification brings these people closer to the underclass, i.e. those who approach the "bottom of society", the second – to those who, thanks to their talents, abilities and high work capacity, have every chance to get the highest habitus and determine the further development of society.

In addition, the precarious practice includes three more large social groups: youth aged approximately 16 years, who are looking for temporary income; women on maternity leave or women who are forced to seek additional income without social guarantees; middle-aged people (30-40 years old) who have to adapt to the flexible system of the global market; pensioners who want to earn additional income.

The given opinions permit to generalize this community from the point of view of employment, as one that is subject to or consciously chooses unstable, non-guaranteed and informal employment in various combinations thereof. Let us further consider the systemic and situational characteristics that affect the spread of the precarious practice phenomenon.

Low level of income. According to this feature, the majority of researchers include the unemployed in the community of precarious workers; people with partial employment; workers who work under fixed-term contracts; interns; students; migrants, etc.

In the scientific literature, it is proposed to equate the low incomes of the precarious practice representatives with the median income calculated for the corresponding region. The median approach in calculations is also used in Eurostat and in statistical offices of many countries of the world. This way of calculating income does not equate the precariat with poverty; the median income

provides the precariats not only with survival, but also with "the usual lifestyle for this group", and only part of the precariat – its "social bottom" – has an income lower than the median (*Shkaratan et.al.: 2015: 102*). This permits to conclude that there is no direct identification between the precariat and poverty, which is emphasized by some researchers of the precarious practice. The main part of the precariat representatives is almost constantly engaged in a certain job, therefore they receive a certain income. According to Eurostat, the share of the poor population in developed countries is around 12% (*Zhmerenetskyi, 2018*), and the percentage of people employed in precarious practices is much higher.

At the same time, the main criterion of poverty, according to the definitions of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in the European Union is a relative measure of "economic separation", i.e. the level of income is less than 60% of the mean income of households in the country of residence (*Zhmerenetskyi, 2018*). The issue of determining the specific level of income that would be associated with the precarious practice is purely technical and debatable.

The median income index permits to assess the real situation in the vast majority of the country's residents and determine the amount of income below which half of the population receives. In most countries, the median income is half the mean level of income. This is explained by the fact that incomes in society are distributed very unevenly, but this fact is hidden by the generalization that occurs when calculating the arithmetic mean of the fortunes in the absolute minority of the super-rich and the majority of poor citizens, as, for example, in Ukraine.

Quite common in scientific discourse is the opinion that the middle class in society can include all those who have the level of income above and below which the same number of workers or the

population receives income (that is, the median income). When the difference in incomes increases, the median income index will decrease, thus significantly distorting the indices of the middle class size, a significant number of whose representatives move to the ranks of the precariat in periods of economic and social instability. Today, this most often happens with employees of the service sector, which to a greater extent belongs to the extremely unprotected commercial sector of the economy. The provision of a social package for workers in this area is a pure formality, "in practice, they have no rights, are alienated from their professional activities, frustrated, knocked off the rails. This is a category, as well as numerous employees of the lower segment of state institutions – museums, libraries and other cultural institutions" (*Standing, 2011*).

Confirmation of this position was observed in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, when employees of the service sector (cafes and restaurants, beauty salons, etc.) lost their jobs en masse or were forced to temporarily cease their activities for an indefinite period. That is, the level of precariousness can be affected by phenomena independent of humans, such as pandemics or natural disasters.

It should be noted that classification in society can be built not only and not so much on the level of income and social status, but on indices of social security, confidence in the future, guarantee of employment and the possibility of preserving one's professional identity. Therefore, the ranks of the precariat can be filled by representatives of well-to-do population groups. According to H. Standing, representatives of the salary class (upper middle class) are often hostages of their material stability, "white-collar workers" who are used to stability and corporate support perceive "everything from the outside as a zone of fear" (*Standing, 2011: 37*). This reveals new trends in social stratification, within

which the community of the precariat crystallizes with its characteristic features, both financially and socially, and from a psychological perspective. From this point of view, the precarious practice can include all freelancers, whose number, according to the online data platform Statista, will increase from 57 million to 90 million by 2028 in the United States alone (*EU..., 2016*). And that's almost half of the workforce in this country. Similar processes are taking place in other countries: a significant share of the total workforce in Germany and France has non-standard employment, and in Japan, for several years, a trend towards transferring employees to a flexible work schedule has been actively implemented (*Hornyak, 2020*). Quarantine restrictions related to the COVID 19 pandemic provided a large-scale impetus to this process. Today, the utilitarian approach is more popular in society, the essence of which boils down to the fact that useful work is more highly valued and, accordingly, paid for. At the same time, the price of labor and its usefulness is determined by the degree of power hierarchy. However, this approach contradicts moral principles, since the concept of productive work is leveled, for example, by the principle of equality. According to the above-mentioned approach, only the employee who will benefit the state, being an independent economic unit, can receive a decent reward. If an employee falls out of this scheme, falling into a situation of precarious practices and instability, he ceases to be effective and will not be financially supported properly.

Another important factor highlighted by researchers of the precariat, the strengthening in the conditions of modern globalization processes – the downward social mobility of the workforce, which provokes fierce competition between employees and, as a result, the legitimization of a decrease in their wages, as well as informal non-market horizontal

exchanges of products and services . Empirical proof of this position is, for example, a study of the life strategies for male workers regarding "maintenance" against the background of economic crises (*Muradyan, 2014*); resources and individual activity in the projection of social inequalities (*Babenko, 2012*); processes of forming group solidarity among representatives of such a low-resource social group as migrants (*Schulika, 2019*).

The results of the above studies show that the presence of a formal employment contract does not guarantee the absence of precariousness. In addition, these studies provide answers to the following important questions: how do workers get into precarious jobs and what mechanisms of the labor market are involved in the formation of this social group?

Thus, based on domestic empirical material, we conclude that precarious employment is more typical of workers whose professional socialization occurred during the Soviet period. Their path to precarity generally begins with the economic transformations of the 1990s and consists of a long series of losses of "normal" jobs, each one slightly worse than the last. Being redundant or dismissed, people tried to find first a job more or less suitable for their experience and qualifications, then a relatively suitable one, then any. Most of them did not plan to change jobs voluntarily at all, but the economic crisis and as a result - the collapse of enterprises, redundancy, restructuring – forced them to agree to any conditions. Thus, the employee carries out a kind of "descent into precariousness" as a forced measure in order to provide for himself in the conditions of the loss of state support. The same period is characterized by informal non-market horizontal exchanges of products and services (*Amelicheva, 2020*).

As a rule, the purpose of such relationships and connections is mutual support, especially in difficult moments.

Obviously, for people who have fallen into difficult circumstances, consumer behavior aimed at minimizing costs is characteristic, and one of the forms of such behavior is mutual informal support. Its role and scale grow with the numerical growth of the precariat and the increase in the duration of being in a state of such uncertainty.

H. Standing also notes a significantly higher level of professional training of precariats compared to the level of their wages and the nature of the work itself. (*Standing, 2011: 10*). Despite the requirement of higher education in job vacancies, real-world tasks often do not require high-level special skills. This leads to a massive loss of professional identity, which cannot but affect a person's psychological state. Psychologists note that this inevitably causes feelings of alienation and non-participation, which leads to professional marginalization. The increase in the number of workers without a professional identity, the uncertainty of professional status, the blurring of professional and status boundaries, and finally status dissonance is a consequence of the opportunities limitation to reproduce professional skills due to frequent changes in the place of work.

Weak social protection, which is expressed in the spread of atypical forms of employment, denial of the social security package, the use of unacceptable work practices and sometimes harmful working conditions, in fictitious self-employment becomes an impetus for the segmentation of the labor market, the undermining of the general social insurance system foundations and the reduction of tax revenues.

Thus, we can see that the instability of labor employment and income (as well as their insufficient level), the presence of reciprocal ties and the loss of professional identification are inherent features of the modern precarious practices. In general, it is quite problematic to single out the final criteria for identifying the precarious practices: it is heterogeneous in terms of

age, income, social status, and other indices. In addition to the above, you can add a group of criteria that effectively demonstrates the current state: lack of employment guarantees; instability of the average monthly income; lack of financial "safety cushion"; a low position in the power hierarchy of society, etc.

It would be fair to note that the modern generation, whose labor socialization occurred in the first decade of the 2000s and who today are the most active working age group, often voluntarily chose a precarious labor path. The reasons for this choice are the approach of the younger generations to work as a short-term project that permits to gain new knowledge and new experience, as well as to expand the network of social contacts, thanks to which you can find the opportunity to work in the same precarious conditions.

In particular, a significant number of freelancers perceive a similar format of work as a way of adapting to the current economic situation. For many, this approach turns out to be quite successful. Representatives of creative professions, taking into account the specifics of their activity, need greater freedom and opportunities for self-expression, as this contributes to the productivity of their creative activity. A traditional orderly schedule does not suit them, therefore atypical unstable employment is perceived by them as a way to work in a rhythm that is comfortable for them.

If we conditionally compare a representative of precarious work and an employee officially working at an enterprise, but of the same specialization and qualification, then we can indeed state that a freelancer has the opportunity to choose among many types of tasks that he can and wants to perform. In the organization, due to the presence of tasks clearly prescribed in the job description

and provided by the manager, the worker cannot go beyond the regulated framework.

Based on this approach, the presence of the possibility in an individual person of a wider choice regarding employment gives him (a person) freedom in his actions. So, for example, women on maternity leave, thanks to modern innovative technologies, have a wide choice for using their free time. They have the opportunity, within the limits of their competences and skills, to choose several types of activities that can bring income.

At the same time, these types can be completely unrelated to each other (for example, online tutoring using video conferencing programs and taking orders for clothing repair). In addition, precariats have more freedom regarding the use of their time: they choose for themselves, in accordance with their own priorities and tasks, when and how long they will devote to this or that type of work. Instead, a hired worker has a clearly defined time for performing one or another task.

The precariat, the modification of traditional and the emergence of new forms of employment are interdependent and mutually determining processes and actively affect the main parameters of the labor market. A review of recent studies shows the growth of scientific interest in non-standard forms of employment (*Motorna, 2008; Hulevych, 2010; Kutsay, N. S., Roshkevych, 2011*), in particular, due to the spread of these forms themselves (*Kolot, 2014: 13*).

The functioning of non-standard forms of employment in the modern labor market has its own specific features, both positive and negative, based on which one can simultaneously reflect on the specifics of precarious practices based on certain non-standard types of employment. The characteristic features of these forms are presented in the following table.

Types of non-standard employment	Positive features	Negative features
1	2	3
Part-time employment (part-time employment or partial payment)	efficient use of professional potential; the possibility of combining work and other personal needs; possible increase in professional motivation and productivity;	decrease in income and opportunities for career growth;
Employment on the terms of fixed-term contracts	reduction of employer costs;	an increase in the employer's transaction costs for monitoring the quality of work;
Borrowed labor (leasing, outsourcing, outstaffing)	saving money and time by the employer; transfer of responsibility to a private recruitment agency;	minimal (or no) guarantees of employment and social protection for the employee; lower wages;
Remote employment	saving the employee's time and money; flexible work schedule; prospects for people with disabilities;	low level of employee social security; decrease in professional identification;
Non-formal employment (shady)	the possibility of additional earnings; increasing the offer of cheap goods and services; savings by employers;	lack of social and labor guarantees and control over working conditions; decrease in the quality of the workforce due to its dequalification and lack of labor protection; potential development of a criminogenic environment; the outflow of qualified specialists to the informal sector; decrease in revenues to the budget;
Self-employment	the use of individual, creative and mental abilities of a person in any field of economic activity, depending on his	low level of social security; instability of received income;

	professional abilities and skills;	
seasonal employment	absence of a trial period; the possibility of quick earnings.	temporary nature of labor activity; lack of main place of work; obstacle to career growth; limited period of work; low income.

Source: compiled by the author based on (*Motorna, 2008; Hulevych, 2010; Kutsay, N. S., Roshkevych, 2011, Huzar, Lutsyk, 2013; Kolot, 2014*)

The types of atypical employment listed above cannot be considered comprehensive, as changes in the flexible labor market are very rapid. However, we can see that, firstly, the advantages (or positive features in the above table) in the case of atypical forms of employment, as a rule, are received by employers, not employees. Secondly, the negative characteristics of atypical forms of employment are identical to the characteristic features inherent in the precarious practices – instability of professional employment, instability of income, loss of professional identification.

Therefore, non-standard types of employment are quite widespread in the modern labor market and will spread in the future. The rapid spread of non-standard employment in the global space has a bidirectional nature: on the one hand, it is a flexible work schedule, prospects for people with disabilities, on the other hand, it is social insecurity, a decrease in professional identification, instability or a decrease in the level of income, etc. Thus, we can observe a specific precarious habitus understood, in Bourdieu's terms, as a certain set of thinking schemes, perception and evaluation, formed in the process of biography and embedded in the body of a social agent (*Bourdieu, 2005: 43*). Habitus serves as a point of transition from an individual's position in social space to the way of his daily existence in a certain habitat in physical space and is related to lifestyle (*Bourdieu, 1996*). The normalization of precariousness, which we

are currently observing in a number of the labor market's segments, contributes to the fact that the entire lifestyle of precarious workers, their planning horizons, self-concepts are subordinated to the format of their unstable, unsteady employment.

Precarious habitus is formed by the economically unstable and socially unprotected existence of workers, determines their specific lifestyle and social practices, and is determined by them. As the researchers note, the precarious habitus is found in working and poor environments even in such developed European countries as Germany, but it is most typical for developing societies, for example, those of Latin America (*Souza, 2007: 21, 23-24*).

According to J. Souza, "precarious habitus is the type of personal or behavioral tendencies that do not meet individual or social group requirements to be productive and useful in a modern and competitive society..." (*Souza, 2007: 21*).

The actual precariousness of formal work with its inherent social instability often forces precarious workers to form a neoliberal subjectivity with the help of self-regulation and productivity maximization techniques, which causes resistance and leads to their withdrawal into informal employment (*Morris, 2012: 223-224, 229*).

Precarious habitus is associated with the absence of any long-term professional and life strategy, decisions about labor transfers and mobility are made spontaneously. Social security, such as sick pay and pension benefits, is perceived as a desirable but unattainable luxury, as a stable job is with the prospect of career advancement. Instead, important

attractors when choosing a workplace for its carriers are the possibility of autonomy, the absence of a regular work regime, diversity with frequent changes of workplaces, and the contractual nature of earnings. Professional employment becomes not the mainstay, but only one aspect of the lifestyle.

The ideas formed by previous generations about the "correct" life strategy, based on a professional path that leads, if not to a career and success, then at least to stability and a predictable future, are changing. In this context, the value of education as an investment in the future decreases.

In the post-Soviet (Ukrainian) context, older workers were more likely to be forced into precariousness due to changes in the structure of the labor market and the devaluation of their former jobs (for example, laborers, engineering specialties) in the 1990s. And that is why representatives of the Soviet generation mostly view precariousness negatively, nostalgic for the Soviet state of social support. For young workers, the most characteristic is the "free" choice of engaging in precarious employment. They justify their choice by the convenience of the schedule, interest in work, proximity to the place of residence, etc., but this limits their opportunities for vertical mobility. And such a choice itself is often illusory, since it is carried out in the absence of real life prospects, and the precarious habitus is a kind of protective reaction to a situation of high uncertainty and a lack of ideas about successful life and career strategies.

Conclusions. Thus, in the interpretation of the precariat phenomenon itself, a certain ambiguity can be observed: on the one hand, this group includes persons whose labor activities unfold in the plane of instability and insecurity of labor relations, on the other hand, persons with a specific type of worldview to this social and labor practice and personal position, and then precariousness begins to make up a significant part of their lives and

determines not only the model of professional relations of such people, but also affects the way they organize their living space, form the appropriate type of worldview, attitude to the existing system of social organization.

The characteristic features of the precariat, which at the same time affect the reasons for the scaling of this phenomenon, are, as the previous analysis shows: *a low level of income*, which, however, correlates with the so-called "median income" and provides precariats not only with survival, but also with the usual "lifestyle". Negative indices of social security, confidence in the future, job security and the ability to preserve one's professional identity are also important characteristics of precariousness.

But, if individuals resort to precarious practices not by force, but consciously, prioritizing constant acquisition of new experience, differentiation of income sources, personal responsibility for their well-being, etc., then the group of precarious workers can be expanded at the expense of freelancers and the "creative class". And now it is almost half of the US workforce and a huge share of workers in other developed European countries. That is, in this case, the formation of a new subgroup of precarious workers and the spread of precarious practices are influenced by external market forces, such as economic crises, global labor migration, a pandemic, as well as changes in the worldview of modern people and their attitude to the labor process as such.

If a person, who is used to work and has worked for a certain time in conditions of social and economic stability and guaranteed income, is forced to accept any work without guarantees of employment and stable income, then its activity falls under such a characteristic as downward social mobility, which is characterized by consumer behavior aimed at minimizing costs and mutual

informal support (for example, non-market horizontal exchanges of products and services).

The role and scale of informal socio-economic ties grow with the numerical growth of the precariat and the increase in the length of staying in a state of such uncertainty. The factor of downward social mobility always accompanies any socio-economic crisis and therefore will not lose its importance and influence on the spread of the precariat phenomenon.

At the same time, the market's response to socio-economic crises is the formation of new, atypical forms of employment, and therefore the formation of a specific "precarious habitus", which is associated with the absence of any long-term professional and life strategy, and the employee's spontaneous decisions about labor displacement and mobility. And currently, the world is increasingly approaching the point where professional employment becomes not the core, but only one aspect of the lifestyle.

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СУТНІСНІ РИСИ ТА ПРИЧИНИ МАСШТАБУВАННЯ ФЕНОМЕНУ ПРЕКАРНОСТІ Олійник І.

Анотація. У статті розкривається сутність прекарності як соціального явища і обґрунтовуються причини поширення цього феномену. Розглянуто класичний підхід, що базується на взаємозв'язку виникнення прекарності з економічними і соціальними трансформаціями, глобалізацією, кризовими явищами і неочікуваними викликами сучасного суспільства. В рамках дослідження прекарності переосмислено поняття габітусу П. Бурдьє, яке розуміється як соціально-економічна позиція щодо праці як одного з аспектів стилю життя. Обґрунтовано ідею «прекарного габітусу», який не тільки уможливорює «нормалізацію» прекаріату в суспільній свідомості, але й сприяє зміні загальних уявлень людей щодо праці та зайнятості загалом.

Ключові слова: прекарність, прекаріат, середній клас, дохід, низхідна соціальна мобільність, прекарний габітус.