

## Precariat as a result of personalizing modern social, labor and personal practices

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### ABSTRACT

The author analyzes the manifestations of social precariousness practices in modern social and labor relations. The analysis is carried out in three methodological directions: political (the formation of the precariat is determined by political factors); economic and technological (precarious practices are considered from the point of view of economic flexibility); functionalist (fixation of an individual's psychological characteristics specific to precarious practices is carried out). It is proved that it is the functional approach that gives grounds for further considerations regarding the life strategies chosen by the precariats, as well as their attitude to the state as the main source of their problems. It was revealed that the combination of a high protest potential with a low ability to organize makes the precariat an environment where, against the background of a low material status, fear and uncertainty about one's future can generate extreme forms of reaction to them – from the conforming acceptance in an individual order of the labor relations' formats, which are provoked by employers, to spontaneous mass protests, which, however, are not able to eliminate the causes of precariousness, but often turn into trashes, intensified by inter-racial and inter-confessional contradictions.

### KEYWORDS

*precariousness, precariat, social and labor relations, neoliberal model, market flexibility, social anomie.*

### Introduction

The modern epoch, often characterized by the concepts of "fluidity", "revolutionary changes", "transformations" and other metaphors that change the structure and social order, does not create favorable conditions and prospects for the development of the human personality. After all, upheavals in the foundations of sociality naturally fill human life with stress and the feeling of being constantly "on the edge", with the loss or reduction of the most universal human values importance, the need to adapt to each subsequent situation, which is difficult to predict and select from the fan of possibilities. As noted by R. Aron, pragmatism and decision-making "according to the situation" become the prevailing value and the only principle of such a life (Aron, 1993).

The social space and strategy of human behavior described in such concepts, along with the globalized economy, is a good ground for the increasingly massive deployment of precarious practices in the field of employment. For example, in Germany, with an economically active population estimated at 44.4 million people, almost 20% were employed in non-standard forms (Manzel, 2010). A similar nature of precarization turned out to be characteristic of France and the Netherlands, with the only difference being that the share of non-standard workers covers even a larger part of the country's workforce there.

In Latvia, the problem of precarization is also associated with an increase in the share of informally employed

people, who produce 30-40% of the country's total GDP (McKay, 2014). According to the results of the GFK study, 15% of respondents in Great Britain consider themselves to be precariat (Savage, 2013).

Precarization processes also affected Japan, known for its traditions of lifelong employment of workers. According to D. Pilling of the Financial Times (Pilling, 2014), about 40% of workers in Japan are employed in low-paid jobs with flexible work schedules, which constitute a potential precariat. G. Standing makes a similar assessment: in 2008, about half of Japanese women and 20% of Japanese men could be classified as precariat in Japan. According to his estimation, in the same period in South Korea, 57% of Korean women and 35% of men were also engaged in precarious work (Standing, 2011: 56).

Today, the term "precariat" is used to unite not only individuals who use specific social and labor practices of non-standard employment. These practices cannot be separated from the entire life process of a person: their basic characteristics gradually change his social behavior and worldview. Thus, instability and uncertainty in professional self-realization is often felt by modern people as a natural, non-catastrophic situation and extends to the lifestyle as a whole.

In this article, I will try to analyze the precariat and precariousness in the context of different approaches applied to the analysis of a transformational society, in order to understand whether it is possible to consider precariat as an immanent characteristic of such a society,



and the precariat – as its systemic and regular social group.

### Research methods

Analyzing the phenomenon of precarization, one should pay attention to the factors of its appearance and spread: external structural restrictions, transformation of personal attitudes, etc. Therefore, giving preference to one or another factor causes different assessments of the studied phenomenon. That is, depending on which discourse to appeal to (political or economic-technological determinism, functionalist approach), the understanding of the scaling processes of the instability of labor relations will change. Therefore, the theoretical basis of this article is the works of world-famous social researchers who presented the analysis of precarious processes in the context of the mentioned approaches – G. Standing, A. Kalleberg, Z. Bauman, C. Gaunce, J. Butler and established the idea of the precariat as an economically active social community with non-standard employment, the ability to quickly change one's professional orientation, willingness to work without standard social guarantees and with specific psychological properties associated with uncertainty in the future and dissatisfaction with one's position.

### Results and Discussion of the research

G. Standing determines the formation of the precariat by economic and political factors, in particular, the dominance of the principles of neoliberalism and globalization processes in countries (*Standing, 2011*). In order to raise competitiveness in the global market, enterprises are forced to reduce labor costs, therefore, with the prevailing neoliberal political orientation, a significant proportion of employees fall into socially and economically vulnerable population groups. A. Kalleberg (*2009*) also agrees that neoliberal globalization causes growing competition between companies forced to switch to flexible employment and outsourcing of labor. In this context, we recall the words of the former advisor to the US Vice President J. Bernstein: "the slogan "we are all together" is being dramatically replaced by "for myself" today.

As you know, the institutional structures of the markets in developed countries today are divided into two types: the Rhine and Anglo-Saxon models. The first model, characteristic of Germany, France and other countries, involves the creation of an institutional environment by the state that would facilitate the implementation of the social security policy of citizens. The Anglo-Saxon model (USA, Great Britain, etc.) weakens such a safety net, giving economic agents more freedom to maneuver. However, adherence to one or another regime does not guarantee states the absence of precarization processes.

So, for example, in the countries with the Rhine model, after the world economic crisis of 2008, there is an increase in the unemployment rate (in France and Germany, the unemployment rate has been on the rise since 2008, according to the statistics of the European Statistical Agency (*EU...*, 2016), but at the same time in the USA, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate has fallen from 10% to 3.5% since 2010 (*Labor Force...*, 2020). However, the U.S. has a high number of precarious jobs: the share of part-time or temporary contracts varies from 20 to 40% of all jobs (*Hauunss, 2016*).

Many authors emphasize that, despite the policies of socially oriented states, the processes of precarization

are also gaining momentum there. How important it is to take local features into account in the characteristics of the precariat can be seen on the example of Germany: due to a significant level of unemployment in the early 2000s, the Hartz reforms were carried out here, the purpose of which is to tighten the rules for receiving unemployment benefits and control over actions (or inactivity) of the unemployed.

Problems with unemployment were solved, the unemployment rate decreased, but at the expense of the non-standard employment forms spread and low-paid jobs. Between 2007 and 2012, more than 2 million new jobs were created in the country, but this growth was accompanied by a decrease in the number of "standard" jobs, and new ones were created due to the expansion of atypical employment (*Alber, Heisig, 2011*).

Taking into account the position of economic and technological determinism, precarization should be considered in the context of such an integral element of the neoliberal model of economic development as economic flexibility. The essence of this concept is that the enterprise must constantly respond to changes in demand and form the necessary level of supply. Because of this, economic efficiency becomes the priority of its activity.

For its constant increase in the conditions of transformations and social uncertainty, the enterprise must adapt to market fluctuations and, accordingly, take certain measures, operating with various types of its resources, including labor. Therefore, the peculiarity of the personnel's work at such an enterprise lies in the reduction or cancellation of the socio-economic guarantees with which it was provided in the previous economic conditions.

Socio-economic guarantees of the enterprise for the employee in the neoliberal economy are more a sustainability index of the enterprise itself and increase its level of competitiveness.

The concept of economic flexibility began to be actively explored in the 1980s. One of its first researchers was the German economist U. Juergens, who in 1986 presented his report at a conference in Saarbrücken.

According to U. Juergens, flexibility in the global economy means: flexibility in understanding the working day (inconstant duration, fragmentation, etc.); flexibility in the content of the work itself, that is, the ratio of "executive" and "management", "creative" and "non-creative" (routine) functions changes, and as a result, the type of relationship with management changes; flexibility in the understanding of the enterprise, which becomes difficult to identify and "localize", since its workplaces can be distributed and taken out of its territory, as well as the spread of such forms of economic activity and ways of conducting production as outsourcing, insourcing, offshoring, the spread of transnational corporations' activities (*Lytvynenko, 2009*).

Economic flexibility in relation to the work of the company's personnel can be understood in three meanings. First, from the point of view of employers, in the management of the enterprise: in the field of wages - as a dependence of wages on the overall efficiency of work and the individual contribution of the worker; in the field of employment and transfer of workers – as a simplified dismissal procedure, wide use of temporary workers, maneuvering of labor resources, retraining of workers, their multi-specialty. Secondly, in the understanding of workers – as strengthening of creativity in work, weakening of rigid hierarchical and bureaucratic control, expansion of opportunities for independent organization of work

and work schedule. Thirdly, in sociological theory, the concept of flexibility can be interpreted from two positions: in a narrow sense, from the position of the organization of the labor process at a specific enterprise – as changes in the organization of work and production in connection with globalization, instability of demand and the process of updating technologies and nomenclature of products, as well as diversity of the worker's skills, flexibility in the organization of working hours and employment policies; in a broad sense, from the standpoint of global social processes – as a new ideology that explains the crisis and uncompetitiveness of capitalist economies, their inflexibility due to excessive state intervention in economic activity and artificial obstacles on the way of the free market.

Researchers of precarization, using the methods of the functionalist approach in their analysis, state the fact that today the personality changes in new unstable conditions that stimulate some workers to realize their professional interests, and "break" others (Butler, 2009). The fear of losing a job isolates a person, atomizes him. Therefore, we can conclude that precarity is the dominant characteristic of most members of society these days. Z. Bauman notes that unreliability is becoming a widespread feature of modern social conditions (Bauman, 2005: 194), which is a factor in the formation of a person's experience of insecurity in various spheres of his life.

Instability covers not only the labor sphere, but also the entire ontological experience of the precariat representatives (Butler, 2009). The situation of worldview rupture, when a person is unable to build a stable personal system of values and life attitudes, and his life turns into discreteness, is a consequence of permanent instability. G. Standing among the main features of the existential life space of a precariat singles out: multitasking – a precariat needs to perform more tasks with less effort at the same time, his psyche is often overloaded with the volume of urgent matters; status frustration – the impossibility of building a stable and conscious career with gradual movement up the career ladder; atomization of behavior, inability to establish strong social ties with other people; impoverishment of leisure time – inability to pay sufficient attention to recreation and restoration of one's own human resources; lack of time control, as a result of which the sphere of interpersonal relations suffers, in particular family and friendship relations (Standing, 2011: 12). This inconsistency of statuses at the micro (personal) level affects the macro level: the social structure of modern societies loses long-term stability as an important condition for functioning.

Taking this into account, we can state that precariousness is not only a phenomenon of the modern sphere of employment, but also a specific psychological characteristic of an individual in certain social and political conditions, which are characterized by instability, uncertainty, lack of guarantees, etc. Therefore, we cannot limit the phenomenon of precariousness only to professional relationships, since the basic characteristics of precariousness affect other spheres of a person's life and extrapolate the state of anxiety and uncertainty to them. This prompts the development of corresponding behavioral patterns, which have their own distinguishing features compared to those that a person has in the conditions of a stable socio-political and economic situation in his country.

Career individualization along with the lack of long-term guidelines meets the demands of the modern competitive environment. An illustrative quote that characterizes the modern attitude of a successful and competitive individual to work is the instruction of Bill Geitz, which he gave to the graduates of Northern Arizona University: "It may seem to you that today's decisions are irreversible and unchangeable. No way... You shouldn't spend the rest of your life doing what you will do tomorrow or in the next 10 years" (Forbes Ukraine, 2022). Increasing the flexibility of labor processes also leads to an increase in the level of responsibility for each employee, which can be characterized as concentration without centralization, that is, when the structure no longer has clear pyramidal relationships, and the burden of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the entire team and each individual, which characterizes a precarious situation of employees. At the same time, the spread of non-standard and informal forms of employment conditioned people's adaptation to new living conditions. Nowadays, the category of people who consciously adopt a non-standard lifestyle as a form of efficient self-realization is quite numerous. The emergence of new Internet platforms that offer additional income and actively use freelance work for this, and their popularity is a confirmation of this. Sometimes highly qualified specialists who have lost their jobs or part of their earnings are hired as executors for temporary work. Other categories of workers are forced to look for sources of livelihood in larger cities or outside the country due to the lack of opportunities to find well-paid work in local labor markets (villages and small towns).

In conditions where the precariats feel unstable and anxious about their future, they stop believing in changes under the existing state system. G. Standing notes that the precariat thus turns into a fundamentally new challenge for the modern world due to the fact that precariats are characterized by feelings of constant dissatisfaction with their position and life in general; anomie, i.e. loss of landmarks in everyday life; restlessness and alienation from society; the status of chronically temporarily employed. In the West, you can even find a special term for this type of employment - "Mc Jobs" (work at McDonald's) (Winterman, 2006).

We can distinguish three possible behavioral reactions of the precariat under the following conditions: accept and go with the flow; to look for options of adapting to the situation using short- and medium-term measures; to protest, opposing the state system or joining criminal structures. In this, the danger to the social order of the uncontrolled spread of precarious practices can be seen.

One of the features of the precarious, which affects their behavioral patterns in society, in addition to social anomie and a sense of dissatisfaction, is their perception of the state as the main source of their problems (Standing, 2011). It is about the feeling of difficulties with hermeneutic identification – the ability of an individual to identify himself with the state as a source of legal norms based on the interpretation of traditions, values, elements of culture. Therefore, difficulties with hermeneutic identification are the main social danger of the precariat: individuals who have been able to achieve an acceptable standard of living for themselves, strongly identify themselves with the state, consider it their duty to be loyal to it. Others, on the contrary, do not perceive the state as a source of law and legal norms. This, in turn, leads to the fact that the value of rights and legality for precariat rep-

representatives is leveled, which can lead to the threat of the emergence and development of social conflicts. In addition to challenges regarding the possible destabilization of the existing system as a result of the increasing number of precariat representatives, the results of the impact of the precarious practices functioning on economic subjects are important. In this context, it is worth noting that today stable and guaranteed employment relations continue to be the reference norm for many. Also, many employers are not interested in the precarization of employees given the specifics of their work. If for some sectors of the economy (for example, the fast food system, retail trade, some segments of the construction business) the replacement of an employee does not pose a problem, and besides, it reduces expenses for the employer, then in high-tech and knowledge-intensive areas, the refusal of a highly qualified employee is unlikely possible. It is also worth noting the researchers' point of view on the precariat as the reason for the rapid decrease in the level of safety and occupational hygiene, due to which the motivational component in the employee's attitude to safety at the workplace is significantly reduced (Dreval, Linetskyi, 2016: 36).

The problem of imbalance and instability of employment is also determined by the increase of workers interested in restructuring the employment system, who are not afraid of the challenges of the modern economy and consider them an indispensable condition for their professional success. However, most people are not ready for such a style in the field of work due to various circumstances: they may lack resources (appropriate education, funds, etc.), which does not allow them to effectively overcome the demands of increasing flexibilization and precarization of employment. The new conjuncture on the labor market devalues them, and problematic employment does not guarantee a minimum of socio-economic freedom. In the conditions of improving the quality of life due to the automation of a number of production processes, the risk of reducing jobs is logically increasing. On the other hand, due to extensive migration processes from economically neglected areas to more economically prosperous countries, there is a significant reduction of the economically active population, therefore, in such regions, there is an increase in the pension crisis and demographic problems in general.

The latest events in the world, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine, only increase the tendency of the world economy to slow down. In such situations, employees are forced to accept part-time or other atypical employment with reduced wages, etc. All this strengthens the thesis about the rapid spread of precarious practices, which can provoke a powerful social explosion. Therefore, informational, since any steps in the framework of adoption and implementation of socially important decisions must be communicated with citizens in order to achieve the most effective results of such decisions. Regular publication of decisions, plans of measures for their implementation, results of monitoring and evaluation of decisions is a mandatory element of this process. At the same time, it is important to choose the right communication channels, taking into account current trends in the field of communication, main messages, etc., according to a certain target audience.

### Conclusions

Social uncertainty as a marker of changes in the nature of social processes in society often finds its way out

in certain social practices of precariousness, which are primarily manifested in the sphere of social and labor relations of a person, but have a significant impact on other spheres of human life. They are characterized by a state of constant uncertainty, insecurity of labor rights, instability of the labor market and the position of the employee in it.

Turning to the political factors identified by well-known social researchers that influence the form of precarity showed that the neoliberal model of the world economy development consolidates the trend towards precarization due to the spread of non-standard forms of employment and low-paid jobs even in socially oriented countries of the world. From the standpoint of economic and technological determinism, the precariat is connected with the phenomenon of economic flexibility.

Despite its different scientific interpretations, today the dominant understanding of flexibility as the dependence of wages on the overall efficiency of work and the individual contribution of the worker, which enables the wide use of the labor of temporary workers, maneuvering of labor resources, constant retraining of workers, and their multi-specialty, is dominant for employers. Therefore, the requirements for employees are constantly increasing, the practice of labor agreements is changing in favor of the employer and the dictates of the latter in matters not only of remuneration, but also of its organization and intensity.

Representatives of the functionalist approach justify the state of uncertainty as an ontological property of the precariat, showing how it extends to all other spheres of human life, besides work. It is this approach that gives grounds for further considerations regarding the life strategies chosen by the precariats, as well as their attitude to the state as the main source of their problems. The combination of a high protest potential with a low ability to organize makes the precariat an environment where, against the background of a low material status, fear and uncertainty about one's future can generate extreme forms of reaction to them – from the conforming acceptance in an individual order of labor relations formats imposed by employers, to spontaneous mass protests, which, however, are not able to eliminate the causes of precariousness, but often turn into trashes, intensified by inter-racial and inter-confessional contradictions.

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## Прекаріат як результат персоналізації сучасних соціально-трудоових і особистісних практик

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Автор аналізує прояви соціальних практик прекарності в сучасних соціально-трудоових відносинах. Аналіз проводиться за трьома методологічними напрямками: політичним (формування прекаріату детермінується політичними факторами); економіко-технологічним (прекарні практики розглядаються з точки зору економічної гнучкості); функціоналістським (проводиться фіксація специфічних для прекарних практик психологічних характеристик особистості). Доведено, що саме функціональний підхід дає підстави для подальших міркувань щодо життєвих стратегій, які обирають прекарії, а також їх ставлення до держави як головного джерела своїх проблем. Виявлено, що поєднання високого протестного потенціалу з низькою здатністю до організації робить прекаріат тим середовищем, де на тлі низького матеріального статусу страх і невпевненість у своєму майбутньому здатні породжувати крайні форми реакції на них – від конформного прийняття в індивідуальному порядку форматів трудоових відносин, що нав'язуються роботодавцями, до стихійних масових протестів, які, втім, не здатні усунути причини прекарності, але часто перетворюються на погроми, що посилюються міжрасовими і міжконфесійними протиріччями.

**Ключові слова:** прекарність, прекаріат, соціально-трудоові відносини, неоліберальна модель, гнучкість ринку, соціальна аномія.

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