

Precarious Work in Comparative Perspective

Call for Papers for Stream at the 2018 International Labour Process Conference (ILPC)

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This stream focuses on theory, research and policy regarding precarious work in both advanced capitalist and developing countries. By precarious work, we mean work that is uncertain, insecure and in which risks are shifted from employers and governments to workers. For the majority of workers affected in advanced capitalist countries the expansion of precarious work represents a dramatic shift in the very logic that governs work under contemporary capitalism. For workers in developing countries, the growth of precarious work has created additional insecurity and uncertainty in the formal sector of their economies. Though these developments have been much studied, much remains unknown.

The topic of precarious work overlaps with many important issues related to work and the labor process, particularly the theme of the 2018 conference on “Class and the Labor Process.” Precarious work is a phenomenon that affects both the middle and working classes, and responses to the negative consequences of precarious work are shaped by cross-class coalitions that take various forms. The latter connections, moreover, have not yet been adequately theorized or subjected to empirical research.

We welcome submissions from sociologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, psychologists, historians, and industrial relations scholars. We especially encourage papers that can address issues in an interdisciplinary way and with contributions from both the Global North and the Global South.

Examples of the kinds of topics we anticipate including are:

- What are the chief causes of this dramatic shift in the structure and operation of the labor market? How have neo-liberal economic trends contributed to the rise of precarious employment? What organizational forms are involved in what has come to be called “flexible accumulation”? And how have social and political conditions affected the onset of precarious work across the global landscape?
- What are the different manifestations of precarious work, and which social groups—including those defined by gender, race and ethnicity, and/or class boundaries—have been most grievously affected by labor market precarity? What is the relation between immigration and the sense of uncertainty that workers experience in their jobs?
- What are some of the most important consequences of precarious work, whether for worker health and safety, stress, family life, or communities and societies? What

policies have been adopted in different settings to deal with the consequences of precarious work?

- How have workers and job seekers responded to these shifts in their work situations? What forms of resistance have emerged to challenge, modify, or contest the imposition of precarious work—and with what effects? Finally, what alternatives can be envisioned that might lead paid employment down more equitable and healthy paths?

We hope to establish dialogues between scholars in the Global North and South with regard to these issues. While the recent rise of precarious work follows a three-decade period of growth and stability after World War II in the Global North, precarious work in the form of the informal economy has long characterized the Global South. Yet many of the issues faced by developed and developing countries with regard to precarious work are similar, given trends in globalization and the connections fostered among countries in the global economy. Indeed, some have argued that the structure of work and employment relations in the Global South are gaining traction in the Global North, contrary to what has commonly been assumed by modernization and development theorists.

We will explore possibilities to publish papers in a book or special issue of a journal after the conference.

Please submit abstracts via the International Labour Process Conference website (ilpc.org.uk) by the deadline of October 31, 2017.