



Acta Medicinae et Sociologica
(2023)
Vol. 14 No. 36 (197-201)

UNIVERSITY OF
DEBRECEN
FACULTY OF
HEALTH SCIENCES

NYÍREGYHÁZA

doi:

<https://doi.org/10.19055/ams.2023.05/31/9>

Book review: Anita R. Fedor (2021): Regional characteristics of the precariat on the labour market. Debrecen University Press, Debrecen

Márton Markovics¹, Zsombor Varga², Dalma Tóth³

¹PhD student, University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities Sociology and Social Policy Department, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0001-6235-1939

²PhD student, University of Debrecen Faculty of Humanities Sociology and Social Policy Department, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0002-3176-7533

³Assistant lecturer, University of Debrecen, Faculty of Health Sciences, Institute of Social Studies, Department of Gerontology, 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1, ORCID: 0000-0003-4554-5998

INFO

Márton Markovics

markovics.marton@arts.unideb.hu

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of the *precariat* has gained significant attention in academic and policy debates on the future of work. The precariat is defined as a growing class of workers who experience precarious and insecure employment conditions, often characterized by low wages, short-term contracts, and limited social protections. While the precariat is a global phenomenon, it is important to recognize that there are regional variations in the experiences and characteristics of this class of workers.

In this review the book *Regional characteristics of the precariat on the labour market* will be discussed which was published by the Debrecen University Press in 2021. Prior to reviewing this book, we wondered about the term *precariat on the labour market* according to the title of the book. Particularly, what makes the situation of the precariat a widely raised question to describe regional characteristics from the aspects of social and spatial inequalities? The aim of the review is to describe the new aspects of researching precariat in the XXIst century according to the author's definitions

Review

This book provides a well-structured overview of the precariat's situation on the labour market mentioning relevant research on the field of sociology, social work and many other related areas. The manner of the book is reader-friendly as it's suitable for those who have studies related to social sciences. However, it can provide something new for those, too, who are specialists of the field because of the new connotations and academic terminology which are used in the work.

The book discusses several empirical interdisciplinary and Hungarian studies, making it reliable in its comprehensive use. The first part of the book discusses theoretical and empirical approaches and it follows in the implication of the research results. It is composed of fifteen consecutive and interdependent chapters.

In the first part of the book it is discussed how the precariat is closely related to the segmented labour market, which refers to the division of the labour market into distinct segments, such as primary and secondary, based on the quality of jobs, wages, benefits, and security. The primary segment consists of well-paid, secure jobs with good benefits, while the secondary segment consists of low-paid, insecure jobs with few benefits. The precariat is mainly composed of workers in the secondary segment, who are subject to exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization. The book provides a wide overview of the tendency of the precariat becoming a concept from a phenomenon. The concept of precariat has since been widely used in academic, political, and public discourses to highlight the precariousness of work and the need for social protection and redistribution. Accordingly, the book is one of the most significant contributions to the social discourse on precariat.

Research on the precariat requires a conscious preparation for labour market research, which involves identifying the relevant theories, concepts, and methods, as well as the data sources and ethical issues. The research activity on the precariat is a new challenge to explore the complex and dynamic nature of precariousness appearing in the labour market. The research objectives formulated for the examination of the regional characteristics of the precariousness appearing on the labour market aim to investigate the specific features of the precariat in a particular spatial area, such as Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county in Hungary. This area is characterized by a high level of unemployment, low wages, and low job security, which contribute to the

appearance of the precariat. According to the literature, the Hungarian labour market processes are shaped by the historical, political, and economic factors that have influenced the country's transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy. The labour market is characterized by a dualism between the public and private sectors, the dominance of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the low level of unionization and collective bargaining. Job satisfaction and work-life balance are critical factors that affect the well-being and productivity of workers, especially in the precariat. The precariat experiences bad work with low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions, which can lead to stress, burnout, and health problems. The precariat also faces conflicts between work and family responsibilities, which result in social isolation and personal frustration.

A significant part of the book discusses women in changing family roles and in the workplaces facing multiple challenges and opportunities that affect their employment, income, and well-being. As it is highlighted women are often employed in precarious jobs that offer low wages, limited benefits, and little job security. They also face conflicts between work and family responsibilities, which affect their job satisfaction and career prospects. However, women have also been successful in breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes and entering new sectors and occupations that offer better opportunities and conditions - this is how precariat has newer coping strategies.

Results of regional studies conducted among Roma people reveal the specific challenges and opportunities faced by this marginalized and stigmatized group in the labour market. The general situation of Roma people is characterized by poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion, which affect their access to education, healthcare, and employment according to the author. The regional employment situation of Roma people living in poor conditions is particularly precarious, as they face multiple barriers entering the labour market, such as low education levels, lack of skills, and social stigma. At the same time, precarity is a threat to children and young people, too, who are vulnerable to the negative effects of unstable and insecure jobs on their health, education, and future prospects. Education is seen as a way to prevent precarity and promote social mobility and inclusion. Predictors show multidimensional analysis of a study database providing insights into the factors that influence the educational and employment trajectories of young people and their ability to cope with precarity. The background ideas to decisions on further education

is shaped by various factors, such as social background, family support, personal motivation, and labour market opportunities. The author mentions phenomena about labour market insecurity of young graduates that is a major concern, as they face limited job prospects, low wages, and high debt burdens, which affect their standard of living and well-being.

The results of the research in the elderly highlight the challenges and opportunities faced by this growing population group in the labour market. An aging society requires new policies and practices that promote active aging and social inclusion. This can be related to the issues of elderly loneliness and relationship insecurity. Institutional opportunities to promote active aging, such as lifelong learning and intergenerational programs, can provide meaningful and fulfilling opportunities for elderly people to participate in society and the labour market. Results of measuring job satisfaction in different settings reveal the diverse identities and differences in national and local outcomes. The author raises the question of: *Is society satisfied?* The answer depends on various factors, such as economic performance, social welfare, and political stability. However, the study of job satisfaction can provide insights into the factors that influence workers' well-being, productivity, the potential for improving working conditions and social protection. Research results on the phenomenon of precariat reveal the complex and dynamic nature of precariousness in different contexts and among different groups of workers. Female-male precarity, precarisation of both genders, changing jobs, changing schedules and skills are some of the key features of the precariat that require new policies and practices to address. Regional research has brought new results and findings that highlight the specific challenges and opportunities faced by different regions and communities in the labour market.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the book discusses the theory in practice by raising some common questions and providing solutions. The research has demonstrated that the precariat is a multidimensional phenomenon affecting a wide range of individuals across different social and economic contexts. It is not only concentrated in low-skilled or disadvantaged groups but can also be found among highly skilled workers in favourable labour market situations. The research has revealed that gender, age, and family roles are key factors contributing to the precarity of individuals in the labour market. In particular, women are more vulnerable to precariousness due to the presence of children,

and the glass ceiling mechanism continues to disadvantage them in senior positions.

It can be also said according to the results, that precariousness can arise from different reasons in different regions and social groups. Environmental and economic policy factors can also contribute to the emergence of precarious characteristics among highly qualified individuals. The complexity of the phenomenon requires a multifaceted approach to addressing it. It is essential to respond to precariousness from the perspective of change management and the methods of adult education and vocational training expected by the labour market.

This research adds to the growing body of knowledge on the precariat and highlights the need for policymakers to adopt a more nuanced approach to addressing labour market insecurity and exclusion. It provides important insights into the multidimensional nature of precariousness and the need for targeted policies to support vulnerable groups. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of precariousness on individuals and society as a whole.

Anita R. Fedor (2021): Regional characteristics of the precariat on the labour market. Debrecen University Press, Debrecen.