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Historicizing Precarious Work: Forty Years of Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities

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ABSTRACT: This survey article seeks to contribute to the understanding of the concepts of precarious work and precarization in the history of industrial capitalism by addressing the debate in the social sciences and humanities over the past forty years. Based on a gendered global approach, this article aims to offer a critique of the Global North-centric perspective, which largely conceives precarious work as a new phenomenon lacking a longer historical tradition. The first part discusses the multiple origins, definitions, and conceptualizations of "precarious work" elaborated with regard to industrial as well as post-industrial capitalism, taking into account selected contemporary sources as well as studies conducted by historians and social scientists. In the second part, the influence of different approaches, such as the feminist and post-colonial ones, in globalizing and gendering the precarious work debate is examined in their historical contexts, exploring also the crucial nexus of precarious work and informal work. In the conclusion, the limitations of the available literature are discussed, along with suggestions for further directions in historicizing precarious work from a global perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, "precarious work" is a highly controversial topic in the political and economic debate concerning labour matters within national and international institutions and organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). In recent decades, a growing number of surveys and studies have shown that precarious work has become one of the main social issues worldwide, particularly for younger generations, less protected workers such as migrants, and the female workforce. According to the ILO,

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the global economic crisis of 2008 heightened the level of labour insecurity worldwide, entrapping more and more categories of workers in what is increasingly labelled precarious jobs, both in the Global North and the Global South.[1] The academic debate on precarious work in the four decades considered in this article has been influenced by the spread of the phenomenon of precarious work and its perception by social actors, who started to mobilize against it in the new millennium, adopting resourceful and often pioneering forms of resistance.[2] Before the early 2000s, precarious work was hardly considered as a subject of investigation, due to the conceptualization, by neoliberal economists and politicians, of "flexibility" and "flexible labour" – important aspects of precarious work – as positive challenges to capitalist systems, deemed necessary to increase employment levels and business competitiveness. Until this time, the use of the precarious work concept had remained limited to the academic debate, as it had been regarded as a contested and highly "politicized" term.[3] The 2008 global recession led to a change. Since the outbreak of this economic crisis, a growing number of studies have been produced independently within academia as well as under the aegis of institutional bodies, especially the European Union (EU). The 2016 study on *Precarious Employment in Europe*, commissioned by the European Parliament, testifies not only to the increasing concern of EU institutions about the phenomenon of precarious work, but also to the final adoption of the concept as a relevant and accepted analytical tool.[4] In the past few decades, social scientists, economists, and legal experts mainly considered precarious work a new phenomenon and a characteristic feature of post-industrial society, emerging in the 1980s after the breakdown of Fordism.

More recently, however, several historical studies have questioned the novelty of job precarity, showing how forms of precarious work have characterized the entire history of industrial capitalism, both in the Global North and the Global South. According to some interpretations, precarious work is the "norm" of capitalism, while the so-called standard employment model, characterized by full-time, long-term employment with a single employer, should be viewed as a historical exception, predominant throughout Western countries only in the third quarter of the twentieth century.[5]

1. ILO, *The Changing Nature of Jobs.*

2. On resistance against precarious work, see, amongst others: Mattoni, *Media Practices and Protest Politics*; Della Porta *et al.*, *The New Social Division*; Lambert and Herod, *Neoliberal Capitalism and Precarious Work*; Johnson, *Precariat*; Procoli, *Workers and Narratives of Survival in Europe*; Milkman and Ott, *New Labor in New York*; Gleeson, *Precarious Claims*.

3. For an overview of the use of the concept in Western Europe until the early 2000s: Düll, *Defining and Assessing Precarious Employment in Europe*.

4. European Parliament, Directorate-General For Internal Policies, Policy Department A, *Precarious Employment in Europe.*

5. Breman and Van der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy".

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By adopting a gendered global perspective, this article challenges the still hegemonic Western approach prevalent in the literature and seeks to contribute to the understanding of precarious work as a historical phenomenon characterizing different phases of industrial capitalism. First, it shows that the model of capitalism prevailing in the literature is the Western European and North American one, and that other models are being generally ignored. Secondly, it points out that the debate on precarious work has focused predominantly on wage work and has not related it to informal work, which is crucial to understanding the very existence of job precariousness in the Global South. Thirdly, it underlines the fact that the forms and the extent of precarious work in economic sectors other than the Western industrial sector are still under-researched. This has prevented an understanding, for instance, of the long-existing nexus of precariousness and informality in a key sector such as agriculture. Finally, this article argues that, by concentrating on the Western European and North American path as the hegemonic one, the implications of the concept of "variations of capitalism" in determining different trajectories of precarity/stability across time and space have rarely been taken into account.[6] A global gendered approach is crucial to understanding how precarious work affected male, female, and child labour differently across time and space, thereby challenging the idea of precarious work as a new, recent phenomenon. Moreover, it demonstrates that the very existence of job precariousness was not perceived and conceptualized as such until it started affecting the Western male breadwinner in core industrial sectors during the far-reaching process of deindustrialization experienced by European and North American countries in industrial capitalism.[7]

The first part of the article addresses the multiple origins, definitions, and conceptualizations of precarious work in the history of industrial and post-industrial capitalism, taking into account selected contemporary sources as well as studies conducted by historians and social scientists. The first subsection examines how precarious work has been conceptualized in, and vis-à-vis, nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial societies, while the second subsection provides a selective overview of the studies addressing the resurgence of precarious work in post-industrial societies after the economic crisis of the 1970s. As language is particularly significant in this context, the relationship between job flexibility and job precariousness is investigated.

The second part explores the contributions provided by different approaches, such as feminist scholarship and Global South studies, in

6. On variations/varieties of capitalism: Hall and Soskice, *Variations of Capitalism*; Thelen, *Varieties of Liberalization*.

7. On the relationship between deindustrialization and the decline of job stability: Emmenegger *et al., The Age of Dualization.*

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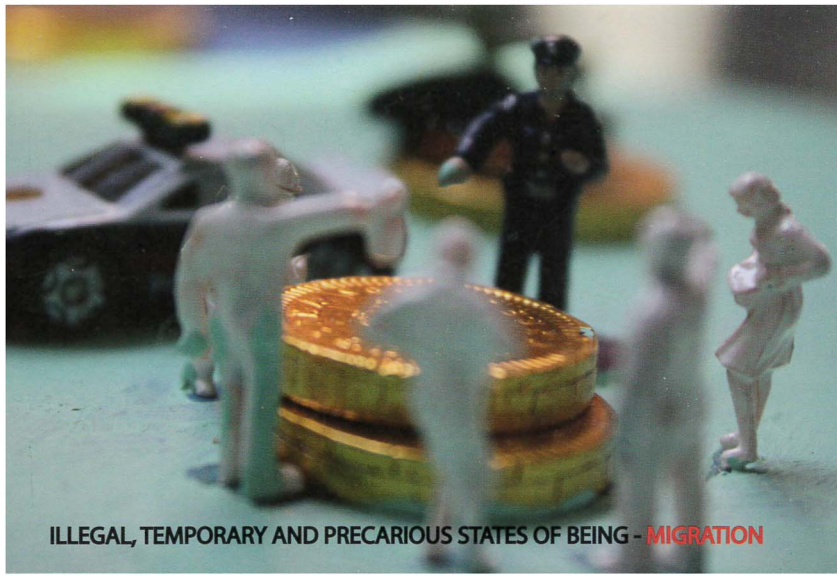

Figure 1. Postcard for the exhibition "Illegal, temporary and precarious states of being: migration" (Bangkok, Pridi Bhanomyong Institute, Feb. 15–28, 2010).
IISH collection.

gendering and globalizing the precarious work debate. The first subsection shows how the intersection of gender, class, race, and citizenship has played a crucial role in the variations of precarity and stability in the history of industrial as well as post-industrial societies. The second subsection investigates the influence of transnational studies, the informality debate, and Global South perspectives on globalizing precarious work. The latest stage of globalization, as well as its critics, have impacted the precarious work debate and have produced a shift from the still hegemonic Western conceptualization towards a broader perspective, which includes the consideration of the former Communist countries jointly with the Global South.

The conclusion seeks to explain and discuss the limitations of the available literature, while suggesting some additional perspectives and concepts to be included in the precarious work debate.

ORIGINS AND CONCEPTS OF PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE HISTORY OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

Precarious work in industrial societies

Writing a "genealogy" of the concept of precarious work has attracted the attention of numerous scholars in the past two decades, especially

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sociologists.[8] Only a few of them, however, have placed the concept of precarious work in the longer history of industrial capitalism or in the pre-capitalist era. Indeed, the conceptualizations of precarious work provided by social scientists from the late 1970s onwards were mainly related to the spread of the so-called "flexible labour arrangement" in the Western labour market, conceived as one of the major changes occurring in the transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Yet, the genealogy of the concept can be traced back much further, as suggested by contemporary sources and historical studies.

From a linguistic standpoint, Jean-Claude Barbier places the origin of the terms "precariousness/precarious" in the common Latin root *precor* (pray) or *precarius* (obtained by praying), dating back to the late Middle Ages or the Early Modern era, depending on the specific country considered.[9] Also, historians like Marcel van der Linden have adopted the perspective of the *longue durée*, taking into account the categories of the casual poor and of casualized wage labour to trace the origins of precarity from Ancient Greece to the present.[10]

Although the term "precariousness" is not new, according to Barbier, it started to be more frequently associated with employment and welfare matters in the major European countries only after 1945. But Marcel van der Linden shows that the concept was used to refer to workers' conditions as early as 1840.[11] The French economist and sociologist Eugène Buret adopted the term *précaire* (precarious) in his book *De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France*.[12] With the rise of the social question in the nineteenth century, engaged intellectuals, especially from the socialist milieu, adopted the term as such or used a similar concept to draw attention on the precarious lives and work of the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat.

Looking at the Marxian tradition, evidence of the use of precarious/precariousness can be found in Friedrich Engels's *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, and even in Marx's *Capital*.[13] The precariousness of workers'

8. In addition to the works of Barbier (cited below), see the following for examinations of the concept of precariousness/precarity/precarious: Faguer, "Pour une histoire de la précarité"; Neilson and Rossiter, "Precarity as a Political Concept"; Candeias, "Genealogie des Prekariats"; Vultur, "La précarité. Un "concept fantôme"; Quinlan, *The "Pre-Invention" of Precarious Employment*; Munck, "The Precariat: A View from the South"; Casas-Cortés, "A Genealogy of Precarity"; Motakef, *Prekarisierung*; Jonna and Foster, "Marx's Theory of Working-Class Precariousness"; Millar, "Toward a Critical Politics of Precarity"; Hewison, "Precarious Work".
9. Barbier, *'Precariousness' of Employment*; *idem*, "La précarité, une catégorie française"; *idem*, "There Is More to Job Quality than 'Precariousness'"; *idem*, "Employment Precariousness".
10. Van der Linden, "San Precario".
11. *Idem*, "Robert Castel's *Les métamorphoses*".
12. Buret, *De la misère des classes laborieuses*.
13. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*; Marx, *Das Kapital*; *idem* and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei.*

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conditions was explicitly mentioned by William Morris in 1883 in his *Signs of Change.*[14] Social reformers like Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth addressed in their enquiries the "precarious" working and living conditions of Londoners.[15] A series of articles published by the socialist journalist Adolphe Smith and the photographer John Thomson described the life of London's street workers as "precarious".[16] The concept was also used by Sidney Webb in 1887 in his *Facts for Socialists.*[17] In latecomer countries such as Italy, the concept of precariousness emerged as well in the enquiries conducted by the establishment and governmental authorities: by Franchetti and Sonnino concerning Sicily, Nitti, and Zanardelli concerning Calabria and Basilicata, and the Jacini investigations of the conditions of rural workers.[18]

Contemporary observers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, hardly distinguished precarious working conditions from the precariousness of the working-class existence as such, and they closely associated the latter with the more general issue of pauperism. This was also the case of post-World War II social studies and analyses, as shown by Dorothy Day's article on "Poverty and Precarity" (1952) in the United States or the parliamentary enquiry into poverty (1951) in the case of Italy.[19] Underemployment and low salaries were considered responsible for precarious working-class conditions even in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when full and steady employment was a shared goal at a global level.

The initial attempt at a conceptualization of precarious work and precariousness came a while later, and it happened, somewhat ironically, in the 1960s, when job stability was beginning to be considered the norm of the "affluent society". In 1964, the Italian economist Paolo Sylos Labini devoted an article to the analysis of precarious employment in Sicily, advocating the relevance of such a concept for studying developing countries and regions.[20] In his 1974 book on the social classes in Italy,[21] he associated precarious work with the Marxian concept of the lumpenproletariat, considering precarious work as a consequence of the Italian economic divide between the industrialized Northern regions and the underdeveloped Southern ones. Precarious workers were identified as low-income casual workers with a highly unstable employment

14. Morris, *Signs of Change*.
15. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*; Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London.*
16. Thomson and Smith, *Street Life in London*.
17. Webb, *Facts for Socialists*.
18. Zanardelli, *Inchiesta sulla Basilicata*; Franchetti and Sonnino, *La Sicilia nel 1876*; Jacini, *Relazione finale sui risultati dell'inchiesta agraria*.
19. Day, *Poverty and Precarity*; Pesenti, *Sottoretribuzione e miseria.*
20. Sylos Labini, "Precarious Employment in Sicily".
21. *Idem*, *Saggio sulle classi sociali.*

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relationship, usually working in small industrial shops, but also in agriculture and retail.

In the same period, Pierre Bourdieu, in his well-known study *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, used the concept of *précarité* to describe the conditions of "unstable" Algerian workers, whom he also associated with the lumpenproletariat.[22] In Bourdieu's discourse, the condition of precarity and its opposite, stability, were associated with the capitalistic transformation of Algerian traditional society and the rise of a more dualistic labour market, formed by a minority of stable workers employed in the modern sector and a diverse group of unemployed or underemployed journeymen experiencing unstable working and life conditions.

Thanks to the development and institutionalization of social and labour history in the second half of the twentieth century, a growing number of historical studies focused on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century working class, revealing its structural precariousness.[23] Social and labour historians usually adopted concepts such as "unstable" and "casual" to address those working conditions that, today, are labelled "precarious".[24] With the rise of feminist studies, female labour historians provided a crucial contribution to the understanding of the diverse levels of precarity (and stability) affecting the early working class by casting light on its gendered composition and diverse paths.[25] "Instability" became a crucial category of analysis to investigate women's working conditions in the modern age, whereas the term precarious/precariousness was rarely applied until the new millennium.[26]

On the theoretical level, studies by Immanuel Wallerstein, especially *Historical Capitalism*,[27] have underscored that the existence of an industrial proletariat, employed permanently and paid wages, on time, depended on both the needs of the employers in the different phases of industrialization

22. Bourdieu, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*; on Bourdieu, see also Rapini, "Can Peasants Make a Revolution?".

23. Hobsbawm, "The Machine Breakers"; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève*; Merli, *Proletariato di fabbrica e capitalismo industriale*; De Clementi, "Appunti sulla formazione della classe operaia in Italia"; Piva, "Classe operaia e mobilità del lavoro in fabbrica"; Bigazzi, *Il Portello*.

24. See, for instance, Knotter, "Poverty and the Family-Income Cycle"; for an overview, see: Van Der Linden, "San Precario"; Betti, *La precarietà del lavoro*.

25. See, for instance: Tilly, "Paths of Proletarianization"; Pieroni Bortolotti, "Le lotte delle sigaraie fiorentine"; Cattaruzza, *La formazione del proletariato urbano*; Botz, *Die Frau in der Arbeiterbewegung*; Müller *et al.*, *Strukturwandel der Frauenarbeit 1880–1980*; Cantor and Laurie, *Class, Sex and the Woman Worker*; Kessler-Harris, *Out of Work*; Perrot, "Travaux de femmes dans la France du XIXe siècle".

26. Among the few feminist labour historians adopting the concept of precariousness were Boris and Dodson, "Working at Living"; Komlosy, "Work and Labour Relations"; Bonfiglioli, "Gender, Labour and Precarity".

27. Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*.

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and the nature of their products. Since the first industrial revolution, employers tended to organize the labour force according to their product market, trying to offload onto the weakest part of the labour force (i.e. women and children) the risks related to their entrepreneurial activity.

While neither the contemporary observers of the early working class, nor the twentieth-century historians provided comprehensive definitions of precarious work and job precariousness, historians from the 2000s onwards increasingly started to use these concepts to analyse workers' conditions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrial capitalism. The perpetuation of similar forms of precarious work from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, despite the changes in the organization of work and production, clearly emerges from the studies by Sophie Beau on the department stores of Lyons[28] and by Augusto De Benedetti on glove-making in Naples.[29] The same perspective is applied in the recent work of Marc Leleux, who retraces forms of precarious work in the industrial development of Northern France from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.[30]

The conceptualization of job precariousness and precarious work that we are familiar with has been mainly elaborated in contrast to the normative standard employment model of the affluent Western society of the 1950s–1970s.[31] It is not surprising, then, that few social scientists, historians, and even contemporary social actors adopted the concept of precarious/precariousness/precarity to investigate the working conditions during the Fordist era.[32] This was considered to be the main period of job stability in the history of industrial capitalism, as opposed to the generalized job instability of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[33]

A relevant exception, never previously acknowledged, is the study published in the early 1980s by the Italian political scientist (and novelist) Valerio Evangelisti, who adopted the concept of the precariat (*precariato*) in identifying the rural proletariat of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as the "Fordist" industrial proletariat of the communist-led Emilia-Romagna region.[34] Evangelisti's empirical study contributed to showing the

28. Beau, *Un siècle d'emplois précaires*.
29. De Benedetti, *Il masso di Sisifo*, pp. 167–222.
30. Leleux, *Aux sources de la précarité*; Leleux, *Histoire des sans-travail et des précaires du Nord.*
31. This debate has been reconstructed in Betti, "Gender and Precarious Labor"; see also Breman and Van der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy".
32. Evidence from the Italian case has revealed that female trade unionists and female leaders of left-wing organizations were among the first to acknowledge the phenomenon of job precariousness during the Fordist era, among them the communist trade unionist Donatella Turtura. See Turtura, *Per nuove più avanzate conquiste delle lavoratrici italiane*.
33. See, for instance: Crafts, Toniolo, *Economic Growth in Europe since 1945*; Armstrong, Glyn, and Harrison, *Capitalism Since World War II*; Boltho, *The European Economy*.
34. Evangelisti, Sechi, *Il galletto rosso*.

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existence of job precariousness within the allegedly "Fordist" working class, which more recent research has corroborated.

In the past two decades, the concept of precariousness has also been used with a wider and more existential meaning, usually by adopting the neologism *precarity*. It was again Pierre Bourdieu who used the term *précarité* to address the transformation of society resulting from globalization and neoliberalism, stating that, in the given circumstances, everybody was precarious .[35] In Judith Butler's view, the concept of *precarity* "focuses on the conditions that threaten life in ways outside of one's control".[36] The concept of the "precariat", widespread after the publication of Guy Standing's book,[37] is also part of the debate on precariousness at large. Defined as a class-in-the-making, whose members have insecure labour relationships and no long-term employment contracts, the very concept of precariat has been contested by scholars such as Jan Breman. The latter addressed the precariat as a "bogus concept" for several reasons, amongst them the North-centric approach, the artificial division between the proletariat and the precariat, the lack of historical perspective, and the very definition of the precariat as a class-to-be.[38]

The subsequent attempts to provide a comprehensive definition of precarious work/precariousness have revealed to what extent the concept has played an increasingly important role in the debate of labour issues in the past three decades. The difficulty in reaching a shared and formalized definition of precarious work/precarious employment, however, testified to the institutional reluctance of adopting as a key concept a notion that was considered highly political, was related to social movements, and was contrary to the mainstream employment policies that were based on the paradigm of labour flexibility. The following subsection will reconstruct some aspects of this controversy.

(Re)Discovering precarious work in post-industrial societies

The economic crisis of the 1970s and its social consequences played a major role in triggering the debate, since the 1980s, on precarious work and job precariousness, first in Western Europe and later in the North American context. The conceptualizations of precarious work in the social sciences were closely related to the spread of the so-called flexible labour arrangement in Western labour markets, conceived as one of the major changes in the wake of the 1970s crisis. As pointed out by scholars such as Jan Breman,

35. Bourdieu, *La précarité est aujourd'hui partout.*
36. Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics", p. i; see, in addition: Butler, *Precarious Life*.
37. Standing, *The Precariat*.
38. Breman, "A Bogus Concept?".

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Marcel van der Linden, Ronaldo Munck, Brett Neilson, and Ned Rossiter,[39] the concept of precarious work was elaborated in contrast to the so-called standard employment model, which was considered to be the standard employment relationship in the West. The collapse, but also the resilience, of the standard employment model were closely connected with the spread of job flexibility and the (new) rise of precarious work in the literature of the 1980s and 1990s discussed below.

Both in Italy and Spain, the rise of job precariousness was mainly associated with the decentralization of industrial production and the spread of subcontractors, industrial homework, and undocumented work.[40] In France, the concept of precarious work could mainly be found in family and poverty studies, as "atypical" employment situations were seen as the primary source of precarious living conditions.[41] Between the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s, terms such as *emplois précaires/précarité de l'emploi* (French), *lavoro precario/precarietà del lavoro* (Italian), *empleo* and *trabajo precario/precaridad laboral* (Spanish) entered the academic debate in the respective countries. However, only from the early 2000s onwards were the terms "precarious work/employment" and "job/labour precariousness" frequently used, indicating that the precarious work debate was not yet as developed in the English-speaking countries[42] as it was in the Mediterranean ones, with the significant exception of Canada.[43] In Germany as well, it was only around the beginning of new millennium that the concept of *Prekariat/Prekarität* and *prekäre Arbeit* became increasingly common in scholarly debates.[44]

39. *Idem* and Van der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy"; Munck, "The Precariat: A View from the South"; Neilson and Rossiter, "Precarity as a Political Concept".

40. On 1980s Spanish studies dealing with precarious work, see: Castillo and Prieto, *Condiciones de trabajo*; Recio, "Flexibilidad, eficiencia y desigualdad"; Alós, Míguelez and Recio, *El trabajo precario en el comercio*; Sánchez Moreno and Cutanda Tarín, *Segmentación, flexibilidad y precarización*. On 1970s Italian studies adopting the concept of precarious work, see: Paci, *Mercato del lavoro e classi sociali*; Meldolesi, *Disoccupazione ed esercito industriale*; Brusco, "Organizzazione del lavoro"; Frey, *Lavoro a domicilio e decentramento*.

41. On French early studies on precarity, see: Pitrou, *La vie précaire;* Pitrou, *Vivre sans famille?*; Linhart and Maruani, "Précarisation et déstabilisation des emplois ouvriers".

42. For an overview of the precarious work debate in the British context, Düll, *Defining and Assessing Precarious Employment in Europe*; in the US context, the discussion on precarious work as such exploded after the publication of Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*, which was preceded by Kalleberg, "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers". In the Australian context, studies can be found since the late 1990s; for an overview, see: Burgess and Campbell, "The Nature and Dimensions of Precarious Employment"; on the development in the new millennium: Tweedie, "Precarious Work and Australian Labour Norms".

43. Studies on precarious work in Canada have been conducted since the late 1990s: Schellenberg and Clarke, *Temporary Employment in Canada*; Rose, "Economic Restructuring"; Vosko, *Temporary Work.*

44. For an overview of the German debate on precarious work, see: Brinkmann, Dörre, and Röbenack, *Prekäre Arbeit*; Altenhain *et al*., *Von 'Neuer Unterschicht' und Prekariat.*; Castel and Dörre, *Prekarität, Abstieg, Ausgrenzung*.

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The importance of the flexibility model in the management of employees by enterprises,[45] and its part of the government employment strategy to reduce unemployment,[46] triggered a new strand of economic studies in the 1980s. The relationship between labour market (de)regulation, flexibility, and precarious work was explicitly addressed by the French economist Guy Caire in his 1982 article "Précarisation des emplois et régulation du marché du travail".[47] Moreover, the volume *La flexibilité du travail en Europe*, co-edited by the French regulationist economist Robert Boyer,[48] and the paper *Labour Flexibility: Cure or Cause for Unemployment?*, written by Guy Standing,[49] at the time employed at the ILO, investigated the effects of job flexibility.

Since the mid-1980s, however, other attempts to conceptualize precarious work were made in Latin America, where the Inter-American Centre for Labour Administration (CIAT-OIT), an ILO facility in Lima, Peru, and the Argentinian Ministry of Labour and Social Security promoted the joint study *El empleo precario in Argentina*.[50] In 1980s Latin America, the conceptualization of precarious work was already very much related to the ideal of industrial wage labour and the standard employment relationship, in spite of the prevailing informality of labour relationships in the continent. The precarization process was addressed as a consequence of the labour market reform of the 1970s, promoted in Latin America under the influence of neoliberal economic policies during the various military dictatorships. Flexible labour arrangements, such as temporary work, part-time work, temporary agency work, sub-contracting, and undocumented work, including industrial homeworking, were considered to be the main forms of job precarity.

In the late 1980s, Gerry and Janine Rodgers' book *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation* provided the most influential and long-lasting conceptualization of precarious work, introducing the concept of

45. Pioneering works on the so-called flexible firms are: Atkinson, "Manpower Strategies for Flexible Organisations"; Atkinson and Meager, *Changing Work Patterns*.

46. On the 1980s discussion about the role of "flexibility" in the labour market, see: OECD, *Flexibility in the Labour Market*; Piore, "Perspectives on Labor Market Flexibility"; Rosenberg, *From Segmentation to Flexibility*; Tarling, *Flexibility in the Labour Markets*; Meulders and Wilkin, "Labour Market Flexibility"; Pollert, *Farewell to Flexibility*; on the relationship between the state and labour market flexibility in Western countries, see: Rosenberg, "Labor Market Restructuring in Europe and the United States"; on labour market flexibility in 1980s Japan, see also: Koshiro, *Employment Security and Labor Market Flexibility*; on the relationship between flexibility and the Fordism/post-Fordism debate, see: Burrows, Gilbert and Pollert, *Fordism and Flexibility*.

47. Caire, "Précarisation des emplois"; Offredi, "La précarité des années quatre-vingt".

48. Boyer and Wolleb, *La flexibilité du travail en Europe*.

49. Standing, "Labour Flexibility: Cause or Cure for Unemployment?".

50. CIAT-OIT and Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, *El empleo precario en Argentina.*

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precarious work for the first time to the English readership.[51] The volume was the result of a seminar jointly organized by the International Institute of Labour Studies, an ILO research facility in Geneva, and the Free University of Brussels. Gerry Rodgers, a development economist at the ILO, conceptualized as precarious jobs "with a short time horizon or for which the risk of job loss is high"; for the same reason, irregular jobs were also considered to be precarious. Job precariousness, in his view, involved "instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social and economic vulnerability".[52]

Since the mid-1980s, comparative studies on labour law exploring the changes in labour contracts and labour legislation in a West–East perspective have increased, revealing well before 1989 a shared concern across the Iron Curtain regarding the new hiring and dismissal practices developed in the capitalist West as well as in the communist East.[53] Although the topic of precarious work was not explicitly addressed, the spread of flexible contracts,[54] the changing regulations on dismissals and, more broadly, labour law deregulation were dealt with, indicating the early concern of labour law scholars concerning the possible dismantling of the standard employment model.[55] The major changes that occurred in the Soviet labour market under *perestroika* were discussed immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall under the ILO umbrella, which, in 1990, organized a conference in Moscow entitled "Towards Labour Flexibility and Employment Reform in the USSR".[56] The new labour legislation promoted in the second half of the 1980s, together with the potential role of the flexibility paradigm, lay at the heart of the analysis by scholars under the leadership of Guy Standing. Unlike the explanation of precarious work developed with regard to Western Europe and Latin America, where the process of precarization was clearly seen as an effect of the introduction of flexible labour arrangements, the Soviet Union's labour market was regarded as a system that needed to be more flexible. Although the potential spread of precarious work was not a real concern of those scholars, the risk of falling into periods of labour insecurity did emerge in the analyses.

In the 1990s, the debate on precarious work became highly polarized. Orthodox economists saw job flexibility as an opportunity and a necessity

51. Rodgers and Rodgers, *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation*.
52. Rodgers, "Precarious Work in Western Europe: The State of the Debate", p. 3.
53. Hepple, "Some Problems of Comparing Socialist and Capitalist Systems of Labour Law"; Ivanov, "Hiring and Dismissal Under Soviet Labour Law".
54. Meulders and Tytgat, "Atypical Employment in EEC Countries"; Boudier, "New Forms of Employment".
55. Wedderburn, "Deregulation and Labour Law in Britain and Western Europe"; Evans and Lewis, "Deregulating Labour Markets and Industrial Relations".
56. Standing, *In Search of Flexibility*.

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in order to create new employment, usually avoiding the very concept of precariousness. This position was fully endorsed by the European Employment Strategy launched in 1997.[57] An increasing number of sociologists, however, started emphasizing the close connection between job flexibility and precariousness, explicitly using the term. French socio-economic scientists were the first to further elaborate on job precariousness, adopting the concept of *précarité* extensively.[58] Robert Castel, in his book *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*, addressed precariousness as a destabilizing force for society as a whole.[59] Along the same lines, Serge Paugam and Pierre Bourdieu elaborated on the impact of job precariousness at the social level, in the wake of the hegemony of the flexibility paradigm.[60] Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiappello, in their well-known book *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, looked at the spread of precarious work as an effect of the increasing labour market segmentation and the major changes that had occurred in the capitalist system since the crisis of the 1970s.[61]

Since the late 1990s, more and more studies in Western countries have explicitly addressed precariousness as the social and individual costs of labour flexibility.[62] Books such as Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Characters* or Luciano Gallino's *Il costo umano della flessibilità* are clear examples of this approach.[63] In Italy, the 1970s debate was not followed by any significant studies until the second half of the 1990s,[64] when several scholars such as Andrea Tiddi, Roberto Rizza, and Federico Chicchi started adopting the category of precariousness and precarious work as key concepts in their analyses.[65] In the United Kingdom, the studies on precarious work in the 1990s were fewer and more limited in scope, usually adopting key words such as "insecurity" and "vulnerability" instead of precariousness as such.[66] The most relevant comparative study of the 1990s, the so-

57. For an overview of the flexibility model as a positive employment strategy, see: European Commission, *Flexibility and Competitiveness*.

58. Lévy, *Vivre au minimum*; Offe and Deken, "La précarité sur le marché du travail".

59. Castel, *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*.

60. Barbier and Nadel, *La flexibilité du travail et de l'emploi*; Paugam, *Le salarié de la précarité*; Bourdieu, "La précarité est aujourd'hui partout".

61. Boltanski and Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme.*

62. Nätti, "Temporary Employment in the Nordic Countries"; Bruegel and Hegewisch, "Flexibilization and Part-Time Work in Europe"; De Grip, Hoevenberg, and Willems, "Atypical Employment in the European Union"; Standing, *Global Labour Flexibility*.

63. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character;* Gallino, *Il costo umano della flessibilità.*

64. Exceptions could be found in: Garibaldo, *Flessibile o marginali?*; Accornero *et al.*, *Il lavoro possibile.*

65. Rizza, *Politiche del lavoro e nuove forme di precarizzazione del lavoro*; Tiddi, *Precari*; Chicchi, *Derive sociali.*

66. Gallie, Crompton and Purcell, *Changing Forms of Employment*; Heery and Salmon, *The Insecurity Workforce*; for a comprehensive overview of job insecurity literature: Sverke, Hellgren, and Näswall, *Job Insecurity.*

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Figure 2. "Precarious Mayday" Demonstration, Brighton May 1, 2017.
Photograph by Callum Cant at PoliticalCritique.org, available at https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/precarious-couriers-are-leading-the-struggle-against-platform-capitalism/2017/08/24

called *Supiot Report*, written by an interdisciplinary group of experts established under the patronage of the European Commission, also analysed the changes occurring in the European labour laws with a specific focus on the consequences of the spread of flexible labour arrangements.[67] Several studies investigated the process of precarization in conjunction with the spread of job flexibility also in non-European Western countries such as Canada and Australia.[68] Few of them dealt with non-Western countries, and if they did, then again it was mainly with Latin America.[69]

Since the early 2000s, the academic debate on job precariousness has become topical, involving a larger number of scholars in the socio-economic sciences and humanities all over the Western countries and beyond. In addition to economists, sociologists, and legal experts, anthropologists, psychologists, gender scholars, and political scientists became increasingly involved in the analysis of precarious work, together with

67. Supiot, *Au-delà de l'emploi.*
68. For an overview of the 1990s Canadian debate, see: Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich, "Precarious Employment in the Canadian Labour Market"; on precarious work in Australia: Burgess and Campbell, "The Nature and Dimensions of Precarious Employment".
69. On Latin America see, for instance: Peñalba and Rofman, *Desempleo structural, pobreza y precariedad.*

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scholars in the humanities, who discovered a wide range of artistic, literary, and cinematographic products based on the topic.[70] A real iconography of precarity,[71] depicting precarious workers as a proper group, often with recognizable features, evolved, along with studies addressing precarious workers as the core workforce of the knowledge/digital society of twenty-first-century capitalism.[72] It is not surprising, then, that more than a dozen special issues devoted to precarious work and precarity at large have been published over the past decade, across a wide range of academic journals, ranging from sociology, to feminist studies, labour law, management studies, social movements studies, drama and art studies, and history.[73]

With the launch of the Italian Mayday parade (2001) and later on Euro-MayDay (2005) – the transnational protest promoted by precarious (and migrant) workers on May Day – an increasing number of studies started analysing precarious workers' mobilization in Western Europe, especially in the Mediterranean countries, where protest levels were higher.[74] Due to

70. For a critical analysis of literary and artistic products dealing with precarity, see, for instance: Contarini, Jansen, and Ricciardi, *Le culture del precariato*; De Sario, *Precari su Marte*; Iwata-Weickgenannt and Rosenbaum, *Visions of Precarity*; Garrett and Jackson, "Art, Labour and Precarity in the Age of Veneer Politics".

71. On the representation of precarity: Bruni and Selmi, "Da san Precario a WonderQueer".

72. Among the most recent studies on precarious work, knowledge society and the digital economy, see: Cocco and Szaniecki, *Creative Capitalism*; Curtin and Sanson, *Precarious Creativity*; Huws, *Labor in the Global Digital Economy*; Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End*; Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat.*

73. The main special issues in the social sciences and humanities devoted to precarious work: Neilsen and Rossiter, "Precarious Labour" *The Fibreculture Journal*, 5 (2005); Nienhueser, "Flexible Work – Atypical Work – Precarious Work?', *Management Revue*, 16 (2005); Bellavitis and Piccone Stella, "Flessibili/Precarie", *Genesis*, 7, 1–2 (2008); De Simone and Scarponi, "Genere, lavori precari, occupazione instabile", *Lavoro e diritto*, 24:3 (2010); Choudry and Collombat, "Nouvelles voix sur la précarité du travail", *Labour, Capital and Society*, 45:1 (2012); Appelbaum, "Precarious Work in Polarizing Times", *Work and Occupations*, 39:4 (2012); ILO, "Meeting the Challenge of Precarious Work. A Worker's Agenda", *International Journal of Labour Research*, 5:1 (2013); Kalleberg and Hewison, "Precarious Work in East Asia", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57:3 (2013); Hewison and Kalleberg, "Precarious Work in South and Southeast Asia", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57:4 (2013); "Precarious Work and Human Rights", *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal,* 34 (2012); "Precarious Situations: Race, Gender, Globality", *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 23:2 (2013); "Youth and Precarious Work", *Social Alternatives*, 34:4 (2015); "Precarious Work and the Struggle for Living Wages", *Alternatives Routes*, 27 (2016); Mosoetsa, Stillerman and Tilly, "Precarious Labor in Global Perspective", *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 89 (2016). Although not formally devoted to precarious work, the following deal extensively with the topic: "Italian Feminisms", *Feminist Review*, 87:3 (2007); "Globalization and Labor Flexibility: The Latin American Case(s)", *Latin American Perspectives*, 31:4 (2004); Kalleberg and Vallas, *Precarious Work*; Schierup and Jørgensen, "Politics of Precarity", *Critical Sociology*, 42 (2016).

74. On Mayday, EuroMayDay and precarious worker's mobilization: Tari and Vanni, "On the Life and Deeds of San Precario"; Neilson and Rossiter, "From Precarity to Precariousness and Back Again"; Choi, Mattoni, "The Contentious Field of Precarious Work in Italy"; Murgia and

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the expansion of the European social movements' campaign against precarious work and the subsequent involvement of European and even international trade union federations – e.g. the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) and the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) – in the mid-2000s, the concepts of precariousness/precarity/precarious became popular not only within academia, but also in the general public debate.[75] It is worth mentioning that several academic studies were indeed conducted by scholars belonging to the *génération précaire*, who combined political commitments towards a condition they themselves were experiencing with the necessary scientific skills to contribute substantially to the study of the topic in a variety of disciplines.[76]

An important part of the European debate from the early 2000s until the onset of the economic crisis of 2008 focused on the conceptualization and implementation of the so-called flexicurity model, based on the idea of merging managerial flexibility and employment security. This debate was at first led by Scandinavian scholars[77] and acquired a European scope when flexicurity was adopted as an explicit goal in the renewal of the European Employment Strategy.[78] In this debate, however, critical approaches also emerged, as flexibility was considered to be a possible driver for a new wave of precarization on the global scale.[79] Scholars such as Ruud Muffels, Peter Auer, and Frank Tros pointed out the difficulty in balancing employment instability with highly diverse systems of social security that were based on

Selmi, "Inspire and Conspire. Italian Precarious Workers"; Marchart, *Die Prekarisierungsgesellschaft*, in particular ch. 4 (pp. 189–230); Foti, "The Precariat for Itself"; Fumagalli, "Cognitive Relational (Creative) Labor"; Bodnar, "Taking it to the Streets".

75. For campaigns of international unions on precarious work, see: International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), *Precarious Work Affects Us All*; European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), *Precarious Work in Europe*; EFFAT, *Social Justice from Farm to Fork*; ACTRAV, *From Precarious Work to Decent Work*; for a critical analysis of unions' response to precarious work: Keune, "Trade Union Responses to Precarious Work in Seven European Countries"; Knotter, "Justice for Janitors Goes Dutch".

76. Among the studies made by and dealing with the *génération précaire*: Murgia and Ermano, *Mappe della precarietà*; Armano, Bove and Murgia, *Mapping Precariousness, Labour Insecurity and Uncertain Livelihoods*; Busch, Jeskow and Stutz, *Zwischen Prekarisierung und Protest*.

77. Wilthagen, "Flexicurity: A New Paradigm"; Wilthagen and Rogowski; "The Legal Regulation of Transitional Labour Markets"; Madsen, "The Danish Model of Flexicurity".

78. Among official documents and responses: European Commission, *Modernising Labour Law*; European Commission, *Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity*; European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), "The Flexicurity Debate and the Challenges for the Trade Union Movement"; European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, "Varieties of Flexicurity"; on flexicurity as a positive model: Wilthagen, *Flexicurity Practices*; Auer, "In Search of Optimal Labour Market Institutions"; Cazes and Nesporova, *Flexicurity*.

79. Muffels, *Flexibility and Employment Security*; Berton, Richiardi and Sacchi, *Flex-insecurity*; Possenti, *Flessibilità.*

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the differing financial capabilities of European states. This was increasingly discussed from 2007/2008 onwards, when critical studies on the financial sustainability of the flexicurity model were published.[80] In the 2010s, in addition to the ILO's the and EU's studies,[81] Romke van der Veen, Mara Yerkes, and Peter Achterberg's research, as well as Toomas Kotkas's and Kenneth Veitch's study, address the relationship between welfare regimes, labour market flexibility, and job precariousness at large, advocating a new basic floor of social rights.[82]

GENDERING AND GLOBALIZING PRECARIOUS WORK IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CAPITALISM

Women's history and feminist scholarship

The literature on precarious work became much more global and gendered in the new millennium, overcoming the Eurocentric perspective and the gender blind approach of the debate in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2010, the European Parliament approved a resolution on "precarious women workers", which stated that the "gender nature of precarious work" and gender discrimination underlie the prevailing spread of job precariousness.[83] The relationship between gender and precarious work has been analysed with increasing attention since the 2000s, even though, in some countries, the feminization of atypical contracts has been studied continuously since the 1990s.[84]

In the new millennium, several scholars, adopting the category of gender and intersectionality, have framed precarious work in the history of (gendered) capitalistic relations of production. For example, Angela Mitropoulos's essay of 2005 and Leah Vosko's study published in 2000 criticized the novelty of the phenomenon from a feminist point of view.[85] Andrea Komlosy explicitly links the analysis of capitalism, labour relations, and precarious work. In questioning wage labour as the dominant labour

80. On flexicurity in the crisis years: Auer, "What's in a Ne"; Andersen, Lubanski and Pedersen, *The Competitiveness of the Nordic Countries*; Tros, "Flexicurity in Europe"; Heyes, "Flexicurity in Crisis"; De Vos, "European Flexicurity and Globalization".

81. European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, *Study on Precarious Work and Social Rights*; ILO, "Meeting the Challenge of Precarious Work. A Worker's Agenda".

82. Kotkas and Veitch, *Social Rights in the Welfare State*; Van der Veen, Yerkes, and Achterberg, *The Transformation of Solidarity.*

83. European Parliament, Resolution of 19 October 2010 on Precarious Women Workers, 19 October 2010 (n. 2010/2018).

84. On Italy, see for instance: Altieri, "'New economy', lavori 'atipici' e conseguenze di genere"; CENSIS, *L'impatto della flessibilità sui percorsi di carriera delle donne*. On Latin America: Lindenboim, "The Precariousness of Argentine Labor Relations".

85. Mitropoulos, "Precari-Us?"; Vosko, *Temporary Work*.

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relationship of historical and contemporary capitalism, she conceived precarious work as a labour relationship by itself, which has characterized the capitalist system throughout its history.[86] The concept of intersectionality, introduced in the early 1990s by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw,[87] has proven to be relevant not only for feminist scholarship, gender studies, and women's history,[88] but also for labour history.[89] Addressing the intersection of gender, class, race, ethnicity (and citizenship) in analysing precarious workers and recurring forms of job precariousness seems indeed particularly relevant, as shown, for instance, by Annette Thörnquist and Åsa-Karin Engstrand's study on precarious work in Sweden.[90]

Eileen Boris stresses that single women, African Americans, migrants, and domestic and agricultural workers were never fully integrated in the steady employment codified in the United States by the New Deal.[91] Along the same lines, Sean Hill has recently analysed precarity in its relationship with the political and theoretical conceptualization of "Black Lives Matter", launched by the homonymous movement in 2013. By emphasizing how black Americans experienced precariousness well before the rise of neoliberalism, Hill openly contests Standing's concept of the precariat as a new class, claiming that black Americans have been part of a possibly "eternal precariat".[92]

Drawing from Butler's theory, Isabelle Lorey points out that the allegedly new neoliberal precarity has a long tradition in industrial capitalism, which has excluded women and migrants from social security provisions also in Western countries.[93] The article by Saffia Elisa Shaukat on Italian seasonal workers in Switzerland clearly illustrates how job precariousness has characterized the working and living conditions of Italians who have emigrated beyond the Alps since the 1950s.[94] My own studies on Italian women workers over the past sixty years have shown to what extent the sexual division of labour and sex-based discrimination have been at the heart of the gendered nature of precarious work, which has characterized women's working conditions in all economic sectors in both industrial and post-industrial societies.[95] Additional studies on North America have revealed the existence and relevance of temporary employees, labelled "Kelly Girls" for

86. Komlosy, "Work and Labour Relations".
87. Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins.*
88. For a history of the concept of intersectionality and feminist scholarship critique: Cooper, "Intersectionality".
89. See, for instance, Boris and Janssens, "Complicating Categories".
90. Thörnquist, Engstrand, *Precarious Employment in Perspective.*
91. Boris and Dodson, "Working at Living".
92. Hill, "Precariy in the Era of #BlackLivesMatter".
93. Lorey, *State of Insecurity*; Puar, "Precarity Talk".
94. Shaukat, "Emigrer et travailler en Valais".
95. Betti, *Women's Working Conditions and Job Precariousness.*

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being mostly female, in the Canadian and US labour markets in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of the so-called temporary help industry, those women experienced working conditions that would today be labelled precarious, as Leah Vosko's and Erin Hatton's studies have suggested.[96]

In Mediterranean countries, feminist scholars such as Adriana Nannicini, Cristina Morini, Silvia Federici, and Laura Fantone[97] have contributed to revealing the gendered transformation of the capitalist system in the so-called neoliberal age, which increased the level of precariousness in women's working and living conditions. Women's activism against precariousness has been dealt with in regard to Italy and Spain, where specific feminist groups such as *Precarias a la Deriva* were formed, becoming themselves a subject of investigation for feminist scholars.[98] In addition to Spanish and Italian feminists, German feminist scholars have contributed to addressing the relationship between precariousness, freedom, and self-determination.[99] The nexus of reproduction and job precariousness has been dealt with at various levels, mostly concerning the Global North.[100]

A virtual round table coordinated by Jasmine Puar shows the diverse possible conceptualizations of precariousness and precarization in the feminist milieu. In addition to the economic aspect, feminist thinkers address the existential dimension by examining the relationship between precarity and the female body, precarity and reproduction, as well as the various precarious identities.[101] *Feminae Precariae* is the definition recently proposed by Alyson Cole and Victoria Hattam to understand the gendered precarization of neoliberal capitalism, explored from several perspectives in the 2017 Fall/Winter issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly*.[102] In Cole and Hattam's view, "the feminine form highlights the gendered fragmentation of production, reproduction, and citizenship; the plural conjugation signifies how precarization, which is embedded in the project of increasing individual capital, is widespread and yet undermines collectivism".[103]

96. Vosko, *Temporary Work*; Hatton, *The Temp Economy*.

97. On feminist perspectives on precarious work: Nannicini, *Le parole per farlo*; Fantone, "Precarious Changes"; Fantone, *Genere e precarietà*; Morini, *Per amore o per forza*; Federici, "Precarious Labor".

98. Precarias a la Deriva, *A la deriva por los circuitos de la precariedad femenina*; Casas-Cortés, "A Genealogy of Precarity"; Fantone, "Precarious Changes"; Di Cori, "Comparing Different Generations of Feminists".

99. Fink *et al*., *Prekarität und Freiheit?*; Aulenbacher, Riegraf, and Völker, *Feministische Kapitalismuskritik*, in particular ch. 9, "Phänomene der Prekarisierung: Entsicherung und erschöpfte Arbeits- und Lebensarrangements", pp. 126–138.

100. See, for instance: Chan and Tweedie, "Precarious Work and Reproductive Insecurity".

101. Puar, "Precarity Talk".

102. Although not explicitly devoted to precarity, this issue if *WSQ* addresses the topic in several articles.

103. Cole and Hattam, "What Works?".

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In the crisis years, the books edited by Judy Fudge and Rosemary Owen[104] and Leah Vosko[105] focused on the gendered nature of precarious work and the growing percentages of precariousness among women, questioning eventually the alleged positive relationship between the feminization and flexibilization of work at the global level. By analysing the relationship between precarious work and changing legal norms, Fudge and Owen establish to what extent national laws and policies had historically reinforced gender roles, according to which women, when they worked, were usually employed temporarily in more unstable and precarious jobs. Vosko shows how the erosion of the standard employment model did not help to reduce the gender inequalities in the labour market or women's level of precariousness, and she advocates a new employment relationship.

Some feminist scholars adopting a Global South perspective also provided a crucial contribution towards understanding the relationship between the current wave of precarization and the global feminization of labour, commonly understood as the increase of women's participation in paid work worldwide but also as the extension of traditional female working conditions to the workforce as a whole.[106] Fatima El-Tayeb points out that precarity is not a symptom of a crisis of late capitalism, but rather a long-term structural element of the modern capitalist system, stressing how populations outside the West had been the main subjects of a process of precarization.[107] Encarnacion Gutiérrez-Rodríguez and Nicole Constable deal with the relationship between precariousness, feminization of work and migration, something which several scholars have contributed to developing in regard to specific sectors, such as domestic and care work, call centres, and farm work.[108]

Women's history and feminist scholarship have provided a crucial contribution to understanding precarization as a continuous process and precariousness as a defining condition of women's employment in the long run, something underlined also by the few studies taking into account the early modern era. The special issue *Flessibili/Precarie* (Flexible/Precarious) of the Italian women's history journal *Genesis* revealed how precarious and flexible work could be conceptualized also in the pre-industrial era with regard to several feminized sectors.[109]

104. Fudge and Owen, *Precarious Work: Women and the New Economy.*
105. Vosko, *Managing the Margin.*
106. Mitropoulos, "Precari-Us?"; Lorey, *State of Insecurity.*
107. El-Tayeb, "Making Do. Survival Strategies under Precarity".
108. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, *Migration, Domestic Work and Affect;* Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, "The Precarity of Feminisation"; Constable, "Migrant Motherhood, 'Failed Migration'"; Alves de Matos, "Gender Commodification and Precarity"; Mayer-Ahuja, "Three Worlds of Cleaning"; Hobson and Bede, "Precariousness and Capabilities".
109. Bellavitis and Piccone Stella; *Atypical Works in Pre-Industrial Europe. Pluriactivity,Mobility and Social Identities;* Canepari and Ragnard, "Abitare la città".

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Research on industrial homeworking is particularly relevant for understanding the persistence of specific forms of traditionally highly feminized precarious work, usually closely connected with informal and undocumented work.[110] Since 1997, women's informal work has been addressed also by the global research-policy-action network *Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing* (WIEGO), which has contributed to expand the knowledge of the quantity and quality of informal work worldwide with a specific focus on feminized highly precarious groups of workers (home-based workers, street vendors, domestic workers, waste pickers). The relationship between informal and precarious employment has been addressed, within the wider debate on the quality of employment. [111]

Another relevant contribution has come from the studies on mobility and pluriactivity, which have revealed the multiple strategies adopted by male and female "contingent", "casual", or "seasonal" workers to face their structural conditions of job and life precariousness. How job precariousness has historically shaped not only male and female behaviour, but also the households' social and economic strategies and their gender division of labour is particularly relevant in a diachronic perspective. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century proletarian and sub-proletarian families, studied by Ad Knotter,[112] can be compared to the twenty-first century precarious ones, both in the Global North and in the Global South.[113]

Transnational studies and perspectives from the Global South

The onset of the global economic crisis in 2008 played a relevant role in popularizing and globalizing the precarious work debate.[114] The relationship between precariousness and globalization became one of the main strands of research during the crisis years,[115] also thanks to the role of the ILO, the Eurofound, and the European Commission, which funded several transnational research projects and conferences on this topic.[116] A special

110. Prugl, *Global Construction of Gender;* Boris and Prugl, *Homeworkers in Global Perspective.*

111. See, among others: Chen, "The Informal Economy"; Carré, Negrete, Vanek, "Relating Quality of Employment to Informal Employment"; on informality, poverty and precariousness from a gender perspective, see also: Kudva, Beneria, *Rethinking Informalization.*

112. Knotter, "Poverty and the Family-Income Cycle".

113. On twenty-first century precarious family: Salmieri, "Job Insecurity, Flexibility and Home-Work Balance".

114. Among the most recent comprehensive studies, see, for instance: Kalleberg and Vallas, *Precarious Work*; Meehan and Strauss, *Precarious Worlds*; on Western countries, see: Sargeant and Ori, *Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Working.*

115. Thornley, Jefferys, and Appay, *Globalisation and Precarious Forms of Production and Employment*; Ross, *Nice Work if You Can Get It*; for a review of the main studies: Kalleberg, "Globalization and Precarious Work".

116. Broughton and Biletta Kullander, *Flexible Forms of Work*; Evans and Gibb, *Moving from Precarious Employment to Decent Work*; European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs

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issue of the ILO's *International Journal of Labour Research* featured some of the contributions to a 2011 symposium, held by the ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), entitled *Meeting the Challenge of Precarious Work: A Workers' Agenda*.[117] The articles addressed the relationship between precarious work and the ILO's standards, including the 2008 "Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization" and the 2015 Recommendation concerning the "Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy". The ILO's role in establishing stable employment relationships across the globe up to the crisis of the 1970s is explored, along with the current need for new standards to protect precarious workers in the twenty-first century.[118] In 2016, the ILO issued the report *Non-Standard Employment around the World*, after hosting a tripartite meeting on the same topic in 2015. The effort to increase the knowledge about the impact of "non-standard employment" worldwide was part of the "Future of Work Centenary Strategy" launched by the Director-General. Although the concept of precariousness was mentioned, "non-standard employment" was preferred to emphasize the decent work deficits as well as the main areas of insecurity experienced by workers in non-standard employment, which should be addressed by policies[119]. The relationship between precarious work and human rights has become another relevant topic in the international debate on precarization and globalization, which has also seen the involvement of international trade union federations.[120]

In the crisis years, precarious work also became a relevant issue in the former Communist countries. Eastern Europe has been included in recent comparative studies with a European scope, while research projects funded by the EU, such as "Precarious Work and Social Rights" and "PRECARIR", included or were about Eastern Europe, too.[121] Additional studies have been published also in regard to Russia and former Yugoslavia.[122] In the latter, precarious work is often related to the restructuring of the industrial system during the transition from planned to market economies,

and Equal Opportunities, *Study on Precarious Work and Social Rights*; Trif, Koukiadaki, and Kahancová, *The Rise of the Dual Labour Market*; Keune, *Bargaining for Social Rights*.

117. ILO, "Meeting the Challenge of Precarious Work: A Workers' Agenda", *International Journal of Labour Research*, 5:1: Special Issue (2013).

118. Demaret, "Editorial: ILO Standards and Precarious Work"; Marín, "Precarious Work".

119. ILO, *Non-Standard Employment around the World.*

120. On precarious work and human righsts: IUF, "Precarious Work: Undermining Human Rights"; the special issue: "Precarious Work and Human Rights", and in particular: Mantouvalou, "Human Rights For Precarious Workers"

121. European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, *Study on Precarious Work and Social Rights*.

122. On precarious work in Eastern Europe and Russia: Herrmann, Bobkov, and Csoba, *Labour Market and Precarity of Employment*; Walker, "Stability and Precarity".

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which frequently led to a process of deindustrialization, as Chiara Bonfiglioli's studies show.[123] The privatization and closure of previously state-owned enterprises has led, according to these studies, to a generalized process of precarization and informalization.[124]

In addition to covering former communist Eastern European countries, an increasing number of studies have addressed the informalization and precarization of working conditions in twenty-first-century China, at times comparing contemporary labour relations to the ones existing in Mao's era when the "iron rice bowl" model granted job stability to the Chinese workers in the massive state sectors.[125] Other studies investigate the changes that occurred between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s in Chinese labour law and employment policies, which led to the rise of temporary staffing agencies as a solution to regional unemployment. The key role of those agencies in making the labour market more flexible and increasing the level of Chinese labour force precarization is discussed by Feng Xu, who points out how flexible employment in China is linked more to informal labour arrangements than in Western countries.[126] Thanks to the work of Heidi Gottfried and Anne Allison, the breakdown of the post-war system of employment stability and the increasing spread of precarious work in post-1991 Japan have also been addressed, revealing a rather similar path to that of Western Europe and North America.[127] Precarious labour in contemporary Japan, according to Allison, has reshaped social relations and increased the sense of loss and insecurity compared to the steadiness of the previous family-corporate system.[128]

Asia at large, Africa, and Latin America entered the debate on precarious work in the crisis years, fuelled by Guy Standing's controversial book, *The Precariat*.[129] The debate saw the involvement of a number of scholars working in the Global South or conducting research on it. Among them, Ronaldo Munck contested the novelty and relevance of Standing's concept of the precariat, providing an interesting contribution to understanding the role of precarious work in the history of capitalism beyond Western countries.[130] He stressed the relevance of the informality debate and

123. Bonfiglioli, "Gender, Labour and Precarity".
124. See, in addition: Woolfson, "Pushing the Envelope".
125. On precarious and informal work in China: Kuruville, Lee and Gallagher, *From Iron Rice Bowl to Informalization*; Zhou, "The State of Precarious Work in China"; Zhang, "From China to the Big Top"; Swider, *Building China.*
126. Xu, "Temporary Work in China".
127. On precarious work in Japan: Allison, "Ordinary Refugees"; *idem, Precarious Japan*; Gottfried, "Precarious Work in Japan"; Piotrowski, Kalleberg and Rindfuss, "Contingent Work Rising".
128. On loss and precarity, see also: Rachwał, *Precarity and Loss.*
129. Standing, *The Precariat*.
130. Munck, "The Precariat: A View from the South".

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informal work to understand the historical and contemporary forms of labour precariousness in the Global South, where Fordism and the standard employment model had never been the norm.

However, the discussion on the informalization of labour relations as a global process has a longer tradition, dating back to the 1990s.[131] Ulrich Beck coined the expression "Brazilianization of the West" at the end of the 1990s to stress the informalization of Western labour conditions and the unexpected convergence with informal/precarious labour arrangements already existing in the peripheral economies of the Global South,[132] something he had already envisaged to some extent in his study on the *Risikogesellschaft* in 1986.[133] In the early 2010s, Jan Breman and Marcel van der Linden corroborated the idea of a convergence of Western countries and the Global South insofar as the spread of informality and precarity was concerned, claiming that the "West is more likely to follow the Rest than the other way around".[134] Along the same line, Andreas Eckert has claimed that a process of convergence between the Western and African labour arrangements has occurred in the light of the normalization of precarity in the West.[135] Sara Mosoetsa, Joel Stillermann, and Chris Tilly – in their introduction to the special issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History* devoted to "Precarious Labor in Global Perspective" – argue for a global convergence in labour relations as well, interpreting the recent spread of precarious work as a "return".[136]

Scholars adopting a Global South and post-colonial perspective have emphasized the need to connect the debate on the informalization of labour[137] with the discourse on job precariousness to fully grasp the normality of precarious work outside Western countries in a synchronic and diachronic perspective. The relationship between precarization and informalization has become a crucial driver in expanding the precarious work debate in the Global South as a whole in the 2010s.[138] Several scholars have

131. Beck, *The Brave New World of Work*.
132. On the concept of peripheral economy and labour, see, for instance: Amin and Van der Linden, "Peripheral Labour"; Dennis and Pickles, "Global Work, Surplus Labor".
133. Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*.
134. Breman and Van Der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy", p. 920.
135. Eckert, "Capitalism and Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa".
136. Mosoetsa, Stillerman, and Tilly, "Precarious Labor in Global Perspective".
137. On the informalization of work in the Global South: Breman, *Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce*; Chang, "Informalising Labour in Asia's Global Factory"; on informal workers, see also: Bhattacharya and Lucassen, *Workers in the Informal Sector*; Eckert, *Global Histories of Work*; Rogan *et al*., "Informal Employment in the Global South".
138. On the nexus of precarious and informal labour in the Global South and peripheral economies: Barchiesi, "Informality and Casualization as Challenges"; Theron, "Informalization from Above, Informalization from Below; Petrungaro, "The Fluid Boundaries of 'Work'"; Arnold and Bongiovi, "Precarious, Informalizing, and Flexible Work"; Munck, "The Precariat: A View from the South"; Breman and Van Der Linden, "Informalizing the Economy".

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Figure 3. Industriall affiliates in Pakistan, PCEM, demonstrates against Shell in Karachi, October, 7 2017.
Pakistan Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine, and General Workers Union – PCEM. Used by permission. Photo available at http://www.industriall-union.org/unions-take-action-against-precarious-work-at-shell.

claimed, providing empirical evidence for their arguments, that Africa, Latin America, and Asia have experienced worsening labour conditions since the second half of 1970s, which had interrupted previous attempts of creating a more formalized and regulated labour market. A new wave of informalization/precarization, according to these studies, started also in the Global South in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[139]

The levels and forms of precariousness affecting South, South-East, and East Asian labour markets have been addressed by scholars such as Arne Kallenberg and Kevin Hewison, who link the expansion of precarious work in those contexts to the development of global production chains under "neoliberal globalization". Precarious workers are labelled differently from country to country, experiencing a diverse degree of instability in East Asian countries (Taiwan, South Korea, China, and Japan) or in southern and southeastern Asian ones (Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and India) .[140]

Jan Breman and Rina Agarwala, in analysing the Indian context, have shown the relevance of addressing the relationship between informal labour

139. Barchiesi, "Informality and Casualization as Challenges"; CIAT-OIT and Ministerio de Trabajo Y Seguridad Social, *El empleo precario en Argentina.*
140. On precarious work in Asia: Kalleberg and Hewison, "Precarious Work and the Challenge for Asia"; Hewison and Kalleberg, "Precarious Work and Flexibilization in South and Southeast Asia".

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and precarious work, due to the prevailing informality of Indian labour relations in the twentieth century and its increase in the formal economy of the new millennium. The expansion of outsourcing, subcontracting, self-employment, and export-led factories has been fuelled by the neoliberal reforms of the early 1990s, according to Agarwala's study on the textile and garment sectors, resulting in the spread of informal and more precarious labour arrangements.[141] More recent empirical analysis has provided additional evidence of the features of such a spread and its consequences.[142]

In addition to the Indian context,[143] an increasing number of studies in English, Spanish, and Portuguese have been investigating precarious work and informal work in the urban economies of twenty-first-century Central and Latin American metropolises. Job and life precariousness appears as intertwined in the life of the urban poor, such as street vendors, waste pickers, sex workers, and other informal workers of Argentina, Brazil, and other countries.[144] The relationship between urban economies, informality, and precarity has been investigated with regard to different cities in the Global South,[145] including urban Africa at large.[146] In addition, urban precarious (and informal) workers – ranging from street vendors to self-employed workers in the handmaking or creative sectors – have been studied in such cities in the Global North as New York, Detroit, and Milan, revealing to what extent the condition of precariousness could be shared by professionals and the homeless in twenty-first-century capitalist cities.[147]

Franco Barchiesi, Carl-Ulrik Schierup, and Bridget Kenny have shown the nexus of precarity and informalization in Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa, pointing out how the race system influenced the level of stability and precarity in both periods, but also the extent of the more recent wave of informalization/precarization.[148] The latter has also been explored in Southern African countries by Oupa Bodibe, who addresses the phenomenon with regard to Lesotho, Mozambique, South

141. Breman, *Footloose Labour*; Breman, *At Work in the Informal Economy of India*; Agarwala, *Informal Labor*; Agarwala and Chun, "Global Labour Politics in Informal and Precarious Jobs".
142. Sapkal and Shyam Sundar, "Determinants Of Precarious Employment In India".
143. Shankar and Sahni, "The Inheritance of Precarious Labor".
144. On precarious work in Latin America: Millar, "The Precarious Present"; Burchielli, Delaney, and Goren, "Garment Homework in Argentina".
145. Das and Randeria, "Politics of the Urban Poor".
146. Tranberg Hansen and Vaa, *Reconsidering Informality*; Webster, Britwum, Bhowmik, *Crossing the Divide*;
147. Gerrard, *Precarious Enterprise*; Dawkins, "Do-It-Yourself"; De Peuter, "Confronting Precarity in the Warhol Economy"; Styhre, *Precarious Professional Work*; for a more general overview of informal work in developed countries: Boels, *The Informal Economy.*
148. Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation*; Schierup, *Under the Rainbow*; Kenny, *The Regime of Contract in South African Retailing*

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Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, stressing the role of multinational companies.[149]

Other studies have recently noted the relevance of connecting precarious work and the free/unfree labour debate.[150] Christian De Vito's research on colonial and post-colonial Latin and Central America suggests addressing the relationship between precarity and workers' control to understand how the different degrees of precarity could be connected to workers' autonomy.[151] Some studies point out the lack of freedom experienced by some precarious workers, namely migrants and undocumented workers, and the long-existing coexistence of forced labour, exploitation, and precarity up to the contemporary forms of modern slavery.[152] The intersection of precarity, free/unfree labour, and migration has been analysed as a relevant subject of investigation as well.[153] Increasingly, studies are looking at the conditions of migrant workers as precarious, underlining the gender implications as well as the racial ones. Among others, Carl-Ulrik Schierup offers new findings to understand the relationship between precarious work and migration at the global level and in the long run.[154]

The historiography on the role of intermediaries in the labour market, moreover, shows how the diverse recruitment methods could contribute to the expansion of precarity and unfree labour conditions as well.[155] The resurgence of the figure of the gangmaster in the agricultural sector, explicitly and repeatedly banned in the British as well as the Italian contexts, has increased the degree of precariousness of rural workers in the twenty-first century, and they have often been obliged to accept exploitative and unfree labour conditions to hold onto their jobs.[156] In addition to gangmasters, labour brokers and middlemen in general have played a significant role in increasing the nexus between precarious and unfree labour in the Global South as well as in the Global North.[157]

149. Bodibe, *The Extent and Effects of Casualisation in Southern Africa.*

150. Benjamin, "The Persistence of Unfree Labour"; Lima, *Freedom, Precariousness, and the Law*; Chalhoub, "The Precariousness of Freedom in a Slave Society"; Armstead *et al*., "And I Poor Slave Yet".

151. De Vito, "Labour Flexibility and Labour Precariousness"; for an overview of the debate on precarity and workers' control, see: Ross, "The New Geography of Work"; Trott, "From the Precariat to the Multitude".

152. Lewis *et al*., *Precarious Lives*; Andrees and Belser, *Forced Labor*; Bales, *Disposable People*; Brass, *Labour Regime Change in the Twenty-First Century.*

153. Castles, "Precarious Work, and Rights".

154. Schierup and Jørgensen, "Politics of Precarity".

155. Bosma, Van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Sarkar, *Mediating Labour*; Wadauer, Buchner, and Mejstrik, *The History of Labour Intermediation.*

156. On gangmasters in the agricultural sector: Patrick, "Agricultural Gangs in Victorian England"; Leogrande, "Caporalato e nuove schiavitù"; Brass, "Medieval Working Practices?"

157. On labour brokering see, for instance: Theron, "Intermediary or Employer?"

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CONCLUSION: HISTORICIZING PRECARIOUS WORK IN GLOBAL CAPITALISM

The debate on precarious work in the past forty years has become increasingly interdisciplinary and international, involving all the social sciences and humanities worldwide, including history. This article has shown that precarious work and job precariousness frequently started to be addressed in the nineteenth century and never disappeared altogether from social enquiries and the social sciences literature, including the studies conducted during the Fordist era. A strictly Euro-centric perspective was dominant in the debate until the 1990s, leading to the universalization of the Western capitalist model and the adoption of its standard employment relationship as the norm compared to which precarious work was considered an exception (and a novelty). In the new millennium, feminist scholarship and Global South perspectives have contributed to gendering and globalizing the precarious work debate, criticizing Euro-centric approaches. The relevance of allowing for different models of capitalism in the precarious work debate has become apparent, along with the importance of connecting precarious work and informal work to understand precariousness in particular in non-Western countries, but also increasingly in the Global North.

Several strands of research can contribute to a better understanding of the historical role of precarious work in the history of industrial and post-industrial global capitalism. Following the feminist and post-colonial critique, studies deconstructing the meaning of work, usually understood only as wage labour, could be useful to pinpoint the crucial role of other forms of work in the home-based and subsistence economy. Research adopting the categories of gender and intersectionality, as well as Global South perspectives, have played a crucial role in criticizing the mainstream periodization and in rethinking the role of precarity/stability in the history of industrial and post-industrial capitalism beyond Western countries. Studies of the effect of the transition from state socialism to a market economy are particularly useful to understand how the socialist model of stability has been disrupted after the demise of state socialism and how, in the former Communist countries, similar forms of precariousness have developed. Research addressing informalization and precarization as intertwined phenomena could suggest further historical routes, which might provide additional evidence of the key role of precarious workers in the history of global capitalism. Moreover, migration studies are particularly relevant to understand the precarity/freedom/citizenship nexus.

From a conceptual point of view, historicizing precarious work in the history of global capitalism implies acknowledging job stability as an exception and job precariousness as its norm. The concept of "waves of precarization" is relevant for comparing forms of precarity at different times and in various places, but also for mapping the existence of precarious

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workers and their features in different economic sectors over time. The diverse waves of precarization have probably been generated by international macro-economic events (e.g. the capitalist crisis), influenced by global political dynamics (e.g. the bipolar Cold War order and its end), shaped by economic theory (e.g. Keynesianism vs. neoliberalism) and production models (e.g. Fordism vs. post-Fordism), and opposed by labour actions, social movements, and progressive labour laws.[158] Rereading the history of industrial and post-industrial capitalism through the opposite concepts of stability/precarity enables us to reconstruct not only the development of the working class and its path towards growing levels of stability in Western countries, but also to retrace the changes in the labour conditions of the so-called peripheral/marginal subjects, among them women, migrants, children, and Global South workers as a whole. Comparing the enduring figures of precarious workers in their manifold manifestations (e.g. industrial homeworkers, street vendors, farmhands, domestic and sex workers) could reveal how subsequent waves of precarization have improved or worsened the labour and living conditions of marginalized subjects across the globe and in different periods.

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158. Following this approach: Varela, "State Policies towards Precarious Work"; Rodgers, *Labour Law, Vulnerability and the Regulation of Precarious Work*.

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TRANSLATED ABSTRACTS
FRENCH – GERMAN – SPANISH

Eloisa Betti. *En historicisant le travail précaire: quarante ans de recherche dans les sciences sociales et humaines.*

Cette enquête tente de contribuer à la compréhension des concepts de travail précaire et de précarisation dans l'histoire du capitalisme industriel, en examinant le débat dans les sciences sociales et humaines durant les quarante dernières années. Sur la base d'une approche globale de genre, l'article entend proposer une critique de la perspective globale nordique, qui conçoit en grande partie le travail précaire comme un nouveau phénomène dépourvu d'une assez longue tradition historique. La première partie examine les multiples origines, définitions et conceptualisations du "travail précaire" élaborées à propos du capitalisme industriel et post-industriel, en tenant compte de sources contemporaines sélectionnées et d'études conduites par des historiens et spécialistes des sciences sociales. Dans la seconde partie, l'influence de diverses approches, telles que les approches féministes et post-coloniales, mondialisant et générisant le débat sur le travail précaire, sont examinées dans leur contexte historique, tout en étudiant également le lien crucial du travail précaire et du travail informel. En conclusion, les limitations de la littérature disponible sont examinées et assorties de suggestions d'orientations ultérieures pour historiciser le travail précaire dans une perspective globale.

Traduction: *Christine Plard*

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Eloisa Betti. *Historisierung der prekären Arbeit: Vierzig Jahre sozial- und geisteswissenschaftliche Forschung.*

Dieser Überblicksartikel soll einen Beitrag zum Verständnis der Begriffe der prekären Arbeit sowie der Prekarisierung innerhalb der Geschichte des Industriekapitalismus leisten, indem er sich mit der innerhalb der Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften während der letzten vierzig Jahre geführten Debatte auseinandersetzt. Ausgehend von einem gendersensiblen, globalen Ansatz zielt der Artikel auf die Formulierung einer Kritik jener auf den globalen Norden zentrierten Perspektive, die prekäre Arbeit weitgehend als neues Phänomen ohne weiter zurückreichende historische Tradition auffasst. Im ersten Teil werden die vielfachen Ursprünge, Definitionen und Konzeptualisierungen der »prekären Arbeit« diskutiert, und das in Hinblick sowohl auf den Industrie- als auch auf den postindustriellen Kapitalismus. Dabei werden ausgewählte zeitgenössische Quellen ebenso berücksichtigt wie von Historikern und Sozialwissenschaftlern vorgelegte Studien. Im zweiten Teil wird der Einfluss verschiedener Ansätze, etwa des feministischen und des postkolonialen, untersucht. Es wird, unter Berücksichtigung des jeweiligen historischen Kontexts, die Frage erörtert, wie solche Ansätze die Debatte um prekäre Arbeit für Genderthemen geöffnet und globalisiert haben. Dabei wird auch dem Zusammenhang von prekärer und informeller Arbeit nachgegangen, der von ausschlaggebender Bedeutung ist. Im Schlussteil werden die Defizite der vorliegenden Literatur diskutiert; außerdem werden Vorschläge unterbreitet, wie die prekäre Arbeit noch weitgehender und aus globaler Perspektive zu historisieren wäre.

Übersetzung: *Max Henninger*

Eloisa Betti. *Historizando el trabajo precario: Cuarenta años de investigación en las ciencias sociales y las humanidades.*

Este artículo tiene por objetivo el contribuir a la comprensión de los conceptos de trabajo precario y precarización a lo largo de la historia del capitalismo industrial abordando el debate habido en las ciencias sociales y las humanidades a lo largo de los últimos cuarenta años. Basado en una aproximación global de género el texto trata de ofrecer una crítica de la perspectiva global nor-céntrica que concibe fundamentalmente el trabajo precario como un fenómeno nuevo que carece una tradición histórica más longeva. En la primera parte se plantean los múltiples orígenes, definiciones y conceptualizaciones del "trabajo precario" que se han elaborado en función tanto del capitalismo industrial como del post-industrial, tomando en cuenta una selección de fuentes contemporáneas y de estudios desarrollados por historiadores/as y científicos/as sociales. En la segunda parte analizamos la influencia de las diferentes perspectivas en los debates suscitados, tales como el feminismo y los estudios post-coloniales a la hora de globalizar e introducir una perspectiva de género en referencia a la cuestión del trabajo precario. Todo ello prestando atención a los contextos históricos en los que se plantean y explorando también los nexos de interrelación existentes entre el trabajo precario y el trabajo informal. A modo de conclusión, se plantean las limitaciones de la literatura disponible y se elaboran sugerencias para trazar futuras direcciones a la hora de historizar el trabajo precario desde una perspectiva global.

Traducción: *Vicent Sanz Rozalén*

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