

Edited by: Emiliana Armano, Arianna Bove and Annalisa Murgia
**Mapping Precariousness, Labour Insecurity and Uncertain Livelihoods:
Subjectivity and Resistance**
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Reviewed by Constantine Manolchev, *University of Exeter Business School*

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Back in the late 1980s, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu famously observed that ‘precarity was everywhere’. Since then, the literature on precarious work has expanded and now encompasses a number of seminal studies, the subject being frequently debated in the pages of WES. Recent studies offer insights into the range of insecurities faced by precarious workers, the structural context of labour markets, the regulation of precarious employment, identity work in precarious contexts and even the construction of precariousness as an ontological state of being. The variety of perspectives notwithstanding, precarity and precariousness are also ideologically underpinned in the Marxian tradition, with the resultant assumptions of exploitation, subordination, and resistance contributing to the level of academic interest.

It is against such expansive theoretical terrain that Armano, Bove and Murgia’s edited volume sets-out to trace the contours and expand on current conceptualisations. Suitably subtitled *Subjectivities and resistance: an Introduction*, the volume considers the structural context of precarious work, yet goes beyond and engages with the grainy, casual and colloquial body of precarious narratives that emerge from the grass-roots and are in danger of being overlooked. The book is divided into three parts, investigating the precarious experience on three different levels and from three different stand-points.

Accordingly, Part 1 explores the socio-economic terrain of precarious work in a number of different industries and across African, Chinese, French, Italian, UK and Australian labour markets. The overarching narrative follows the familiar direction of socio-economic insecurity and focuses on the sine qua non of precarious work: a number of case studies explore the role of race and racial governance, the legitimisation of self-exploitation and ‘flexploitation’ in public discourses, as well as the growth of freelance and temporary work. The chapters follow an extended case-study format, which allows Part 1 to consider a wide range of precarity characteristics. At the same time, it is unable to fully explore the structure-subjectivity nexus, despite hints (such as Bureau and Corsani’s) that new ‘kinds’ of subjectivities are emerging in the neoliberal timeline. A Foucauldian lens is frequently apparent yet used more as a retrospectively-fitted point of reference, and its explanatory power is not fully utilised – or demonstrated. Of particular interest in this section are Morgan and Wood’s discussion of how sessional academic staff are becoming the ‘galley slaves of higher education’ (pp. 82-97), and Joanne Richardson’s sonic tapestry of precariousness, weaved solely through interview quotes. Part 1 ends with a brief but original overview of emergent precarious resistance through a spot-light on *Rosu Gene*, Japan’s ‘lost generation’, who struggle for ‘survival’ and seek empowerment against the recesses of insecure work (pp. 122-134).

Part 2 continues with the theme of ‘precarious resistance’ by focusing on the struggle against employment and everyday precarity (p. 139). A number of theoretical perspectives are introduced, however, they are presented in rapid succession across the section and somewhat insufficiently operationalised, perhaps due to considerations of space. This, at times, disrupts the coherence of the overarching section narrative, which oscillates between ‘biofinancial’ deregulation (pp. 139-148), activism, migrant identity management, and ‘collective subjectivity’ as responses of resistance against the ‘precarisation of life’ (pp. 157-169). Here Alex Foti, a historian of precarious struggles across Europe, provides an engaging account of the trajectory of precarious resistance through the rise and fall of Euro May Day movements.

Having mapped several precarity contexts and explored dynamic resistance, Part 3 seeks to develop the conceptualisation of precarity. The section distinguishes between precarity as a structural condition and precariousness as subjective construction, to which Foucault’s ‘biopolitical’ dimension is added (pp. 199-209). Part 3 utilises cross-sectional conceptualisations in order to better represent the nuanced nature of the phenomenon. The uneasy balance between precarity and entrepreneurial agency is illustrated through the rise of ‘free labour’ (internships, placements, prison work), ‘shared-economy services’ (Airbnb, Uber, Lyft), and ‘digital platforms’ (Amazon’s Mechanical Turk and TaskRabbit) (pp. 189-198). Angela Mitropoulos’ final, summary chapter is particularly noteworthy as it connects the precarity of labour market structures with the precariousness of existence in a mosaic of markets, state policy, labour valorisation and regulative order. It restates the continued scope for individual resistance in the face of precarious odds, reminding that the volume is equally concerned with past trends, and the direction of future travel.

Mitropoulos’ chapter adds the finishing touches to a dynamic, disruptive and daring exploration of a concept, which is gradually taking on existential dimensions. In part ethnographic and frequently Foucauldian, this is a study which neither attempts to consolidate existing knowledge on the subject, nor present a formalised and definitive ‘state of the literature’ report. Rather, as if directing a knowing wink at the reader, the volume concludes by rejecting its own title. Precariousness has become a ubiquitous part of being, and ‘being can never be mapped completely’ (pp. 223).