

Socioeconomic Processes of Precarisation in Russia¹

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The scientific research of the precarisation in Russia, is still insufficient, requires further investigation of the identity of the precariat and explanation of precarisation problems in Russian society. While there are significant economic works focusing on different aspects of precarisation, it seems important to analyse the precariat from sociological points of view.

The phenomenon of “precarisation”, or labour instability, has grown in importance at the global labour market. There are still open questions of social consequences of labour insecurity and its new influences on life-styles in Russia.

Theoretical model - criteria for identity of Precariat in Russia

The issue of criteria for identity of Precariat in Russia is still open since the uncertainty of employee’s position is crystallized in different aspects of labour relationships. [Golenkova, Goliusova, 2013: 13]. In the paper there is attempt to integrate standpoints of different scientists in theoretical model that affords to fulfill for quantitative evaluation of Precariat in Russia and for exploring different types of Precariat existing in Russian society. It should be taken into account the revealed classification of criteria has been developed advisedly for exploring of Russian society but it can be modified for any other country and become an appropriate base for precarisation’s studying there.

As most researchers [Standing 2011; Jonsson and Nyberg 2010; Tucker 2002; Frase 2013; McKay et al. 2012] state working positions of Precariat are characterized by “Labour instability” or “Absence of Employment security”.

In addition criterion of “Occupation instability” is put forward for most working activity of precarious employees distinguished by lack of professional identity. Work of these people often doesn’t correspond to the qualification [McKay et al. 2012, Tucker 2002] or doesn’t require special skills.

¹ The study was implemented in the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2016

Generally, Precariat is economically vulnerable employees [Standing 2011, Tucker 2002, McKay et al. 2012, Jonsson, I. and Nyberg 2010; Wilson 2013] that's why wage or income instability inherent to these individuals. Our approach corresponds to the other methods approved relevance (OECD/EUROSTAT) in well-being measuring that define economic positions of individuals (or households) through income's variation from its low level to medium one. Thus the modified concept of relative deprivation is employed in our model when accustomed life-style and consequences of lack of economic resources are analyzed.

Finally, Precarisation as process affecting on different aspects of human life and forming distinct "culture" and psychology [Neilson 2015], can be identified just on long distance of life. By the analogy with period of 5-7 years revealed [Tichonova 2003] under studying of marginalization's period the criterion of long duration of being in the conditions of instability - from 5 and more years – is taken into account.

Thus the current results of study offer original attributes afforded to define precariat. The theoretical model includes the next criteria²:

1. Employment or/and occupation instability;
2. Income instability when average monthly income varies from minimal level (inherent to poverty culture) to median level in definite region;
3. Long duration of being in the conditions of instability: from 5 and more years.

Quantitative evaluations of Precariat in Russia

Despite there are still scarce scientific researches in studying of Precariat in Russia some significant advances in quantitative evaluations of new social stratum – Precariat – should be highlighted.

According to the analysis of data RLMS-HSE (The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of HSE) in 2011 there were detached 3 groups with different level of employment instability in Russia. Herewith the first group with the highest level of employment instability consists of 6% hired employees from the sample, the second group with moderate instability on the labour market includes more than 50-60% hired employees [Bobkov et al 2014: 25]. The third group grasps the peripheral forms of employment instability and amounts up 85% hired employees.

Notably there was load announce of Russian government vice-premier – O.Golodec - about 38 million of labour force are unknown what are doing and how being employed. This figure of 38 million was got by accounting the number of Russians who don't pay taxes [Golodec 2013].

² It's necessary to note that the attributes also were checked and approved through the field stage of qualitative empirical research

The other evaluation of Precariat in Russia bases on the data of representative polls conducted from 1994 to 2013 by professor Shkaratan [Shkaratan et al. 2015]. The results show that 27% employees may be regarded as Precariat. The clustered analysis was applied for identification of strata with precariat's features, diminishing of this features space had been preceded. The most appropriate space was revealed with 3 factors, explaining 55,2% dispersion: "Factor of economic well-being" (23,7%), "Risk of losing a job" (16,7%), "Scarcity of resources" (14,8%). In the research it was proven that employment instability grasps 2 separated zones in social structure – zone of "obvious" instability (low-level income groups, embedded in poverty culture) and zone of "anomalous" instability (economically independent groups).

Peculiarities of socioeconomic Precarisation processes' spread in Russia

The Privatization of 1990s has defined waiving from employment guarantees and transition to the new market rules; following to neoliberal principals had been conditioned Precarisation processes in Russia as well as in the whole world. The low level of official unemployment in the beginning of 1990s didn't reflect deepness of transformational problems in the labour market where standard employment had already ceased to be norm. Thereat G.Standing has compared current positions of Precariat in the world with the horrors of 1990s Russia [Standing 2013]. The escalation of diversity of conditions and employment forms has become one of key features of Russian labour market [Gimpelson, Kapelyushnikov 2006: 9]. From the other point of view, the spread of non-standard and informal employment, relationship conditioned by rigid labour legislation and weak enforcement, has served as instrument of adaptation during the period of transition from plan economy to market one [Popova 2008: 138]. Afterwards the adopted anti-crisis measures of jobs' saving with simultaneous decreasing of salaries and transfer of employees to non-standard jobs have become the most exploited tool contributed to put down social disagreements in Russia.

Moreover the new type of freelance [Podcerob 2015] is expanding in Russian metropolises: new internet-platforms (Bringo247.ru , Youdo.ru) offers casual work and actively dress to possibilities of supernumerary labour. Even high-level professionals are engaged into low-qualified or temporary works, they have to agree with it in the cases when they lose job or salary piece. The other categories of employees have to move to bigger cities for searching any job there. This phenomenon is named as "otchodnichestvo" and it has achieved mass scales - there are more than 15-20 million people working and living out of family's location in Russia, they form special life-style of provincial population [Plusnin et al. 2015]. All these atypical forms of employment promote spread of Precarisation in Russian society.

It's worth to pay attention to the heterogeneity of working instability in the modern Russian society. Our analysis is based on in-depth interviews afforded to detect which features may distinguish them in the society. 52 interviews (September – December 2015) were collected with employees, who can be identified as finding themselves in precarious positions. The interviews were carried out in different locales, including Russian megapolises (Moscow and Saint Petersburg), different regional industrial capitals (Kirov, Vologda, Samara) and a small regional town (Kimry in Tver region). Such choice of locales was conducted in order to account for the stark differences in socioeconomic situation that exist in Russia between regions and settlements.

The typology of employees in precarious employment is built on the base of key exploited dimensions:

– *employment status and labor market strategies*: work in low prestigious positions, self-employment (free-lance and individual entrepreneurship), part-time and socially insecure unemployment (unofficial employment), and different variants of interrupted or delayed occupational careers;

– *sources of status instability*: precariousness caused by external factors, which individuals cannot influence by themselves, and precariousness caused by internal factors such as specific preferences.

The typology is summarized in Table 1, which also provides a brief description of each of the dimensions and the resulting social groups.

Table 1. The typology of employees in precarious employment according to the sources of status instability and labor market strategies

Sources of status instability		External (EX)	Internal (IN)	
		I. Structural precariousness	II. Existential crisis, false beliefs	III. Idealized careers, specific preferences
Type of employment and labor market strategies				
Standard (S)	I. Employment in enterprises and organization in low prestigious positions	Semi-professionals, easily substitutable workforce, workforce characterized by low levels of spatial and occupational mobility, workers in loss-making	Employees with immature professional culture and motivation lacking ability to capitalize on their labor and skills; low paid passive frontline employees	
	II. Self-employment, free-lance, entrepreneurship	Self-employed and individual entrepreneurs, whose work and business do not allow a stable and relatively high income	Unfulfilled professionals without clear aspirations in life and careers; employees facing various intrapersonal problems which impede professional growth and success in career building	Professionals at the start of their careers or unfulfilled professionals, who nevertheless value freedom and independence above the material well-being and stability of incomes, and regard
Non-standard (NS)	III. Part-time and socially insecure employment	Employees deprived of social security rights or employees locked in the reputational trap		

		(e.g. employees featuring odd or otherwise unacknowledged career records that arouse mistrust on behalf of potential employers)		regulated office work as a waste of life
	IV. Interrupted or delayed careers	Employees who enter labor market after continuous interruption (e.g. ex-housewives, women after childcare leaves)	Professionals in the course of reappraising their values and coping with their recent career failure, downshiffters	Professionals with an excess load of additional duties, who regard their current jobs as a temporary compromise before future grand careers

The revealed heterogeneity admits to state that the instability on the labor market and resulting socioeconomic instability stem from external (e.g. environment) and internal sources (e.g. norms, values and socio-psychological differences), as well as labor market strategies pursued within standard and non-standard forms of employment. Withal the other noteworthy feature of precarious employment is the ambiguousness of boundaries between demonstrated groups, so that instability of social status in modern societies affects different segments of the classical social structure: from manual workers in remote towns to urban professionals.

The analysis has shown that the precariat cannot be identified as yet another stratum in the classical stratification hierarchy. Rather it represents a ‘structure within the structure’, it actually conceals a diversity of personalities and motivations, and that precariousness is not only associated with the lack of professionalism and reluctance to work, but among others: personal dynamism, ambitiousness and idealism. That’s why the next step in exploring of Socioeconomic processes of Precarisation in Russia is to focus on definite group of employees in precarious employment and apply additional qualitative analysis for understanding of its detailed portrait and its perception and interpretation of precarious position.

Qualitative analysis. Methodology

It was decided to concentrate on 2 close groups – Idealized careers and specific preferences professionals (group NS_{II,III}IN_{III} and NS_{IV}IN_{III}) and to study them deeply. CQR-method (Consensual Qualitative Research) was applied to achieve this goal. The choice of CQR is conditioned by its opportunities to describe phenomena and in our case – to look at the processes of Precarisation from respondents’ perspectives. Adherents of the method more rely on explicit level of meaning of respondents’ thoughts rather than employ the implicit interpretation of their statements. So that just focus on description of respondents’ behavior and responses to the own precarious positions was carried out. It’s worth to note that CQR may serve appropriate tool for investigating of career development queries because of its claim to uncover complex

issues [Hill et al. 1997]. As adherents of the method respondents' interviews are considered as a kind of constructed reality, other words – “socially constructed versions of ‘the truth’...”[Hill et al. 2005].

The researchers-team to arrive to consensus judgments consists of 2 people³ and 1 auditor at the current moment.

As method requires a small number of cases was studied intensively, namely – 8 in-depth interviews were analyzed⁴. All chosen respondents are employees with instable status on the Russian labour market. The participants can be united in one group according to the next common characteristics:

- All participants lack constant employment position;
- All of them possess high level of qualification and university education;
- Their flows of incomes are instable and volatile, but they can't be reckoned in poor categories;
- Participants are professionals from 25 till 45 years (so they already have enough experience in working – more than 5 years – and ready to build career, don't think about leaving labour market);
- All of them live in big Russian cities (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Samara).

Thus selected category represent qualified part of Precariat who have higher perspectives on labour market but on account of some factors and reasons they characterized by precarious positions.

Table 2. Respondents Descriptions

Respondent	<i>age</i>	<i>city</i>	<i>profession</i>	<i>gender</i>	<i>Relationship status</i>
<i>Nº 1</i>	25	Moscow	Translator, personal assistant	female	single
<i>Nº 2</i>	27	Moscow	Psychiatrist, organizer of children holidays	female	married
<i>Nº 3</i>	27	Moscow	Art historian	male	in relationship
<i>Nº 4</i>	45	Moscow	Aquarium specialist	male	married
<i>Nº 5</i>	34	Moscow	Organizer of exhibitions (self-employed)	female	single
<i>Nº 6</i>	34	Moscow	Sculptor	male	single
<i>Nº 7</i>	30	Saint-Petersburg	Psychiatrist	female	in relationship
<i>Nº 8</i>	32	Samara	Master of ceremonies/weddings	male	single

Qualitative analysis. Results

³ At the current initial moment just 2 scientists participate in the research as team members, in future it's intended to attract one more researcher in the project

⁴ Analysis was conducted through special program ATLAS-TI

The results of qualitative analysis (domains and different types of categories) is summarized in Table 3. There are 7 domains and 36 categories: 2 general ones, 7 typical ones and 27 variant ones.

Table 3. Results of CQR analysis

domain	categories	number of cases	type of category
Work	work for oneself	4	v
	freedom in decision making	3	v
	adherence to profession	6	t
	Work as a hobby	6	t
	routine and over-regulated work	4	v
	volunteer activity	2	v
	fame	2	v
	search for stability	2	v
	unsatisfied level of task or sphere of work.	3	v
	work too exhausting	4	v
	blat	3	v
Tactics	networking	6	t
	accidental choice of profession	4	v
	search for niche	4	v
	orientation for future	3	v
	short-run orientation	4	v
	forced temporary job	3	v
	interesting job	7	g
Attitudes of others	positive attitude	3	v
	negative attitude	5	t
	external support	2	v
Material conditions of life	not enough money for travelling	2	v
	unsatisfied economic position	2	v
	middle income level	3	v
	instability of orders	6	t
	source off stress	2	v
Attitudes of Precariat	decrease consumption needs	3	v
	need for challenge	4	v
	responsibility for life	3	v
	peculiar life-style	5	t
	negative attitude to needless safety net	3	v
Factors of precarisation	absence of problems with employment	2	v
	availability of resources and absence of burdens	7	g
	structural factors	4	v
Schedule of work and life	work with own rhythm	5	t
	enough time on family and leisure	4	v

Work

The domain includes work attitudes (such as attitudes to work conditions and career perspectives), professional affiliation, work motivation, conception of success in professional sphere and satisfaction about current situation.

There are two typical categories: *adherence to profession* and work as a hobby.

Adherence to profession. Most of respondents have distinct professional orientation. They point out they are ready to accept an offer only in their professional sphere. They want to develop themselves in this area and tie their future with it.

“Then I understood who I want to be. I realized that i’m an ideal personal assistant, because somebody find beneath his dignity to make coffee for somebody, but neither me... (...) I made a conclusion, I would be namely a personal assistant. When they delegated me secretary task, i rejected it” (1)

In some cases these suggestions imply possible float within the boundaries of the chosen professional sphere.

“It was fundamental issue to work within art (...) or around this sphere. I have a dream about combination it with human science. (...) It is kind of extension of the sphere.” (3)

Respondent also may point out the adherence to several coterminous professional areas, united by common features that are significant for respondent. For example, one of participants was ready to work as a DJ, radio broadcaster or stand up comic because all these jobs suppose interaction with public (8).

Work as a hobby. Participants note they chose the profession due to intrinsic interest in spite of employment perspectives or expected wage. Sometimes the choice was conditioned by childhood or adolescence hobbies.

“My grandfather was an architect, and grandmother too. Some their books still remained and I took thick volume of art history written by Grabar. And I was charmed by the idea to work in art. Maybe I was interested in art because my mother was interested in art too. She wanted to study history of art”(3)

“I started to work with aquariums when I was 5 or 6 (...) But I gave up it on my second year in university. I let out the water from my aquariums. But I knew that sometime I would return to it. And when I was 25 I brought my hobby back to life. I became teacher in aquarium section for children” (4).

In other cases, a hobby became a profession. An activity that is done for enjoyment during leisure time may start to produce revenue when one achieves high level of skills in this sphere.

“I always like psychology, I always like to help people. And once I decided to start to make money, if anyway I listen to people and let them pay to me” (7)

“I spontaneously started to organize exhibitions, and my first exhibition brought me almost no profit. It was just a hobby; I was doing it for myself. I was surprised when after one and a half month of hard work I got 4-5 thousands of rubles” (5)

This professional choice seems to be irrational, but respondents say about their aspiration to work at concrete job which gives pleasure and interest by itself despite the financial context.

“Find a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life” (5)

Variant categories. Several participants tell about their negative working experience in office on full-time, they characterize office work as **routine and over-regulated**. There are a few positive features of precarious work noted by respondents: **work for oneself** (not for the man) and **freedom in decision making**. They consider that it would be hardly possible to work on standard job. Next category is **fame** as a criteria of professional success. Moreover some respondents assume that success implies **search for stability**. Not all participants are satisfied by their work, some of them are **unsatisfied by level of task or sphere of work**. A few respondents find their **work too exhausting**. Some respondents address **volunteer activity**.

Schedule of work and life

One of specific features of precarious life according to our respondents is flexibility and inconsistency of working time and, as a consequence, insecurity of the whole life. This topic was very significant for almost all participants, but it is complicated to decide whether schedule should be ascribed to work or life-style. So it was decided to develop a separate domain. The only typical category is preference to **work with own rhythm** and **refuse from work with hard schedule**. For some respondents it is hard to be in time at work, they assess working schedule as redundant and burdensome formality.

“It was strange and impossible to understand why working day should start at 9 a.m. I’m an owl, I don’t like to wake up early and I always was late at work. (...) I have never been staying on one full-time job more than one year” (5)

Free schedule is more comfort and natural for respondents:

“It coincides with my life rhythm. I have time to unhurriedly uprise, take a shower, eat and go to work to 2-3 p.m” (4)

There is one variant category. Several respondents say that current work allows them to spend **enough time on family and leisure**.

Factors of Precarisation

Factors of Precarisation are external conditions promoting extension of instable states; on the one hand, these factors constrain possibilities of standard employment, on the other hand, - demotivate to obtain such positions on the labour market.

There is one general category - **availability of resources** and **absence of burdens** are inherent to respondents and there is one typical category – the influence of **structural factors** on Precarisation processes in the domain.

The category of **burden** impose assumption about presence of children, disable relatives in family, etc.; the category of **resources** offers situation when individual may bank up help of parents or even live on account their maintenance. These circumstances afford to respondents to feel much more free in regarding of material well-being, to risk and follow own interests, goals not drawing away to worries about securing of minimal needs. Otherwise as respondents note they would have to address standard employment.

“Thanks God, I didn’t pay for the flat, I had place to live, I don’t have children, I don’t need to give money to my parents, I had enough for “bread and butter”, and I don’t need more” (5)

“If I didn’t have support from husband I would think in the other manner and work in the other way. I would stop putting on and start to work” (2)

“There are people with stable employment, but it’s conditioned by need – to rent a flat, grow up children....I’m Muscovite and I know many people from province who has to decide accommodation problems. Everything would be otherwise if I don’t have this base, my inheritance” (3)

Respondents emphasize among **structural factors** on the misbalance of demand and supply on Russian labor market for definite professions, the absence of demand exclude them from standart employment and force to apply for precarious positions. The participants state there is no use to rely on long-run landmarks: the market is instable, there is no certainty about which skills and knowledge will be paid in future. These insights according to respondents’ opinions are significant not just for their concrete case but also are true for others.

“Now I even don’t know where to sign on, I have skills but nobody needs it”(7)

“It’s impossible to build career as before, it’s impossible to foresee for some observable period whom I will work whom grow up. When I planned such specialties that I am occupying now didn’t exist” (5)

Attitudes of others

Attitudes of others to position of precariat - their work, life-style, material conditions and perspectives – characterize emotional comfort of social interaction. The content of this domain

based on Precariat's experience reflects the extent of close people's tolerance to instable life-style.

Attitudes of others demonstrate in which degree instable life-style is regarded as a norm or possible deviation. Respondents say that close people often judge people with precarious position: there is 1 typical category - the instable life style is **assessed negatively**; 1 variant category – attitudes of close people are distinguished by **positive** understanding, even by envy.

“New friends react somehow as soviet people, somebody think it's wild, strange, but I don't appeal anybody to behave the same as me. Everybody has own choice: some people like to sit in the office, others – not” (1)

“People still don't understand, don't understand how I will earn, how I will live” (6)

Respondents point out generation gap – misunderstanding of parents concerning career way of their children:

“Parents and other elder relatives say: “so, when do u find a job?” - Me: “Is it not a job?”. They think I am scrimshanking, and this is not job according their view” (2)

Other respondents report that their current instable position on the labour market is perceived by others either positively or as a norm, as an alternative acceptable life-style.

“as a variant of living – it's taking into account (.....). Among my friends - yes, it's one of alternatives for life, and no questions are raised about this” (3)

Material conditions of life

The domain “Material conditions of life” includes income level, it's stability, and ability of individual to keep accustomed level of life-style, having just such income amount.

Respondents express different thoughts about the material conditions, nevertheless almost all these category are variant, i.e. belong to 2-3 interviews.

For example, some respondents assess the **economic position as not satisfied**, others – count their **income level as middle** one, some participants satisfy by their material position but say that they **don't have enough money for travelling**. Respondents use 2 types of adaptation in the cases of low income level: they **decrease consumption needs**; others try to stabilize situation on account of **external support**. Hard material conditions appear to be a **source of stress** and insecurity for some respondents.

There is typical category is **instability of orders** (or lack of orders in some periods) in the domain which cause the low average monthly incomes, whereupon respondents don't say that the payment of their job is not sufficient, the key point – inconstancy of demand.

“The orders are coming variously, consultancy is instable in general, for example, it can be 5 times a month, and then during 3 month anything can be, holidays are—just in seasons, (.....). Everything is unpredictable” (2)

Attitudes

The attitudes of respondents reflect their life orientations and values, beliefs about right social order. This domain, inter alia, affords to judge about voluntariness or necessity of instable position.

There are most of variant categories:

- **need for challenge.** Crisis, difficult life periods are perceived by Precariat as not obstacle but possibilities, chance of changes;
- **responsibility for life.** They ascribe own success or failures to internal factors;
- **absence of problems with employment;**
- **negative attitude to needless safety net.**

One typical category – **peculiar life-style.** Instability and insecurity of Precariat’s occupation enlarge upon other life sides, forming peculiar life-style. They don’t aim and don’t take into account living in other way.

“ It’s difficult to imagine stable organization where I could stay for a long time. It’s hard to be in such static structure (.....) As such stability is not important because I follow such life-style and I don’t have children” (3)

This life-style significantly defines and characterizes communication circle.

(I.) “Among your friends are many people with instable employment?” –(R.) “A lot of, beginning list from musicians, well we are such creative specialists, from dancers and finishing by movie-makers, actors and so on” (6)

The thoughts of respondents sound as if the instable life-style is inherent to most people nowadays:

“I asked this question in Facebook to all my friends of my age, near 30-40 years old, -it turns out they had 10-20 different ways of earning that were not connected to each other. I guess nowadays it’s a norm” (5)

Career tactics

One of the central aspect majority of interview is a topic of labour mobility. Namely character of decisions about education, job changing (leaving the job and job placement), professional development differ our participants from their coevals which have standard employment. This decisions are frequently situational and there are lack of connection between them and common plans about the career. It is a reason to call current domain as **career tactics.** Word tactics was chosen in opposition to term strategy, which guide employees acting in

circumstances, when there is more reliable and predictable connection between, on one hand, skills, abilities, effort of an individual and, on other hand, results such as income and position.

There are a general category - searching for **interesting job** - and a typical category - **networking**.

Interesting job. Almost all of respondents note their interest in the work as one of crucial factors taken into account when searching for job or changing job. They are ready to neglect level of income if work is interesting. Striving for new impressions is enough reason for changing job.

“If I find a job that is really interesting for me, other characteristics will be not important. (...) I want to have a work, that I just like. In that case I start to work harder, better and creative, income and schedule are not so important” (3)

Networking is the practice of developing and maintaining a net of personal connections, which may be used for searching a clients, employment, solving professional issues, etc.

“I used to search job with the help of my friends. I texted a post in Facebook and my friend said me that they had a vacancy. It always happens like that. I always use personal connections” (5)

“It is obvious that a lot of my orders was found due to that many people know about my profession. A good relationship with the people helps me.” (10)

This tactic of job searching probably more actual for precarious employees than traditional approaches such as sites of vacancies.

“I absolutely certain that the best way to search a job is not a job-sites but using help of acquaintances. I'm collecting contacts” (2)

Variant categories. A few respondents note **blat** (nepotism, job placement through corruption, exchange of favors) as a way to find a job. The **accidental choice of profession** influenced by parents or friends, and, as a result, the necessity of the professional re-orientation. It is sometimes a problem to **search a certain professional niche** within the boundaries of the chosen professional sphere, so that the niche would be interested and give an opportunity for professional success. Several respondents ought to work on low-income position in hope that it gives them an opportunity to career success in future (**orientation for future**), whereas some others live by one day (**short-run orientation**). Sometimes hard financial situation forces respondents to employment on an uninteresting and non-perspective job (**forced temporary job**).

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