

Navigating Precarity: Political Struggles and the Impact on the Shadow Economy

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ABSTRACT:

This research study comprehends the phenomenon of the precariat and emphasizes the core issues surrounding multicontextual discourse. It examines the distinction between the precariat and the underclass, substantiates the use of the concept of “precariat” to describe a social group experiencing anomie. The study delves into the main forms of political struggle undertaken by the precariat, with particular attention to the alternative forms of political group organization and the latest means of protest employed. Furthermore, the authors highlight the potential impact of the precariat on the shadow economy or informal sector within the country. The research explores how the dynamic and diverse work situations of the precariat, often outside traditional labor laws and regulations, could contribute to the growth of informal work arrangements and activities. This consideration adds an important dimension to understanding the precariat’s role in contemporary society. The research explores the role of cities in addressing precariat vulnerabilities through formalization incentives, social security access, localized policies to uplift marginalized groups. Successful municipal programs can prevent growth of the shadow economy while promoting sustainable and inclusive development. Moreover, the research study addresses the futurological prospects of the precariat issue in society at large. It also proposes directions for further investigation aimed at overcoming the negative trends associated with the precariatization of modern society, offering valuable insights into potential policy measures to address the concerns and vulnerabilities of the precariat in today’s rapidly changing world.

Keywords: precariat, shadow economy, sustainable development, labor law, anomie, underclass, protest, uncertainty, risk, inequality.

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1. Introduction

The concept of precariat, derived from the terms precarious and precarium, refers to a new class of hired workers experiencing social disorganization or anomie, characterized by instability in their professional status and lack of stable employment (Standing, 2011; Byrska, 2018). This emerging social class has lost the various securities fought for by the working class, treating work as a means for uncertain and temporary earnings rather than forming their identity around a specific profession. The phenomenon of the precariat has garnered significant attention in contemporary social research due to its far-reaching implications on the labor market, social structures, and political dynamics.

Although scholars recognize the significance of the precariat as a new class influenced by changes in the labor market, there remains a lack of consensus on its criteria, social composition, and even its distinct existence. Despite regional variations, common features underpin the recognition of the precariat as a recognizable social phenomenon.

Discussion of this topic highlights the nuanced perspectives on the precariat's role, with some researchers viewing it as potentially stabilizing the liberal-democratic political order instead of posing a threat to capitalism. They consider it an heir to the middle class, albeit vulnerable and unstable, and not a revolutionary class but a disadvantaged group competing among themselves (Fishman, 2018). On the other hand, Guy Standing, a prominent researcher in this field, explores the connections between the precariat and the universal basic income and emphasizes the critical emancipation of the precariat, urging decommodification of education and information (Standing, 2015). Other studies focus on specific contexts, such as Bunnell's investigation of international education teachers forming a global educational precariat (Bunnell, 2016). Moreover, the relationship between informal employment is often analyzed as a proxy for the precariat and various economic indicators. Ballafkih *et al.* delve into the needs of precarious workers, challenging prevailing labor market-oriented measures (Ballafkih *et al.*, 2017).

However, the precarity–informality nexus undermines the social sustainability of cities by denying basic rights and social protection to a growing proportion of the urban population. A systems perspective is imperative to create sufficient decent work opportunities and extend social security for inclusive development.

Additionally, scholars examine the precariat's position in the social class structure, often drawing comparisons with the underclass. However, the inclusion of certain social groups, such as the homeless, beggars, vagrants, and prostitutes, within the precariat category is questioned, as it may blur its distinct essence and content as a class in the making (Chambliss, 1964; Aceska, 2019; Christensen, 2018). Additionally, some researchers highlight the impact of globalization on the rise of the precariat, emphasizing its significance as a distinctive socio-economic group without sufficient social compensatory mechanisms (Krakorova & Ossterreicher, 2016). Understanding the precariat's nuanced relationship with the underclass is essential for delineating its unique features and socio-economic challenges.

In the urban context, the growth of the precariat and expansion of the informal sector exacerbates spatial inequality and polarization. It strains existing infrastructure and increases the environmental footprint of cities through activities like urban sprawl and proliferation of informal settlements.

The precariat phenomenon has garnered the attention of researchers worldwide, including A. Foti (2005), T. George (2016), A. Mattoni (2016), A. Negri (2008), B. Neilson and N. Rossiter (2008), among others. Their works have contributed to understanding the multifaceted nature of the precariat class and its role in contemporary society. As the concept evolves, Fletcher (2019) identifies a post-industrial 'precariat' facing social insecurity, with the state responding through habituation to insecure labor. However, this provided support often drives many precariat members into destitution and crime, undermining the notion of a 'civilizing offensive'.

When examining the position of the precariat in the social class structure, it becomes crucial to explore the relationship between the precariat and underclass concepts. Some studies have sought to broaden the interpretation of the precariat by incorporating all disadvantaged segments of society, including those referred to as the underclass (Coupland, 1991). However, this subjective perspective may overlook the influence of objective socio-economic and socio-political conditions on their behavior.

While Guy Standing's ideas present a counterforce to the neoliberal counterrevolution regarding wage labor and working-class organization (Gonzalez, 2020), the exploration of precariat's role in various societies and contexts remains an ongoing area of research, with scholars advocating for further investigation into collective forms of precariat protest (Shulika, 2019). Clarifying the nature and characteristics of the precariat is essential for understanding the dynamics of contemporary social class structures and informing policies aimed at addressing the needs and challenges faced by this emerging group. This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the precariat, shedding light on its diverse forms of political struggle and potential implications on the shadow economy, labor law, inequality, and social cohesion.

2. Methodology

This article employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a comprehensive review of academic literature, official reports, and expert analyses with primary data collected through a survey among university students in Kyiv, Ukraine. An in-depth review of peer-reviewed papers, books, and scholarly sources across relevant disciplines, including sociology, economics, political science, and labor studies, was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding the precariat and its implications. Secondary sources, such as news articles and interviews, were consulted to provide real-world perspectives and contextualize the topic. Particular attention was paid to studies examining the precariat in Ukraine, its subgroups, and estimated size during specific periods. Studies exploring the precariat through the lens of urban sustainability were reviewed, highlighting the need for more interdisciplinary research linking precarity, informality, inequality, and spatial dynamics.

To gain insights into the perceptions and attitudes toward the precariat among the younger generation, a survey was conducted among students from leading universities in Kyiv. The survey sample included 45 students from the STU (Students of Economics), 38 students from the KUBG (Students of Philosophy), and 42 students from the NAVS (Students of Psychology), aged 19-27 years. The survey aimed to identify differences in the perspectives of students from diverse academic backgrounds, including humanities and

exact sciences, regarding the precariat and its challenges. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and differences across the student groups. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the precariat phenomenon, combining theoretical foundations from academic literature with empirical data reflecting the perspectives of the younger generation. By integrating these diverse sources of information, the article presents a well-informed and balanced analysis of the challenges and potential of the precariat as a socio-political movement, while also considering its implications for sustainable urban development.

Table 1. Perceptions of the State's Protection of Precarious Workers' Rights Across Student Groups.

To what extent do you agree with the statement that the state insufficiently protects the rights of precarious workers?

Options	Response	Students of Economics (STU)	Students of Philosophy (KUBG)	Students of Psychology (NAVS)
agree	Strongly agree	45%	20%	21%
	Somewhat agree	32%	41%	25%
to answer	Neutral/Hard	15%	24%	38%
	Somewhat disagree	6%	10%	11%
disagree	Strongly disagree	2%	5%	5%

The Tab. 1 highlights the differences in perceptions regarding the state's protection of precarious workers' rights across three student groups from different academic backgrounds. A significant proportion of students from each group perceives the state's efforts as insufficient. Economics students predominantly agree with this view, aligning with their understanding of labor market dynamics. Philosophy students exhibit a more varied range of responses, with some agreeing, some neutral, and some disagreeing, reflecting their tendency to analyze issues from multiple angles. Psychology students also display diverse perspectives, with a substantial portion remaining neutral or uncertain, while others agree with the statement. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives and a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the rights and vulnerabilities of precarious workers. By acknowledging the diverse viewpoints across academic disciplines, policymakers and stakeholders can develop more inclusive and effective strategies to address the challenges faced by this segment of the workforce.

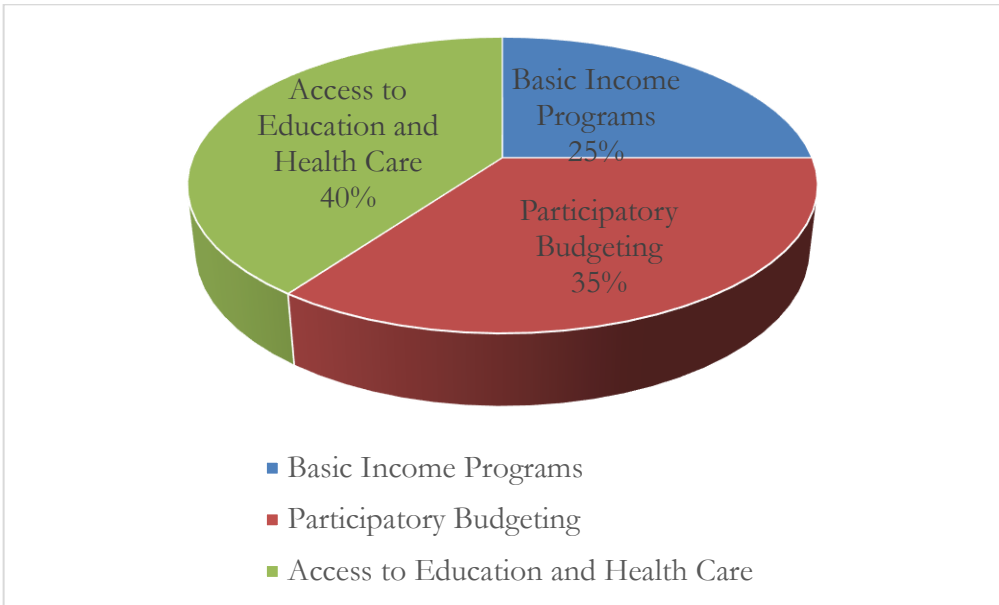


Figure 1. Effectiveness of local initiatives to support the precariat in cities.

The Fig. 1 illustrates the distribution of responses regarding effective local initiatives to support the precariat in cities. The majority believed that expanding access to education and healthcare would be most beneficial, as it can enhance the skills and well-being of precarious workers. The second most popular option was participatory budgeting, allowing the precariat to participate in decision-making and prioritize expenditures addressing their needs. Although basic income programs received relatively less support, they can still provide a safety net and address financial insecurities. These initiatives are not mutually exclusive, and a comprehensive approach combining multiple strategies may be necessary to effectively support the diverse needs of the precariat in urban areas.

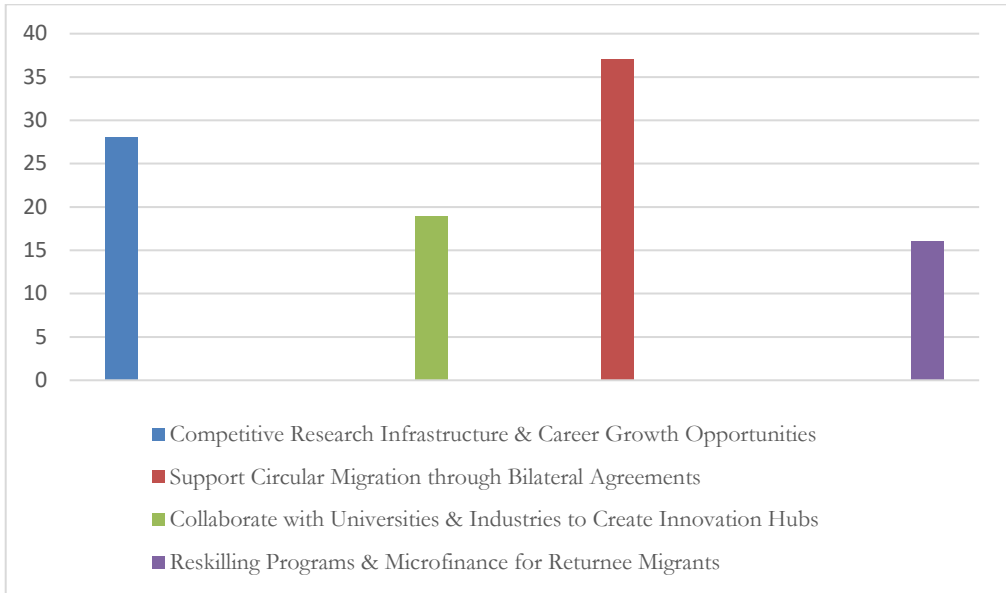


Figure 2. *The most effective measures to overcome the “brain drain” and retain highly qualified specialists in Ukraine.*

The Fig. 2 illustrates the distribution of responses regarding effective measures to overcome “brain drain” and retain highly skilled professionals in Ukraine. The most popular response was supporting circular migration through bilateral agreements with major destination countries, allowing migrants to gain skills while maintaining ties with home communities. The second most popular measure was providing competitive research infrastructure and career growth opportunities within Ukraine to create an attractive environment for professionals. Collaborating with universities and industries to create innovation hubs also received support, acknowledging the importance of fostering an ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship. Providing reskilling programs and microfinance opportunities for returnee migrants was another measure aimed at facilitating their reintegration. These measures are not mutually exclusive, and a comprehensive strategy combining various approaches may be necessary to effectively address the “brain drain” challenge. Policymakers should consider the perspectives represented in the data and tailor interventions accordingly.

3. Results

The discourse surrounding the position of the precariat within the socio-class structure has attracted significant attention, revealing diverse interpretations in scientific literature. The growth of the precariat poses sustainability challenges, especially in urban contexts. Precarious workers often lack access to affordable housing and transport in cities, undermining social equity goals. Notably, G. Standing (2011) presents a distinct classification of the modern class structure, outlining the elite as the apex of the pyramid, followed by the ‘salaried’ with stable employment and social welfare benefits, ‘professional

technicians' acting as independent workers, and the declining classical proletariat. Below these groups emerges the rapidly expanding precariat, comprising insecure individuals leading uncertain lives, engaged in precarious and fluctuating employment lacking prospects for career advancement. This portrayal emphasizes the significance of understanding the precariat's evolving role and its distinct characteristics within the contemporary social landscape.

However, the presented classification faces criticism for lacking a unified basis, encompassing multiple dimensions such as employment form, knowledge utilization, and social status, thereby overlooking the holistic concept of sustainable development. Moreover, it solely focuses on wealth and political influence to determine the elite, neglecting the middle class. The inclusion of strata often considered part of the underclass within the precariat category further adds to its discursiveness and vagueness highlighting the need for sustainable urban planning that considers social equity and inclusion. Consequently, the characterization of the precariat primarily based on negation has led to skepticism about constructing a "new class" founded on deprivation (Biriukov, 2015).

The precariat represents a newly emerging class, comprising both socially stratified individuals with professional knowledge and aspirations for rational societal interactions and a swiftly expanding layer of workers experiencing unstable social status and unpredictable employment conditions. This group faces fluctuations in the distribution of surplus products and arbitrary wages, coupled with limited access to social and legal protections, leading to dissatisfaction with their civil and personal lives. The need for sustainable urban development strategies becomes evident as the escalating global changes highlight precarization as a multifaceted process involving quantitative and qualitative shifts in employment that affect a substantial part of the population. Objective conditions and subjective factors, such as employer practices and existing legal laws, emphasizing obedience to those in power during economic and political management, play a crucial role in shaping precarization (Biriukov, 2015).

The precariat can be divided into three distinct groups, each contributing to its perceived danger. The first group comprises the 'old' proletariat, including migrants, minorities, and vulnerable individuals who lack the benefits enjoyed by previous generations. The second group consists of disenfranchised individuals facing vulnerability, while the third group comprises educated youth disillusioned by their expensive education yielding limited career prospects.

Scholars highlight the precariat's disenfranchisement in understanding the causes, content, and consequences of their activities as a distinctive aspect of their contextual existence. The precarization of labor relations is marked by job insecurity, uncertainty in receiving monetary remuneration, and the lack of guarantees due to evolving employer-employee relations. The state's insufficient monitoring of workers' rights further compounds the issue, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive labor laws and social policies for the precariat's well-being and security. To explore these perspectives further, a survey was conducted as shown in Tab.1, revealing differences in how student groups from various academic backgrounds perceive the state's protection of precarious workers' rights. Consequently, the precariat is left uncertain about their future and retirement, necessitating sustainable social security measures to address these concerns. The

precarious communities experience an unstable social situation, resulting in the loss of social position and status, causing serious concerns and threats to individuals.

Moreover, the pressure to retain jobs leads some employees to push themselves to the limit, striving to prove indispensability, dedication, and usefulness to employers, resulting in occupational diseases, health deterioration, and physical and mental exhaustion due to overload (Tolstov *et al.*, 2018).

The presence of the precariat gives rise to several contextual trends that have significant implications for society. Within this emerging class, many social groups experience a sense of blurred and deformed consciousness due to the instability and uncertainty of their civic positions. Consequently, their actions may range from anomalous behavior to engaging in destructive activities, including criminal and delinquent behavior.

One noteworthy consequence of the precariat's precarious existence is the growing prevalence of radical sentiments, including neo-fascist ideologies, particularly observed in various European countries. The constant uncertainty and lack of security experienced by the precariat contribute to the spiritual and moral degradation of individuals, leading to a loss of ideals, faith in justice, and trust in the proper order of the world that are vital for sustainable development.

Moreover, the uncertainty surrounding their present and future lives affects the decision-making process concerning important social issues, such as marriage and the intention to have children. The instability in their life positions often results in individuals postponing these decisions until they achieve a minimum level of guaranteed employment and stability.

The ambiguous circumstances of the precariat also foster an environment characterized by fear, lack of faith, frustration, and disengagement from official structures. Many individuals within this class perceive themselves as victims of uncontrollable circumstances, leading to an unfortunate increase in the number of suicides among them.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of precarity may obscure the true extent of unemployment, as individuals are compelled to accept part-time work, often receiving lower remuneration than expected. This situation leads to greater exploitation and self-exploitation, with inadequate compensation for their efforts, further perpetuating the precariousness of their situation.

In addition to these challenges, the phenomenon of precarization has implications for the shadow economy. Due to the instability of their employment, some individuals within the precariat may be driven to seek informal and off-the-books work, contributing to the growth of the shadow economy. This informal sector often lacks legal protections and social security measures, exacerbating the vulnerabilities faced by the precariat.

The precarious nature of their employment and the lack of stable income sources may push individuals in the precariat towards engaging in informal economic activities to make ends meet. In the absence of proper labor protection standards and social safety nets, they may find themselves more inclined to accept jobs in the informal sector to survive financially. This can include undeclared work, 'off-the-books' employment, and gig economy arrangements, which are often outside the purview of formal labor laws and regulations.

Moreover, the prevalence of informal work within the precariat can perpetuate a cycle of vulnerability and exploitation. Without legal protections, workers may be subject to

lower wages, longer working hours, and inadequate working conditions. The lack of social security measures also leaves them without access to essential benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and unemployment benefits, further deepening their socioeconomic insecurities.

Furthermore, the presence of a significant precariat population engaged in informal economic activities may contribute to the underreporting of economic activities and income in official statistics. Therefore, cities should strive for decent work for all residents by setting labor standards. This can distort the true picture of economic productivity and hinder accurate policy formulation, leading to challenges in addressing the needs of the precariat and designing targeted interventions to improve their living conditions.

Addressing the challenges posed by the shadow economy and its interplay with the precariat requires comprehensive policies that encompass both formal and informal sectors of the economy. Policymakers must focus on creating an enabling environment for decent work, ensuring fair wages, providing social protection, and promoting opportunities for skill development and career advancement. Urban authorities should specifically target infrastructure and training programs towards marginalized communities to directly uplift the precariat with formal employment. Combining these efforts with measures aimed at reducing informality and encouraging formalization can foster economic stability and social cohesion, benefiting both the precariat and society at large.

So we can claim that the presence of the precariat in contemporary society has far-reaching effects, influencing individuals' psychological well-being, social stability, and overall perceptions of their place in the world. Understanding these contextual trends, including the impact on the shadow economy, is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by the precariat and devising effective policies to alleviate their vulnerabilities and foster a more inclusive and secure society. The analysis of political protest among precarious political groups further highlights the significance of these movements in challenging socio-political exclusion, advocating for labor rights, and seeking innovative solutions to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the precariat. By engaging with the politics of precarity, society can actively address the underlying issues and work towards fostering a more inclusive and secure environment for vulnerable individuals and communities.

In light of these challenges, the issue of political protest among precarious political groups becomes crucial. Around 2000, the term 'precarity' was adopted by certain socio-political movements associated with anti-globalization measures, such as the marches of European communities against socio-political exclusion, unemployment, and social instability. City governments need to proactively engage with such civil society groups and labor unions to incorporate precariat voices into policy decisions. For instance, cities can pioneer localized policies like universal basic income schemes and participatory budgeting to directly uplift their precariat residents. Such programs can be scaled up to state or national levels once proven successful at municipal levels.

Furthermore, precarity disproportionately impacts migrant workers who lack local social capital and networks. Cities that rely heavily on migrant labor must actively foster inclusion by expanding access to services, education, healthcare and rights protection. Urban solidarity across class or ethnic lines is vital for equality, growth and harmony. Official reports on social security in the EU also referenced precarity.

In Paris, during the winter of 2000, the first European political alliance network dedicated to combating precarity, known as Stop Précarité, emerged. This network was closely linked to political groups of the French radical left (Fumagalli, 2015). In Italy, the first precarious group was established in 1997 in Milan, in response to the introduction of the Temporary Employment Agency under the Employment Law. The Chainworkers Crew, a socio-political movement in Milan, conducted specific activities against precarity, particularly in large shopping centers across different regions of Italy (Risager, 2015).

From this movement, the proposal to organize an alternative Labor Day in Europe in 2001, called the MayDay Parade, originated. The parade aimed to give a voice to the so-called “precarious generation” (Fumagalli, 2015). These events stood out for their use of political performance and ‘carnival’ methods of campaigning, employing allegorical and symbolic posters and colorful actions. Activists viewed this as a revival of the precariat May Day traditions, representing a departure from traditional trade union representation and social democratic promises that had allowed instability and social insecurity to escalate across Europe (Shulika, 2019).

As centers of economic activity and migration flows, cities have a crucial role to play in addressing precarity and empowering precariat voices. Urban governments should actively support grassroots political movements like EuroMayDay by providing public spaces and platforms for marginalized workers to voice their concerns.

By analyzing the main forms of political protest employed by precarious political groups, researchers highlight the significance of these movements in challenging socio-political exclusion, advocating for labor rights, and raising awareness about the concerns of the precariat. The adoption of creative and unconventional methods of protest by these groups reflects their desire to break away from established norms and effectively address the pressing issues faced by the precariat in contemporary society.

An essential characteristic of the issue of precarity is its potential to transcend the realms of hopelessness, isolation, and exclusion when it becomes the focal point of the political process. This transformation goes beyond the scope of traditional social policies, which have proven ineffective in their conventional forms due to the restructuring of collective security systems aimed at normalizing the security situation. As a result, the emergence of a politics of precarity is fostered, challenging existing norms and highlighting the role of precarity and precarization in the political sphere. This novel approach advocates for innovative ways of addressing precarity, urging a departure from merely reformulating traditional social safety nets, and exploring more comprehensive solutions to tackle the multifaceted challenges posed by the precariat (George, 2016).

By engaging with the politics of precarity, society can actively address the underlying issues and work towards fostering a more inclusive and secure environment for vulnerable individuals and communities. In turn, the city government can tap into this politics of precarity by actively engaging precariat movements and co-designing policy solutions that challenge outdated paradigms. The lived experiences of marginalized urban groups should inform new social compact ideas better suited to contemporary realities. This issue was further explored through a survey presented in Tab.2, which examined perspectives on various local initiatives aimed at supporting the precariat in urban areas.

The emergence of precariat political movements exhibits several distinct features. One notable characteristic is the drive to “organize the unorganized”, exemplified by the

EuroMayDay movement that originated in Milan on May 1, 2001 (Foti, 2005). This movement, organized by a network of diverse labor collectives, students, migrant groups, and other socio-political and cultural movements, advocates for universal workers' rights, open migration policies, and a universal basic income. The EuroMayDay parades, with their transnational orientation, have redefined traditional May Day traditions, emphasizing direct action and opposing the privatization of public spaces through creative and symbolic displays (Foti, 2017).

Antonio Negri highlights the autonomous nature of the EuroMayDay movement, characterized by a demand for a universal approach and radical alternative practices that transcend individualistic tendencies. Negri sees the precariat as a subject of revolutionary re-composition, contributing to the construction of the universal (Negri, 2008). Similarly, Gerald Raunig views the EuroMayDay movement as an ongoing struggle, resisting structurization while creating new ways of being and acting, emphasizing the power of the movement as a socially productive force (Raunig, 2010).

The precariat's potential as a socio-political movement lies in its ability to foster unity amidst diversity, acknowledging the differences between various precariat groups while striving for common visions and alliances (George, 2016). This inclusive approach, exemplified by the demand for a universal basic income, demonstrates the unifying potential of precarity, embracing heterogeneity rather than suppressing it. Cities can play a crucial role in enabling such unified precariat movements by creating open platforms and networks focused on labor rights, basic services access, and social protection policies. By engaging with networks, organizations, and collectives that promote precariat unity, the precarization experience can become a catalyst for political resistance and offer an opportunity to reject division. Collective action and a reevaluation of societal conditions may serve as potent manifestations of support for these ideas, paving the way for a more equitable and empowered future for all.

However, the precariat's reluctance to participate in traditional labor protests and join trade unions stems from various factors that shape their perceptions and experiences. Firstly, trade unions are often perceived as weak and ineffective in addressing the specific challenges faced by the precariat. Cities and municipal agencies must then fill this gap by designing innovative, context-specific policies and programs to support the precariat. Hyperlocal solutions co-created with marginalized communities can meet on-ground needs better than centralized unions. The traditional methods of protest employed by unions may be seen as inadequate and less impactful in addressing the precarious nature of their work and life situations. Secondly, the nature of precariat work makes it difficult to organize within the traditional labor framework. Their lack of protection under labor laws, frequent job changes, and uncertain employment status contribute to a dispersed and disconnected workforce. This high level of fragmentation poses challenges to collective solidarity and organized mobilization (Swider, 2015).

The precarious workers' unique circumstances lead them away from typical mobilization strategies and institutions. Traditional forms of organization and protest, both within formal and informal sectors, are not widely adopted by the precariat. In the context of industrialized workers, entering institutional structures like trade unions aimed to protect their collective interests. However, such structures may not fully address the

precariat's multifaceted challenges, which go beyond conventional labor issues (Agarwala, 2008).

In recent decades, labor movements have sought to establish institutional frameworks to protect workers from employer exploitation while formalizing their identity and status. Despite these efforts, the precariat's diverse and dynamic work situations may not easily fit within the confines of traditional labor laws and regulations. As a result, their engagement with existing institutional structures may be limited, prompting them to seek alternative avenues for representation and advocacy. Hence urban governments should constantly evaluate and update regulations to reflect the realities of new, non-standard forms of work. Legal definitions of work and workers need to expand to include the precariat so they can access social services and protections.

In Ukraine, the precariat represents a diverse and heterogeneous social group facing precarious employment conditions, and its composition encompasses various categories of workers. Ukrainian cities must recognize this diversity while devising customized policies for different precariat subgroups based on their unique needs and challenges. Scholars O. Grishnova and E. Bryntseva (2016) have identified several subgroups within the precariat, including migrant workers, the unemployed, low-income earners, those involved in informal employment (receiving wages off the books), and part-time workers lacking proper labor protection standards. Their extensive research, employing a specific calculation methodology, estimated the number of individuals belonging to this group to range from 11 to 13 million during the period 2004-2011. Moreover, the representation of the precariat within the overall employed population experienced fluctuations, ranging from 50.4% in 2007 to 58.5% in 2009. Particularly noteworthy is the disproportionate impact of precarization on certain demographics, including illegal labor migrants, middle-aged women, individuals of pre-retirement and retirement age, and young people without professional education.

The phenomenon of labor migration also contributes to the diversification of the precariat in Ukraine. An estimated 7 million labor migrants from Ukraine are dispersed across various countries, with only a small fraction (less than 500 thousand people) holding official work permits. The majority of labor migrants engage in seasonal work, while approximately 2 million have chosen to live abroad permanently. Cities can play a key role in supporting circular migration through bilateral agreements with major destination countries. This allows migrants to gain skills and remit incomes while retaining ties with home communities. Returnee migrant capital and expertise can catalyze urban enterprise and development.

Labor migration in Ukraine exhibits varying degrees of composition and qualifications. Interestingly, highly educated individuals are among the active labor migrants, with a substantial number of scientists opting for permanent residence abroad, primarily in the United States and Germany. "Brain drain" poses a huge challenge for sustainable growth that requires multi-level policy responses. Cities can collaborate with universities and industries to provide competitive research infrastructure, innovation hubs and career growth opportunities to retain talent and prevent human capital flight. Tragically, this trend is also associated with a decline in the number of research scientists within Ukraine, which decreased threefold between 1991 and 2013. Furthermore, a substantial proportion (about

41%) of respondents aged 18 to 29 express a willingness to leave Ukraine in search of well-paid and promising job opportunities.

Since 2014, the precariat problem in Ukraine has faced exacerbated challenges, particularly concerning internal migrants and other related factors. And since 24 February 2022, the situation has taken a tragic turn, further highlighting the urgency of addressing precarity issues within the country (Tolstov & Danilian, 2018). Ukrainian cities hosting internally displaced people must prioritize services and employment access for them. Affordable housing, reskilling programs and microfinance can prevent migrant precarity traps. The dynamics of the precariat in Ukraine, combined with the impact of labor migration, underscore the complexity of the precarization phenomenon within the country. The varying employment conditions and qualifications of labor migrants, including highly educated professionals, further accentuate the challenges faced by the precariat, necessitating comprehensive and targeted policies to address their vulnerabilities and foster social stability.

The presence of a significant precariat population in Ukraine, facing precarious employment conditions and involving workers in informal employment, may have a notable impact on the shadow economy or informal sector within the country. Cities can launch information campaigns and institutes to formalize precariat enterprises and provide social security access. Simple registration, digital payments adoption, and tax incentives can move more economic activity into the formal economy over time. The dynamic and diverse work situations of the precariat, often outside the traditional labor laws and regulations, could contribute to the growth of informal work arrangements and activities. As individuals in the precariat seek alternative avenues for income generation and representation, the informal economy may provide an attractive option due to its flexibility and lower barriers to entry.

Moreover, the phenomenon of labor migration among the precariat further adds to the complexity of the informal sector in Ukraine. Labor migrants dispersed across various countries, many without official work permits, may be more inclined to engage in informal work to sustain themselves in foreign lands. The fluidity of labor migration, particularly for seasonal workers, can facilitate participation in the informal sector in both Ukraine and the countries where they seek employment.

The precariat's diverse composition, including highly educated individuals, scientists, and young professionals willing to emigrate in search of better opportunities, may lead to a "brain drain" effect in Ukraine. The loss of skilled labor can impact the formal sector, potentially creating opportunities for informal economic activities to fill the void left by the emigrating workforce. To explore perspectives on this issue, we conducted a survey among students, presented in Tab.3. By engaging with the politics of precarity, society can actively address the underlying issues and work towards fostering a more inclusive and secure environment for vulnerable individuals and communities.

Addressing the challenges faced by the precariat and mitigating their vulnerabilities would require comprehensive policies that not only focus on improving conditions within the formal labor market but also consider the implications on the informal economy. Recognizing the complexities of the informal sector and understanding its interplay with the precariat can assist policymakers in designing effective strategies that promote social

stability and economic growth while providing support and protection to all segments of the labor force.

The precariat phenomenon in Ukraine poses multifaceted challenges that demand urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. The diverse and heterogeneous nature of the precariat, along with the impact of labor migration, requires policymakers to approach the issue with an inclusive and holistic perspective. City governments must set the pace on progressive precariat policies, amplifying their success stories to inspire provincial and national action. Showing real on-ground impact at the municipal level can catalyze broader transformation. Addressing precarity in Ukraine requires innovative and targeted policies that not only strengthen the formal labor market but also address the implications of the informal economy. By fostering unity amidst diversity and empowering collective action, the precariat can become a powerful force for positive change, leading toward a more equitable and secure future for all Ukrainians.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is essential to distinguish the precariat from the underclass, as the former represents an active social stratum that strives to assert and defend its right to a decent life despite facing hardships and restrictions. The precariat's unique social position makes it a potential determinant of political protests, given that its formation is rooted in new forms of power and exploitation inherent in neoliberal logic. The prevalence of precarity as a way of life undermines social justice and threatens the core principles of democracy. By assigning risks and responsibilities to individuals rather than fostering shared responsibility, precarization challenges the very concept of citizenship and erodes trust in social security, leading to political protests against precarity. Cities, as centers of economic activity and migration, have a pivotal role to play in empowering precarious groups through localized policies like universal basic services, skills training, and platforms for political participation. Successful municipal programs can then inspire broader transformation.

The emergence of new forms of individualization and the limitations on traditional avenues of association and collective struggle have left precarious groups with few options for representation and advocacy. Traditional political processes, trade union representation, and conventional notions of interests have become inadequate in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by the precariat. Consequently, the precariat has turned to alternative means of mobilization and collective action, seeking to resist unsustainable conditions that hinder collective solidarity and deny democratic institutions.

In Ukraine, the precariat has evolved into a stable social and class formation, uniting a significant portion of the population in an uncertain status that fosters a sense of inferiority and limited opportunities for self-realization. As this awareness grows, the precariat's potential as a future class becomes more evident, with its consciousness and behavior potentially influencing the fate of the country.

Furthermore, the precariat's presence in Ukraine, characterized by precarious employment conditions and involvement in informal work, may have significant implications for the shadow economy or informal sector within the country. City administrations can proactively address this by simplifying bureaucracies, providing social

security access and instituting incentives to formalize precariat businesses and employment. Gradually moving economic activity out of the shadows expands the tax base for public spending on urban infrastructure and services. The dynamic and diverse work situations of the precariat, often existing outside the confines of traditional labor laws, could contribute to the growth of informal work arrangements and activities. As individuals in the precariat seek alternative avenues for income generation and representation, the informal economy may become an appealing option due to its flexibility and lower barriers to entry.

Moreover, the phenomenon of labor migration among the precariat may further complicate the informal sector in Ukraine. Labor migrants dispersed across various countries, many without official work permits, may be more inclined to engage in informal work to sustain themselves in foreign lands. The fluidity of labor migration, particularly for seasonal workers, can facilitate participation in the informal sector in both Ukraine and the countries where they seek employment.

Addressing the challenges faced by the precariat and mitigating their vulnerabilities will require comprehensive policies that not only focus on improving conditions within the formal labor market but also consider the implications on the shadow economy. Recognizing the complexities of the informal sector and understanding its interplay with the precariat can assist policymakers in designing effective strategies that promote social stability and economic growth while providing support and protection to all segments of the labor force. Cities play a frontline role in pioneering such progressive policies, directly uplifting precariat residents through basic services access, reskilling programs and formal work opportunities. Successful local models can then drive broader national transformation. Emphasizing the importance of collective solidarity and shared responsibility in a democratic society is vital in addressing the grievances of the precariat and ensuring a more inclusive and secure future for Ukraine.

The precariat in Ukraine faces unique challenges that urgently require targeted policies and initiatives. To address these issues and work towards a more equitable society, we propose the following concrete recommendations:

- Implementing a strengthened social safety net system that accounts for the precarious nature of employment and income for this group, such as universal basic services, portable benefits, and flexible social security contributions.
- Fostering greater labor market security through measures that discourage exploitative practices, promote formalization of informal work arrangements, and provide legal protections for precarious workers.
- Establishing dedicated platforms and mechanisms for political participation and representation of precariat interests within policymaking processes.
- Investing in accessible skills training and capacity-building programs tailored to the diverse needs of the precariat, enabling adaptation to evolving job market demands.
- Incentivizing and supporting the formalization of businesses operating in the informal sector, thereby expanding the tax base for public spending on urban infrastructure and services.
- Enhancing international cooperation on labor migration policies to safeguard the rights and welfare of Ukrainian migrant workers abroad.

The article could benefit from further research exploring the intersectional dimensions of precarity in Ukraine, examining how factors like gender, ethnicity, and disability intersect to shape diverse experiences within the precariat. Such insights would inform more nuanced and inclusive policy approaches. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of the precariat as a social force, its political consciousness, and its impact on societal transformations could yield valuable understandings. Comparative analyses across regions and contexts could also shed light on effective strategies for empowering and integrating precarious groups into the fabric of democratic societies.

Furthermore, international cooperation and coordination are crucial in addressing the precariat's challenges, particularly concerning labor migration. Collaboration with destination countries can help ensure better protection and rights for migrant workers, reducing vulnerabilities and exploitation.

Overall, by recognizing the significance of the precariat as a social and political force, Ukraine can take proactive steps to address their grievances, empower them as active citizens, and foster a society that values collective well-being and social justice. The journey towards a more equitable and prosperous future for all citizens requires acknowledging and addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the precariat and working together towards a society that values the dignity and rights of every individual.

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