New Social Groups within Stratification Systems of Global Society

Abstract

Precarisation of labor relations is extensive in modern societies. This phenomenon has given rise to a new social group in the social structure of modern societies. It is a precariat. The precariat is considered to be the new dangerous class of the modern society.

Keywords: post-industrial society, the social structure of society, precariat, precarisation of labor relations, employment, generation X

Social world is a multidimensional space with many social fields. Each individual and group occupy their respective positions, turbulent flows and "force lines" of social space direct the torrent of human activity.

There are many types of stratification in the world. A class division is a division into classes that own or do not own the means of production and is based on the division of labor [Lenin, 1970, p. 15]. Three main criteria (education, income, identity and sub-criteria set) are used to scrutinize processes of stratification in society [Radaev, Shkaratan, 1996]. The social estate stratification includes groups based on the principle of inheritance [Kordonskii, 2008, p. 27].

Under globalization and permanent economic crisis there appear a new and very important criterion for the stratification of modern post-industrial countries: namely the division of economically active population on stable/instable, and secure/insecure sectors. This approach is taken by many adherents in the EU and the USA. A new group of stratification is meant by "The new dangerous class – precariat" [Standing, 2011]. Term “precariat” is derived from the words "precarious" (unstable) and "proletariat" (the working class). Precariat includes groups of individuals who, regardless of the size of their income, education, identity, and other characteristics, are engaged in instable employment. They have no the stable position in the labor market and assured jobs. There are different income groups – from bigger income earners to smaller income earners among informal employees. It should be noted that these groups can not be integrated into any of the existing social systems. Precariat has bilateral relations with any of the stratification system. Internal heterogeneity of this group gives rise to well-founded criticism. However, it is not worth denying this problem. Precariat is viewed as a "class of outcasts", who has "nothing to lose". It is independent of the modern democratic institutions and is capable of a ruthless and bloody rebellion. Many political scientists and politicians believe that the American
movement "Occupy Wallstreet!" is a manifestation of global precariat movement. In Europe, a new social movement «May day» threatens the ruling class. In Japan, new stratum known as "freeters" and "NEETS" includes young people with or without vocational education. They are not able to find a job after graduating from high school, college and odd jobs.

Copeland in his book "Generation X" [Copeland, 2009] describes a similar stratum, called as a "the space poor" traveling across continents and countries in search of new experiences and odd jobs. According to some analysts, this new social group starts "rebellion" against the lifestyle and values of the middle class. In their opinion, this rebellion is like rebellion of hippie in 1970s.

In Russia problems of precariat have been discussed recently. In April 2013 at the XIV International Conference «Modernization of the economy and society" Deputy Prime Minister Olga Golodetz said that “it was not clear” where 38 million working-age Russians “were busy and how busy". This approach causes the Russian scientists to "conduct an audit" of Russian society, if people are involved in any employment. Some experts believe that about 30% of Russians are on a "precarious employment". Their employment relationship is not formalized but it is in shadow or, according to Olga Golodetz, "no legitimized" sector of the labor market [Rossiyskaya…].

Is it true that this new group is so dangerous? What is its essence? What is its origin? These issues need to be studied and well-founded conclusions are to be drawn.

A notion "precariat" is closely related to a concept of "precariousness". This term implies that "labor relations” may be broken by the employer at any time, unsettled, incomplete, constricted forms of legal and social assured employment. This phenomenon embraces a significant portion of employees" [Vikipediya(a) …].

The notion of precariat derives from the concept of "precaritat" which is meant by unpredictable, unreliable and unsafe living conditions causing material and psychological distress. Precaritat is often close to marginalization and anomy in Durkheim’s sense of the word [Vikipediya (b)…].

Discussion around precariat is not only connected with the growth of the protest movement in society, but also with erosion of the "middle class. According to German researcher Professor University of Jena Claus Dörre, «every third employee in Germany is in a state suspended or fluid precariat” [Marmer, 2009]. The reasons for this are rooted in the perception of social inequality. German majority (61%) believe that there is no more middle class and only the higher and lower ones.
In Russia there are only few discussions about precariousness and precariat as a new stratification group. For example at the Faculty of Philosophy of Higher School of Economics in February and April 2013 seminars were held by research group as titked "Work, knowledge and leisure in postindustrial society» dedicated to discussion of the Guy Standing book "The Precariat – The new dangerous class".

The Russian scientific community discusses some aspects of theses problems. Among them there are the issues of part-time jobs, hidden unemployment, informal employment, shadow or "gray" economy, etc.

It should be noted that there is not comprehensive approach to the study of a new social groups. Consequently, it is necessary generalization, specification of the research object and its objective study since the protest is on rise in modern society. Precariat can become a moving force of social protest movement in the world and in Russia. Precariat can cause the global system to be instable.

According to Guy Standing, many informal employees who consider themselves "middle class", in fact are not this class because their status is uncertain. Many freelancers are not involved in stable employment. They reveal the "Staged integration" as a state of social many dimensional identity that excludes them from the labor force.

Precariat has a "reduced status", minimal relationship with the state and the employers in terms of stability and security. Precarian workers in minimum identify themselves with the professional community, of which they may be a part. As a consequence, they are not members of trade unions. That is why there is a crisis of the important public organizations.

G. Standing outlines three potentially precarized social groups: youth, women, the elders. According to the British sociologist, in these groups there are migrants also. But in the last case they are meant by precarized labor relations rather than group identity patterns.

Process of precarization of labor activity embraces also such country like Japan. For many years the researches in the country of Rising Sun explore the implications of this phenomenon. In particular, they study issues respecting precarized groups - freeters and NEETs. The term "freeter" appears at the end of 1980s. It is meant by young people who refuse to be engaged stable employment. They hope to find a more prestigious job [Reiko, 2013]. First of all, this problem is regarded only in the context of changes in the attitudes of young people toward work and labor.

In the early 90s the number of young people who can not find a full-time jobs has increased. There are not only those who do not want to work in «old-fashioned" manner but also
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those who like to work but are not able to get necessary jobs. They are forced to seek temporary work and call themselves as "freeters". There is more difficult situation for NEETs (acronym - not in education, employment or training). This group includes individuals who have no any education, job and have no skills. The face great obstacles to be integrated into the traditional Japanese employment system. According to Japanese researchers, young people are ready to perform the work formerly accomplished by older women. Any skills are not required to occupy this position. Young people want to have full-time jobs in large companies. Youth employment is on the focus of the Government of Japan since 2003.

The issue of precarization is put with big acumen because there is the big gap between wages of regular employees and wages of irregular workers in Japan. Unfortunately, the irregular employees and the staff employees have unequal chances. Employers give a favor for regular employment. The freeters who are more than 30 years old are not able to find full-time jobs.

Japanese scholars and politicians recognize that the solutions of issues of youth employment need to be implemented at the state level. The point is that the young people when getting old, will fill applications to go to pension. Meanwhile irregular employees are not allowed to make fees to the pension funds. With other words regular employees have pension rights only.

Issues of precariat are out of the academic discourse. But the Russian officials recognize these issues are of crucial importance. Who is the Russian precariat? First of all it is this group which includes individuals excluded from a stable employment. The Russian precariat consists of temporary workers, part-time job workers who have no labor contracts with the employers.

As a consequence of an irregular labor relationship, they are deprived of any social guarantees according to labor law (limited working day, paid annual vacation, medical insurance, fees to the pension fund, social insurance, etc.). In the Western countries there are youth, women, the elders and migrants among the main groups of precariat. In Russia any type of labor human resources can be included in this stratum regardless of age, sex, ethical identity. The Russian precariat is not a lower social group because its income and education are often the same as the middle class income/education. Often the employees, who are out the staff and taken on lease by another companies (outstaffing, outsourcing), can fall into the precarized group. In Russia this phenomenon is not considered to be negative one. And in our country, these phenomena do not appear as negative and semi-legal. In 2011 according to recruitment agencies, from 70 to 100 thousand people are on leasing work in Russia. Dozens of recruitment agencies provide
outstaffing jobs. These workers are deprived of labor rights and social guarantees. It leads to the social anomie and growth of marginalized population.

The part-time jobs groups are as follow: those who are involved in the employer and the employee agreement; those who have part-time jobs for reasons not depending on intentions of the employer or the employer's fault; those who are forced to be the unemployed and people who fail to find a job. According to Russian statistic service, in 2011 255,728 people (0.4% of employment in the economy) had part-time jobs [Federal'naya(a)…] In 2012 29,3% were unemployed due to lack of experience and 5,9% lost jobs when their temporary work on the contract was over [Federal'naya(b)…]. In 2010 687,000 people of the economically inactive population failed to find a job (3.6% of the economically inactive citizens) [ Federal'naya (c)…]. According to the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation M. Topilin, 10-15% of employees have jobs without labor contracts [Ministerstvo truda…] The irregular labor relations, which are widespread in Russia, lead to the development of the informal economy. Here some features are given to afford the portrait of the contemporary Russian precariat.

Firstly, the Russian precariat comes to reality. Secondly, the emergence of the precariat can produce negative consequences. Third, the instable employment provokes emotional, psychological and social disorder that leads to latent social conflicts and rebellion. Fourth, it would be worth pondering who took part of the protest wave on Bolotnaya Square in Moscow. the middle class or the precariat?

Therefore to construct models of social stratification is to take into account additional criteria when studying global society. For last decades fundamental process of changes in workplace spread; knowledge economy appeared. At the same time the transition to high-tech production has slowed down as within the traditional segments of the labor market and within the new ones as well. Under the structural mass unemployment, the social upheavals and the growth of risks there emergences a significant stratum exposed to be threatened by loss of social status and downward mobility. It is the precariat which is defined as «counter resource management stratum». We talk about the uncertainty with which the discriminated communities face. This uncertainty is crystallized in different points of the sphere of wage labor as in the Western societies and the transitional societies as well. Sociological task is to find a appropriate criteria and indicators for the study of this process.