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***Precarious Work: The Challenges for Labour Law in Europe,* edited by Jeff Kenner, Izabella Florczak Marta and Otto. Edward Elgar publishing. Cheltenham, Uk, Northampton, MA, USA, 2019, 264 pp., ISBN: 9781788973250, Price: £90.00, hardback.**

What constitutes precarious work? (p.xi) Ongoing academic and public policy debates focus on investigating and assessing precarious work, yet rarely is it clearly defined. The purpose of this book is to offer a comparative perspective of the legal and social policy challenges posed by precarious work. As such, the book proposes to investigate how precarious work is manifested in different national and European contexts and, most importantly, to highlight the challenges encountered by legislators when addressing the topic through EU labour regulation.

The concept of precarious work is fluid, attracting vivid interest in the recent years. While some scholars synonymise it to non-standard employment (NSER), emphasising the temporal element such contracts entail, others associate it with insecurity. Although certain that NSER and atypical contracts include contingent work conditions, precarious work has been recently permeating the arena of full-time standard employment, thus requiring re-conceptualisation and further definition. Reflecting on this need, the book is divided into three main parts. The first part provides the theoretical foundations that frame precarious work and discusses the need for concrete definitions. The second part provides empirical evidence from different national contexts and EU labour regulations on precarious work forms, as well as how these have been regulated more or less effectively. The final part is a distinctive section, concentrating on the gig economy, which is growing significantly and associated with precarious working conditions.

One of the strengths of the book is its impressive discussion about different definitions and key concepts. For example, Florczak and Otto (p.6) argue that legislation in the field is limited predominantly due to the lack of a legal definition of precarious work. One step earlier the authors emphasize the need to initially define atypical and non-standard employment and identify their problematic nature, thus posing the question of what is atypical employment? Is it anything other than typical or standard? The authors then conclude that the essence of precarious work lies on the underpinned unbalanced relationship and subsequent asymmetrical power dynamics between employees and employers. With this asymmetry in mind the authors distinguish between insiders (employees with secure working conditions) and outsiders, who constitute the precariat, i.e. employees lacking social protection and security, characterised by high vulnerability. Illegal work as a clear manifestation of precarious work does exist and is prevalent in different national contexts, even though legislators may have neglected it, or treated it as non-existent. Finally, solo self-employment but also bogus and false self-employment cover a large part of the book, and are further re-visited in the final part referring to gig economy, with the authors scrutinising the extent to which these concepts (bogus/false self-employment and gig work) are in fact the same thing.

A number of implied individual and social costs related to precarious work are then presented. Social pollution (the generation of a surplus of precarious employees) produced by specific employers, deepening precarity, as part of a process weakening a number of employees' rights such as freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of access to tribunals through imposed fees, are hinders of descent employment. Finally, the authors emphasize the limitations and challenges these new precarious work forms pose to unionisation and collective bargaining. Setting as an example gig workers or 'independent contractors', as consistently and intentionally being labelled, and the solo

self-employed, the authors shed light on the obstacles associated with collective action and mobilisation due to the isolation such work patterns pertain.

The final part sets a very successful overview of the growing gig economy. This part stands out by providing a concrete definition of the gig economy, exhibiting its difference to the platform economy. One step further, this part distinguishes between platform work via apps and via online platforms/crowdwork, giving a holistic overview of a very contemporary topic. Manifestation of how these forms contribute to precarious work conditions and examples of deteriorating working conditions of gig workers in Italy that triggered worker mobilisation are presented. In the last chapter Kennell emphasizes the need for a clear work identification of gig workers, intentionally labelled 'independent contractors' by platforms in an attempt to mitigate employment costs to workers and signify disengagement regarding employment responsibilities with the platform. These are very important debates, vital to be discussed in a book that addresses the concept of and legal framework on the gig economy.

Despite its merits the book includes a number of weaknesses. The first is concerned with the terminology used. The authors, although insightfully acknowledging in the introductory chapter the complexity of the definition of precarious work (p.xi), use a range of terms without previously having clarified differences. Therefore terms such as precarity, precariousness, precarisation, which refer to a wider notion, are used interchangeably to terms such as precarious work and working conditions and precarious employment, which are more specific (Alberti et al., 2018). As an example, precarisation is the process that leads to precarity, whereas precarity, the state of being precarious, as a wider concept is not only limited to precarious work but entails non-work aspects (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018). This is further suggested by Mangan (chapter 4, p.57), who associates deepening precarity to non-work aspects, yet not consistently used as such throughout the edited collection. Similarly, although authors in the introduction very insightfully argue that precarious work is beyond atypical employment and non-standard contractual agreements, a large part of the chapters on national contexts still concentrates on fixed-term contracts, agency work and part-time work providing some mundane evidence.

Another underdeveloped theme relates to methods of investigating precarious work and solutions suggested managing it. I Fabrellas (chapter 5) on Spain could potentially provide some quantitative evidence, however, the chapter has pertinent weaknesses. The main one has to do with the allocation of reforms to precarious and non-precarious typologies, generating questions on the assumptions and criteria utilised for such allocation, as well as the extent to which such assumptions and criteria are unanimously accepted. Regarding solutions, Cammalleri (chapter 3) suggests an intriguing alternative, the imposition of a Pigouvian tax (SSFT) to employers who contribute to and generate precarious workers. The authors though offer limited implementation prospect as well as feasibility of such tax.

Written in an accessible language this book is well-structured, addressed to readers who wish to gain a good understanding of precarious work and associated legal challenges in different national contexts. As such it is very useful for policy makers both from a comparative and a national perspective. The book is also suitable for industrial relations, sociology of work and employment law scholars, who already have some prior understanding of precarity as a broader term and precarious work in particular. Most importantly, the book initiates a dynamic dialogue on the emergence of new working patterns that lead to precarity, such as the gig economy. Its contribution lies to the

generation of a dynamic discussion between readers, legislators, policy makers and scholars on new working patterns that can be introduced in the future, the changing concept of employer and challenges that will be encountered in the future of work.

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Kalleberg, A.L. and Vallas, S. (2018) Probing precarious work: Theory, research and politics. *Research in the sociology of work*, 31: 1-30.