

Precariousness in Mexico: Labor Trajectories and Meanings of Work

In the context of the processes of globalization, productive restructuring and labor flexibility, data from international and national studies on the topic shows that contemporary work features a spread precariousness condition. In order to contribute to the discussion, in this paper we present the main findings of a study about work precariousness in Mexico which is based on the heterogeneity and subjectivity of this phenomenon. In giving account of the diversity and development of work precariousness, we compared the labor situation of workers from three contrasting occupations in different regions of the country: garment workers, call center workers and orchestra musicians. Empirical research was based on a mixed methodology which allowed us reconstructing workers' labor itineraries through a non-probabilistic survey and qualitative data from in-depth interviews.

The analysis of the work trajectories shows that uncertainty and instability are part of most of these itineraries, with the exception of some groups of garment workers from big transnational factories, technical and professional workers of higher hierarchy in call centers and tenured musicians from the most stable orchestras. While precariousness in garment industry is multidimensional, in the call centers precariousness is mainly based on quality metrics, and among musicians multiactivity is the main feature of this phenomenon. In these conditions the meanings of work are multiple and require from workers constant adaptations along their labor trajectories.